



MPHA

VOICES OF PUBLIC HEALTH NEWSLETTER

The Official Newsletter of the Michigan Public Health Association
Affiliate of the American Public Health Association



A Message from the President

Dear MPHA Members, Partners, and Friends,

Moving Forward Together

Public health is built on collaboration, innovation, and a shared commitment to improving lives. The engagement and dedication of MPHA members continue to demonstrate the strength of Michigan's public health community, and I am continually inspired by the work taking place across our state.

Across Michigan, public health professionals, community leaders, researchers, students, and advocates are advancing initiatives that improve the health and well-being of our communities every day. From innovative community-based programs and applied research to policy advocacy and cross-sector partnerships, the progress being made reflects both the commitment and expertise of those working throughout the public health landscape. These efforts remind us that public health is not the work of one organization or sector alone, but the result of sustained collaboration and shared purpose.

Over the past several months, MPHA members and sections have been actively contributing to conversations that shape the future of public health in Michigan. Through conferences, webinars, professional development opportunities, and collaborative initiatives, our members continue to share knowledge, elevate emerging issues, and strengthen the public health workforce. These activities create spaces for dialogue, learning, and innovation while helping to build stronger connections across disciplines and sectors. Just as importantly, they help prepare and support the next generation of public health leaders who will continue advancing the work of protecting and improving health across our communities.

MPHA is proud to stand alongside these efforts and to support the individuals and organizations leading this important work. As we look ahead, we are well positioned to continue expanding our role as a convener, advocate, and resource for Michigan's public health community. By strengthening partnerships, elevating the voices of our members, and fostering opportunities for collaboration, MPHA will continue to help advance the work that is already making a difference across our state.

In the coming months, MPHA will also be launching an updated **website and member platform** designed to better support our members, programs, and services. This "web lift" represents an important step forward for the association. The new platform will improve access to resources, events, and communications while providing enhanced opportunities for engagement across our membership and sections.

A Message from the President, (Cont.)

We believe this update will help us better connect our members, support our growing programs, and provide improved tools to strengthen the work being done across Michigan's public health community. We are excited about this next step and encourage members to **stay tuned for additional information as this new platform is introduced.**

You will also hear more in the coming months about MPHA's collaboration with the newly forming Michigan Public Health Coalition (MPHC). This effort brings together the Michigan Public Health Association (MPHA), the Michigan Association for Local Public Health (MALPH), and the Public Health Advisory Council (PHAC) in a shared commitment to strengthening collaboration and communication across the state's public health system.

The Michigan Public Health Coalition is still in its early stages, but it represents an exciting opportunity to bring together thought leaders, practitioners, and partners to address the complex challenges facing public health today, especially affecting Michiganders. Across the country, similar state-level alliances are beginning to emerge to foster stronger communication, share expertise and resources, and support coordinated responses to emerging public health issues. Through the MPHC, we hope to foster a collaborative environment in which organizations can work together to elevate public health priorities, strengthen advocacy efforts, and support healthier communities across Michigan.

MPHA is also exploring additional collaboration with the Midwest Interprofessional Practice, Education, and Research Coalition (MIPERC). MIPERC is a regional initiative designed to enhance interprofessional education and collaborative practice across health disciplines. It brings together academic institutions, public healthcare professionals, and practice partners to develop innovative models for delivering public health services and strengthening workforce preparation. By supporting partnerships and emphasizing the core competencies of interprofessional education, MIPERC provides important infrastructure for preparing health professionals to work collaboratively to address complex population health challenges.

These emerging partnerships reflect a fundamental principle of public health: our greatest progress occurs when we work together—across disciplines, institutions, and communities. By strengthening connections across organizations and sectors, we can better support innovation, share knowledge, and build the capacity needed to address the evolving health challenges facing our state and nation.

As we reflect on the progress being made and look ahead to the opportunities before us, I remain incredibly proud of the work being done across Michigan. MPHA is honored to stand alongside the individuals and organizations leading these efforts and remains committed to supporting collaboration, innovation, and leadership throughout our public health community.

Thank you for your continued engagement, leadership, and dedication to advancing public health in Michigan.

I look forward to continuing this important work together as we strengthen and advance public health for all Michiganders.

Warmly,



Marcia Mastracci Ditmyer, PhD, MS, MBA, MCHES

Celebrate National Public Health Week with MPHA: April 6–12th

National Public Health Week (NPHW) is our opportunity to spotlight the work, people, and partnerships that keep Michigan communities healthy and resilient. This year, MPHA is proud to showcase a full week of stories, insights, and initiatives that reflect the power of public health—from data-driven decisions to community-based care, education, and advocacy. Join us as we explore how Michigan is leading the way and how you can get involved.



MPHA's NPHW Schedule & Highlights. [Click here to join us!](#)

Pre-NPHW: *Introduction to NPHW* – Learn what National Public Health Week is all about and MPHA's plans for celebrating public health across the state.

Day 1 – Monday, 4/6/26: "Ready. Set. Action." Kickoff for the week, including an overview of Michigan's public health efforts and why public health matters now.

Day 2 – Tuesday, 4/7/26: "The Power of Data and Facts in Combating Misinformation"

Day 3 – Wednesday, 4/8/26: "Prevention in Action / Community-Based Care"

Day 4 – Thursday, 4/9/26: "Strengthening Public Health Through Oral Health"

Day 5 – Friday, 4/10/26: "Building Healthier Communities Through Education"

Day 6 – Saturday, 4/11/26: "Government Partners in Public Health"

Day 7 – Sunday, 4/12/26: "The Future of Public Health"

Post-NPHW: Closing reflections on how to continue engaging with public health, applying the week's lessons, and staying active in improving community health.

Stay tuned throughout the week for daily features, stories, and insights

Please join MPHA in celebrating the people and programs making Michigan healthier, stronger, and more resilient.



**NATIONAL
PUBLIC
HEALTH
WEEK**

AN INITIATIVE OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

Celebrating Progress and Looking Ahead

As we move through the spring months, the MPHA continues to advance its mission of promoting healthy communities and strengthening the public health workforce across our state. The past few months have been filled with meaningful engagement, collaboration, and advocacy, and we are excited about the opportunities that lie ahead.

[Reflecting Back on March](#)

March was an active and productive month for MPHA, highlighted by several important events organized by our sections and partners across the state.

On **March 24**, the **Public Health Nursing (PHN) Section Annual Conference – Addressing Misinformation/Disinformation about Health** brought together public health nursing professionals and colleagues to explore strategies for responding to health misinformation and disinformation. As misinformation continues to influence health behaviors and public trust, this timely conference focused on strengthening communication approaches and equipping public health professionals with practical tools to address misinformation in their communities.

On **March 26**, MPHA's Public Policy and Legislative Committee hosted the webinar **"Making an Impact in Health Policy – Advocacy Strategies That Work."** This engaging lunchtime panel featured experienced public health leaders who shared practical strategies for effective advocacy, including communicating with legislators, participating in town halls, writing op-eds, and building partnerships that elevate public health priorities at both the state and federal levels.

The month concluded on **March 31** with the **Michigan Journal of Public Health (MJPH) Lunchtime Learning Series**, a brief virtual session designed to highlight current research and emerging issues in public health. These sessions provide an accessible way for professionals to connect, learn, and engage with important topics shaping the field.

We extend our appreciation to the MPHA sections, volunteers, presenters, and organizers who made these events possible. Their work continues to strengthen Michigan's public health community and advance meaningful dialogue around the issues that impact the health of our residents.

[Looking Ahead to April: A Month for Public Health](#)

April is always an exciting time for public health professionals as we celebrate **National Public Health Week**, which begins **April 6**. This national observance provides an opportunity to recognize the contributions of the public health workforce and to highlight the importance of prevention, health equity, and community partnerships in improving health outcomes. Beginning April 6, MPHA will be sharing information throughout the week highlighting key issues and priorities in public health. We encourage members and partners to visit the MPHA website during the week to learn more about these topics and to join us in recognizing the many ways public health professionals work to improve the health of communities across Michigan.

April also brings several important public health observances that align closely with the work happening across Michigan, including **National Minority Health Month**, **Black Maternal Health Week**, and **World Immunization Week**. Each of these observances reminds us that improving health requires attention to equity, access to care, and sustained investment in prevention.

Celebrating Progress and Looking Ahead, Cont.



MPHA will also host the **MPHA Epidemiology Conference on April 17, 2026**, at the **DeVos Center, Pew Campus at Grand Valley State University in Grand Rapids, Michigan**. This conference brings together epidemiologists, researchers, students, and public health professionals from across the state to share knowledge, research findings, and best practices related to epidemiology and population health. Events like this help strengthen Michigan's public health workforce by fostering collaboration, highlighting emerging research, and supporting professional development. **Registration for the conference is currently open**, and we encourage members and partners to participate in this important gathering.

Looking Forward to June

As we move into early summer, MPHA will continue building momentum through member engagement, collaboration, and opportunities to connect across the public health community. Please mark your calendars for the **MPHA Annual Meeting and Public Health Summit**, which will take place on **June 25 from 11:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. in Lansing, Michigan**. This important gathering will bring together public health professionals, partners, and leaders from across the state to share ideas, highlight innovative work, and discuss the evolving priorities shaping public health in Michigan.



We are especially **thrilled to welcome the President of the American Public Health Association (APHA), Nandi Marshall, DrPH, MPH, CHES, CLC, CDE**, who will be traveling to Michigan to address MPHA members during the event. Dr. Marshall is a community-engaged scholar committed to advancing maternal and child health equity and preparing the next generation of public health professionals. She currently serves as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Associate Professor at Georgia Southern University's Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health.

Her visit represents a wonderful opportunity for MPHA members to engage with national leadership and to connect Michigan's public health priorities with the broader public health movement. Additional details, including the program agenda and registration information, will be shared soon.

As we reflect on the progress of the past few months and look ahead to the opportunities before us, it is clear that Michigan's public health community continues to demonstrate remarkable leadership and dedication. The events and initiatives highlighted in this issue are only a snapshot of the important work taking place across our state. We look forward to continuing this momentum together—celebrating successes, strengthening partnerships, and advancing the shared goal of healthier communities for all Michiganders.

Message from Michigan Association for Local Public Health



What does it take to build a healthier Michigan?



Across the state, the Michigan Association for Local Public Health (MALPH), alongside public health leaders and community partners, is working toward a shared answer:

Together for Health: A Stronger Michigan Begins Here!

This is more than a vision—it's an effort to bring people together around a simple idea: when we work together toward a common goal, we can create healthier communities for everyone.

Turning a Shared Vision into Real Progress

The **Together for Health** campaign is designed to help make public health more connected, more visible, and more effective across Michigan.

At its heart, the campaign is about helping people better understand what public health does and why it matters in everyday life—from safe drinking water and disease prevention to healthier neighborhoods and stronger communities.

It's also about building trust and making sure the public health system is ready to respond to today's challenges—and whatever comes next.

How This Work Moves Forward

To bring this vision to life, the campaign focuses on four key areas:

- **Supporting the Public Health Workforce**
Giving local and state public health professionals the tools, training, and shared language they need to lead and communicate effectively in their communities.
- **Improving Communication Across the State**
Creating clear, consistent messaging and resources so people across Michigan hear the same reliable, easy-to-understand information—while still reflecting local needs.
- **Bringing More Partners to the Table**
Working with schools, businesses, hospitals, local governments, and community organizations to make health part of everyday decision-making.
- **Creating a Central Place to Connect and Learn**
Building an online hub where people can find resources, share ideas, and stay engaged in this work. Our Together for Health website is coming soon! Check www.malph.org for updates.

Together, these efforts are designed to make public health easier to understand, easier to access, and more connected to the communities it serves.

Michigan Association for Local Public Health (Cont.)

Health Is About More Than Healthcare

One important idea behind this work is that health doesn't just happen in doctors' offices or hospitals. It's shaped by where we live, where we work, how we get around, and the opportunities available in our communities.

That's why this effort encourages a **"Health in All Policies"** approach—making sure decisions about housing, transportation, education, and economic development all support healthier lives.

What This Could Mean for Michigan

Over time, this work aims to create:

- A better understanding of what public health is and why it matters
- Stronger connections between organizations and communities
- Greater trust and support for public health efforts
- A system that is more prepared, responsive, and fair for everyone

A Role for Everyone

Building a stronger public health system isn't something one organization can do alone. It takes all of us—public health professionals, community leaders, partners, and residents—working toward a shared goal.

***Because a stronger Michigan starts with healthier communities...
and healthier communities start with all of us, working together.***

Together for Health.



Member Spotlight (Kelsey Phelps)



Kelsey Phelps is an undergraduate student at Saginaw Valley State University pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Public Health with a concentration in health promotion and education. During her studies, she has developed strong interests in the planning and implementation of community-based initiatives that promote healthy lifestyles, particularly those focused on nutrition and physical activity. Through coursework and applied projects, she has explored how community efforts, health education, and environmental supports can improve access to healthy food and opportunities for movement. With plans to graduate in May 2026, Kelsey intends to continue her education at University of Michigan in Ann Arbor beginning in Fall 2026, where she hopes to pursue a Master of Public Health in the General Epidemiology concentration.

Kelsey currently serves as Director-at-Large and Webmaster for the Michigan Public Health Association (MPHA). In these roles, she contributes to strengthening the organization's digital communication and engagement strategies through the design and management of MPHA's website and online presence. Her work focuses on ensuring that public health professionals,

students, and community members across Michigan can easily access information about programs, advocacy efforts, and professional development opportunities. Kelsey first became involved with MPHA as an intern under the mentorship of MPHA President Marcia Ditmyer, and through that experience she developed a deeper understanding of the many sectors and disciplines that contribute to advancing public health across the state. Since then, she has sought opportunities to engage with various MPHA sections and committees in order to broaden her perspective and gain experience working with professionals from diverse public health backgrounds.

Through her academic and professional experiences, Kelsey has discovered a growing passion for infectious disease surveillance and data analytics. She has especially enjoyed coursework in statistics and epidemiologic methods, where she has learned how quantitative data can be used to identify patterns of disease, guide public health decision-making, and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions. She appreciates the analytical side of public health, working with data, identifying trends, and translating findings into meaningful actions that improve population health outcomes. Ultimately, Kelsey hopes to build a career in infectious disease epidemiology and contribute to national disease prevention and response efforts through organizations such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In addition to her interest in epidemiology, Kelsey is passionate about maintaining an active lifestyle and building habits that support long-term wellbeing, including regular exercise and balanced nutrition. She also enjoys sharing her knowledge with others through informal conversations, campus initiatives, or community outreach. She believes that small lifestyle changes can have a meaningful impact on long-term health. As she continues her journey in public health, Kelsey looks forward to learning from experienced professionals, expanding her research and analytical skills, and contributing to efforts that protect and improve the health of communities across Michigan and beyond.



2026 BWell Public Health Summit

2026 BWell Public Health Summit

Transforming Community Health

May 1, 7:30am-4pm
Temple Theatre
 Free Event, \$100 for 5.25 CME credits

MORNING SESSIONS

7:30-8:20am

Registration/Breakfast

8:30-9:30am



Christina Harrington, MPH, Health Officer,
 Saginaw County Health Department
From Assessment to Impact: Our Strategy for Community Health Transformation

9:40-10:40am



Natasha Bagdasarian, MD, MPH,
 Chief Medical Executive for the State of Michigan
Delicia Pruitt, MD, MPH, FAFAP, Medical Director, Saginaw
 County Health Department, **Interim Chief Executive**
 Director, **CMU Medical Education Partners**
*Where Policy Meets Real Life: A Frank Conversation About Medical
 Changes and How They Will Impact Our Community*

10:50-11:50am



Samuel Shaheen, MD, President and CEO, Shaheen Development
Storage Together: How Community Collaboration Impacts Health Outcomes

noon-1pm

BWell Champion Awards

REGISTER



Scan the QR code or visit
<https://pci.jotform.com/form/260335384389162>

DESCRIPTION:

BWell Saginaw Summit 2026 offers two tracks – one for healthcare providers and another for the general public. Keynote speakers and breakout sessions will take a multi-faceted approach to Saginaw's top health priorities. There is something for everyone to learn, apply to patient care, adopt for healthier living, and work individually and collectively to improve Saginaw's wellbeing.

TARGET AUDIENCES:

- 1) Patient-facing provider community including physicians, advanced practice providers, nurses, and
- 2) Community members.

AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSIONS

	COMMUNITY HEALTH	WOMEN & CHILDREN'S HEALTH	BEHAVIORAL HEALTH / SUBSTANCE USE	OBESITY / CHRONIC DISEASE
1:00-1:50	<p>Mamie Thorns, PhD, Chief Diversity Officer, Saginaw Valley State University <i>Implicit Bias in Healthcare: Recognizing It, Reducing It, Repairing Trust</i></p> <p>IMPLICIT BIAS CREDIT AVAILABLE</p>	<p>Renee Sundstrom, DO, Obstetrics & Gynecology, CMU Health <i>Menopause Explained: Symptoms, Science, and Solutions</i></p> <p>COMMUNITY/NO CME CREDIT</p>	<p>Michael Ingram, MD, Psychiatry, Great Lakes Bay Health Centers <i>Practical Strategies for Substance Use Disorder Care: A Psychiatric Perspective for Health Care Providers</i></p> <p>CME</p>	<p>Brandon Elliott, MD, Obesity Medicine & Metabolic Wellness Clinic <i>Muscle Preservation Strategies During Weight Reduction: How Medication, Nutrition, Physical Activity and Sleep Work Together</i></p> <p>COMMUNITY/NO CME CREDIT</p>
2:00-2:50	<p>Nicholas Haddad, MD, Infectious Disease, CMU Health <i>Advisory to Action: Implementing the Latest Immunization Guidance</i></p> <p>CME</p>	<p>Shanna Hensler, Region 5 Perinatal Quality Collaborative Lead <i>Infant Mortality Update: A Powerful Indicator of Our Community's Health, Stability and Future Success</i></p> <p>COMMUNITY/NO CME CREDIT</p>	<p>Kathy Dollard, MyMichigan Health Sam Price, Ten16 Recovery Network Rene' Anyette, Sacred Heart Rehabilitation Center Ricardo Bowden, Peer 360 Recovery Alliance <i>Panel Discussion: Continuum of Care in Action: Recovery, Peer Support, and Aligned Community Services</i></p> <p>COMMUNITY/NO CME CREDIT</p>	<p>Dr. Dafina Allen, MD, Wise Weight Management <i>Advances in Obesity Care: Evidence-Based Eating Plans and Treatment Strategies</i></p> <p>COMMUNITY/NO CME CREDIT</p>
3:00-3:50	<p>Steven Frazier, Director of Quality and Patient Safety, MyMichigan Health Jenna Bernson, MD, MyMichigan Health Scott Ross, MD, MyMichigan Health <i>Healthcare Without Walls: Increasing Access through Team-Based Care</i></p> <p>COMMUNITY/NO CME CREDIT</p>	<p>Nikita Roy, MD, Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, CMU Health Abhishek Bala, MD, MPH, Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, CMU Health <i>Clinical Perspectives on Autism Care Across Healthcare Disciplines</i></p> <p>CME</p>	<p>Randy Pfau, Saginaw County Medical Examiner's Office <i>Opioid Deaths in Our Backyard: How Awareness Leads to Prevention</i></p> <p>COMMUNITY/NO CME CREDIT</p>	<p>Jason Kuhn, DO, Bariatric Surgeon, Covenant HealthCare <i>From Prevention to Intervention: Innovations in Pediatric Obesity Care</i></p> <p>CME</p>

Hosted by



OBTAINING CME:

CME evaluation certificate and transcript for this activity may be obtained by visiting: med.cmich.edu/cmecert

APHA Policy & Advocacy Information

APHA 2026 Advocacy Priorities

- Increase and protect funding for vital public health agencies and programs and strengthen the nation's public health infrastructure and workforce.
- Defend existing federal public health programs and the workforce in light of ongoing efforts to defund important agencies and programs and dramatically reduce the federal public health workforce.
- Uphold and strengthen the Affordable Care Act and the Medicaid program and further expand access to health coverage and services.
- Tackle the health impacts of climate change.
- Protect access to women's health services and reproductive health care.
- Strengthen and uphold critical public health laws, including defending and challenging existing public health and environmental health laws and regulations in the federal courts.
- Address the nation's gun violence epidemic by advocating for interventions to reduce firearm-related morbidity and mortality and maintaining and expanding funding for gun violence prevention research at CDC and NIH.
- Advocate for the humane treatment of all immigrants, including in detention facilities, and support access to needed health services, safe living conditions and nutritious food.

What can you do?

- [Send an action alert.](#)
- Spread the word and [Speak for Health.](#)
- Check out this [handy summary of APHA's 2025 advocacy priorities.](#)



Arlington, VA and Digitally | June 9-10 (with optional Hill Day June 11)

Mark your calendars for the 2026 Policy Action Institute!



The 2026 Policy Action Institute will take place June 9-10 at the Hilton Arlington National Landing and digitally, with an optional Hill Day on June 11. Registration and housing will open in the spring, so check back for more information!

Through panels, hands-on workshops and networking sessions with top public health policymakers, attendees learned how to navigate funding cuts, influence policy to drive change and secure critical resources for their initiatives.

PHN Section Reflecting on Productive 2026 Thus Far!

On March 24th we held our annual conference, virtually.

Our theme was **Misinformation and Disinformation in Public Health**

We enjoyed 152 attendees: 142 nurses and 10 non-nurse PH colleagues

AGENDA

- ✓ **KEYNOTE: State Level Approach to Addressing Misinformation**
Dr. Natasha Bagdasarian, MD, MPH, FIDSA, FACP, Chief Medical Executive, State of Michigan Health & Human Services
- ✓ **Misinformation & Disinformation: How Politics have Played a Role and the Threat to PH at the Local Level**
Aimnee Mullendore, BSN, RN, Clinic Coordinator & Communicable Disease Nurse, Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency
- ✓ **The Use of Artificial Intelligence & Misinformation in Public Health**
Dr Stephen Ferrara, DNP, RN, FNP-BC, FAANP, FAAN. Associate Dean of Artificial Intelligence, School of Nursing, Professor of Nursing, Columbia University Irving Medical Center
- ✓ **Misinformation: A Threat to the Community's Health**
Dr Matthew Seeger, PhD. Professor Emeritus, Department of Communication
- ✓ **Using Social Media to Counter Misinformation**
Dr Amanda Sams, PhD, Assistant Professor, Integrated Marketing Communications, School of Journalism and New Media University of Mississippi

SECTION AWARDS

- ✓ Award for Excellence in Leadership: Lisa Saigh, RN, BSN
- ✓ Award for Excellence in Leadership: Christina Plummer, MSN, RN
- ✓ Award for Excellence in Practice: Vaundle Jones, RN, MSN
- ✓ Award for excellence in Education: Judi Fouladbakhsh, PhD, RN, MSN



BOOK DISCUSSIONS

Our quarterly virtual book discussions are enriching learning experiences. They are free, attendees do not need to be MPHA members, and one free Continuing Education unit is available for each discussion attendance. Complementary books are available; contact Lynn McDaniels, Section secretary, mcdanielsl@hotmail.com to request a book copy.



Future Book Discussions:

- 5-19-26 *How Minds Change: The Surprising Science of Belief, Opinion, and Persuasion*
- 8-18-26 *The Misinformation Age: How False Beliefs Spread*
- 11-17-26 *On Disinformation: and How to Fight for Truth and Protect Democracy*

In December 2025, several executive committee members published the article "**Fostering Dialogue, Learning, and Reflection: The Role of Book Discussions for Public Health Professionals**" in the December 2025 issue of the Michigan Journal of Public Health. It provides helpful inspiration insight into our book discussions ongoing success.

We eagerly look ahead to the remainder of 2026, anticipating continued impactful work in public health advocacy.

Oral Health Section

Michigan's Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment Program (KOHA)

Getting ready for kindergarten now includes a quick dental screening! A healthy mouth helps children to focus, eat well, sleep better, and be ready to learn. The Hearing and Vision Screening Program has been legislated since 1949 and has provided services to over 50 million children in Michigan since its inception. For the past few years, the Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment Program (KOHA) has focused on oral health for all children entering their first year of school. How did this come about?

Senator Sam Singh sponsored bill SB 280 in 2020. Then came COVID19 - the pandemic delayed some of the implementation of this bill. SB 280 also included a "sunset clause." However, it had bi-partisan support and was amended in October 2023. After passing in both the Senate and the House of Representatives in November 2023, the bill went to Governor Whitmer's desk. She signed PA 316 of 2023 in December for the 2024-25 school year. The law eliminated the sunset clause. KOHA includes passive consent, mirroring the Hearing and Vision Program.

Public Act 316 of 2023 is a win for Michigan children entering their first year of school. Why? Because cavities are common in children. According to the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, nearly one in five children under the age of 5 and nearly half of the children aged 6-11 in the U.S have experienced tooth decay.

<https://www.aapd.org/research/policy-center/childrens-health-data/>

The good news and the primary focus in the KOHA Program are to identify children who need to be seen by a dentist and refer them for care. Secondary purposes are to connect children and families to dental homes, provide basic oral health education at the time of screening, and raise awareness of the importance of oral health among children, families, and the community at large. It is quick and simple – a licensed dental professional will take a quick look inside the child's mouth and fill out a screening form. No treatment is completed and the screenings by your local health department (LHD) are free. The KOHA Program is convenient as the screenings are offered at preschools, school registration events, community events, and during school hours. Help is available if your child needs to see a dentist. LHD can help you find one. If the child doesn't have dental insurance, they may qualify for Michigan Healthy Kids Dental Program.

As we all experience the shortage of dental professionals across Michigan and the country, especially in rural areas, many private dental practices are not accepting State insurances - Healthy Kids Dental - making it very difficult for children to receive care. Many LHD employ registered dental hygienists as their Oral Health Coordinators (OHC), working across multiple districts. Currently, Michigan LHD have 12 OHC's working across the State. They recognize the importance of having private-practice providers on board, as well as the safety net-clinics. The OHC's act as boots on the ground, serving to bridge the gap. Education and networking are an integral part of their work plan.

"In many of our counties, we have only a few offices and clinics to refer the children", stated Dawn Marie Strehl, RDH, CDIPC, with Health Department of Northwest Michigan. "The dental community is still feeling the impact of the pandemic. Many dental offices and clinics are scheduling up to a year out and some are unable to take on new patients."



With the re-establishment of the Michigan Public Health Association Oral Health Section, the hope is to educate our partners across the State about the dental needs of children.

Please visit these websites for more information:

[Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment Program \(KOHA\)](#)

and

[Public Health Code \(Act 368 of 1978; 222.9316\) Dental Oral Assessment Program](#)



Michigan Public Health Association

CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

The *Michigan Journal of Public Health* will open for new manuscript submissions on March 15, 2026.

Michigan
Journal
of Public
Health



What you need to know:

- A **peer-reviewed** journal published by the Michigan Public Health Association.
- A new issue will be published in late 2026.

- **No submission or publication fees!**
- All articles are published open access.

- Original public health research and practice articles with a focus on Michigan are of interest.

All articles must follow the MJPH manuscript submission check list. Before submission, please use the checklist to prepare your manuscript. See journal website for more information:

<https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/mjph/>

Questions?

- Contact the editor Dr. Sarah Nechuta at:
nechutas@gvsu.edu

For submission policies and more information:

<https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/mjph/>

Public Policy and Legislative Committee: Making an Impact



The Public Policy and Legislation Committee has been busy advancing public health across Michigan! Our leadership team is fully in place, with a Chair, Co-Chair, and two At-Large representatives guiding our efforts.

The committee is also actively sharing timely resources and information with the public. Currently, two articles are featured on

the MPHA website: **“March is National Nutrition Month”** and **“Traumatic Brain Injury Awareness Month”**, offering practical insights and ways to engage with these important health topics.

On March 26, 2026, the committee hosted a highly engaging webinar, **“Making an Impact in Health Policy: Advocacy Strategies That Work,”** attended by 73 participants. The session explored a variety of advocacy approaches—from individual and community action to engaging with government officials—equipping attendees with practical tips to drive change in public health policy.

And this is just the beginning! The committee has more initiatives and events in the works, so stay tuned for updates and opportunities to get involved. Whether you’re a seasoned advocate or just starting to explore health policy, there are multiple ways to make your voice heard and contribute to healthier communities across Michigan.

Exciting News: NEW MPHA Website Coming Soon!

Get ready for a fresh look and a host of new features! Our website is getting a makeover—same URL, mipha.org, but with a more modern design, easier navigation, and more ways to stay connected with Michigan public health news, events, and resources.

Whether you’re looking for the latest updates from MPHA, ways to get involved, or tools to support your public health work, the new site will make it easier than ever to access what you need—and help us get the word out about public health across the state. Stay tuned for the launch and explore all the ways the new website can help you engage with Michigan’s public health community!



April's Highlight Article

Public Health Is Everywhere: Why It Matters Now More Than Ever

Each April, communities across the country recognize **National Public Health Week (NPHW)**—a time to celebrate the work of public health professionals and highlight the programs, partnerships, and policies that protect and improve community health. Organized by the American Public Health Association, National Public Health Week reminds us that public health extends far beyond times of crisis; it represents the ongoing work of building systems that support healthier lives every day.¹

The **2026 theme, “Ready. Set. Action!”**, calls on public health professionals, organizations, and communities to move beyond awareness and toward meaningful action.¹ For Michigan’s public health community, this message resonates strongly. Across the state, professionals are addressing complex challenges—from chronic disease and behavioral health to environmental health, oral health access, and emerging infectious diseases. Data from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services continue to guide this work by tracking key indicators such as chronic disease trends, maternal and child health outcomes, and communicable disease patterns across the state.² Together, these efforts demonstrate that public health is not confined to a single profession or agency. Instead, it is a coordinated effort involving local health departments, healthcare providers, educators, researchers, policymakers, and community organizations working toward the shared goal of healthier communities.

Using Data and Evidence to Combat Misinformation

One of the most pressing challenges facing public health today is the rapid spread of misinformation. Reliable data and credible information remain foundational to sound public health decision-making.³ Public health professionals play a critical role in ensuring that communities have access to accurate, evidence-based health information and in translating complex scientific findings into messages that are clear, understandable, and actionable.

Across Michigan, surveillance systems and population health data help professionals identify emerging health concerns and communicate risks effectively. By strengthening transparency and trust, public health professionals can help communities navigate an increasingly complex information environment.

Prevention in Action and Community-Based Care

While much attention is often focused on responding to health crises, the true power of public health lies in prevention. Preventive programs—such as vaccination initiatives, chronic disease prevention efforts, environmental health protections, and community-based health interventions—reduce illness, improve quality of life, and help lower healthcare costs across populations.⁴

In Michigan, these prevention strategies are often most effective when they are rooted in community partnerships. Local health departments, healthcare organizations, nonprofit groups, and community leaders collaborate to design programs that reflect the unique needs and priorities of the communities they serve. Through these partnerships, prevention becomes not just a strategy, but a shared responsibility.

Strengthening Public Health Through Oral Health

Another critical, though sometimes overlooked, component of public health is oral health. Dental caries and periodontal disease remain among the most common chronic conditions affecting both children and adults worldwide.⁵ Public health strategies—including community water fluoridation, preventive dental services, and school-based oral health programs—play an important role in improving oral health outcomes and reducing disparities in access to care.

April's Highlight Article, (Cont.)

Michigan communities continue to recognize the importance of integrating oral health into broader public health initiatives, reinforcing the understanding that oral health is inseparable from overall health and well-being.

[Building Healthier Communities Through Education](#)

A strong public health system also depends on a well-prepared workforce. Education and workforce development help ensure that the next generation of public health professionals is equipped to address emerging health challenges and adapt to an evolving health landscape.⁶

Michigan's universities, colleges, and training programs play a vital role in preparing students and professionals with the knowledge and skills needed to support evidence-based practice, interdisciplinary collaboration, and innovative approaches to community health.

[Government Partners in Public Health](#)

Equally important to these efforts are the partnerships between public health professionals and government agencies at the local, state, and federal levels. These agencies provide leadership in disease surveillance, emergency preparedness, health promotion, and policy development.⁷ Through coordinated efforts, government partners help ensure that public health programs are responsive, evidence-based, and capable of addressing emerging challenges.

Tools such as the County Health Rankings provide valuable insights into the factors that influence health across Michigan communities. These data highlight how health behaviors, access to care, socioeconomic conditions, and environmental factors shape health outcomes across the state.⁸ Such information helps guide policymakers, public health leaders, and community organizations as they work to improve population health.

[Looking Toward the Future of Public Health](#)

As the field continues to evolve, the future of public health will depend on continued innovation, collaboration, and investment in infrastructure and workforce development. Advances in data science, technology, interdisciplinary partnerships, and community engagement are reshaping how public health professionals understand and address health challenges.⁹

Michigan's public health community is well positioned to lead these efforts. By building on strong partnerships and embracing new approaches to prevention and population health, public health professionals across the state are helping shape a healthier future for Michigan residents.

[Turning "Ready. Set. Action!" into Practice](#)

National Public Health Week is not only a time for reflection—it is also an opportunity for action. Public health professionals across Michigan can help advance the theme of **"Ready. Set. Action!"** in meaningful ways throughout the month by:

- Promoting accurate health information through community outreach, presentations, and digital engagement.
- Engaging policymakers and community leaders to advocate for policies that support prevention and health equity.
- Supporting community-based initiatives that address local health priorities.
- Mentoring students and early-career professionals to strengthen the future public health workforce.
- Sharing success stories and innovative programs that demonstrate the impact of public health across Michigan.

Voices of PH Series: Community-Led Change Across Michigan



Voices of Public Health aims to inspire, inform, and connect communities statewide through a new series, *Community-Led Change Across Michigan*. We're excited to launch this series celebrating the people, organizations, and partnerships driving public health across our state. Each installment will highlight local challenges, successes, and innovative solutions—giving a platform to stories that too often go untold. As the series continues, we'll feature diverse communities from across Michigan, showcasing how grassroots efforts, meaningful partnerships, and everyday actions are shaping the health of our state. Stay tuned and join us in celebrating the individuals and communities making public health real in Michigan—one community at a time.

FLINT RAISES THE BAR...

Our first spotlight is in Flint—a community that has faced unique public health challenges but continues to demonstrate remarkable resilience, creativity, and collaboration. This installment is written by Ella Greene-Moton, a longtime champion of community-led public health whose work spans local, state, and national arenas. Ella brings decades of experience in advocacy, policy, and community-based public health initiatives, and continues to engage with the Michigan Public Health Association and the Great Lakes Public Health Coalition and served as President of the American Public Health Association.

In this piece, Ella highlights current, on-the-groundwork emerging from partnerships between the local community and Michigan State University.



I am a proud member of the Flint, Michigan “Northside” community... joining this resilient circle of hard working dedicated people... who have come from different parts of the country and in some cases, different parts of the world...different cultures, different ethnicities, different faiths or spiritual callings, and even different educational backgrounds and aspirations, but who have brought those lived experiences ...yielding a valuable community facing and community building expertise.

I have found the Flint community to be a place where amazing things happen in so many areas of our existence but especially in the realm of public health...Some of those spaces are where life changing ideas were born... where scholastic, artistic, and athletic stars were discovered. I believe Flint’s uniqueness is embedded in the forward thinking, out of the box ways of knowing and being as well as how we interact with each other and how we have learned to celebrate and build on those past accomplishments.

I want to take a moment to invite you to celebrate with me as I highlight and recognize some of the phenomenal work that has been done in the city of Flint ...but particularly here at the Charles Stewart Mott Department of Public Health (CSMDPH), College of Human Medicine (CHM) at Michigan State University (MSU).

Community-Led Change Across Michigan (Cont.)

Over the years, I have witnessed a shift from the very strong authentic relationship-oriented partnerships and collaborations between local community partners and their individual academic partners to this very intentional and empowering space where the partnerships and collaborations are now taking place at the institutional level are not indicative of the timeline of an individual study or program. CSMDPH in Flint, is expanding the concept of community engagement beyond the scope of a research cycle, into other key areas.

In 2011 MSU CHM leadership met with Flint area leaders to co-create and co-design the CSMDPH. Community members set the research and health priorities for the medical school and served on search committees to recruit gifted and talented faculty to Flint. In 2025, the Community Co-Governance Council (C3) was created and adopted by the CSMDPH. The C3 was incorporated in the department's bylaws and institutionalized as an official committee of the department. The C3 provides a platform to have community partners represented at various decision-making tables within the department. Thus, acknowledging that the community is not an external entity, and confirming that the community voice and perspective is included in the internal structure of the department.

This is groundbreaking and MSU CHM is the first University to engage community in this fashion. Not as tokens but as co-collaborators, co-governors, and co-creators. The C3 has also co-created and established a Community-Academic Co-Governance Model that serves as a conceptual framework for this innovative work. Secondly, CSMDPH has established a Social Determinants of Health Solutions Lab (SDOH-SL), an interdisciplinary group of community members whose sole purpose is to develop a SDOH agenda for Flint and Genesee County, MI. Understanding the role that the SDOH play in overall health and life expectancy according to the County Health Rankings Model, we host monthly meetings, and annual summits to de-silo system leaders, engage community residents, and co-develop solutions steeped in the SDOH framework. The SDOH-SL is a working group of the Department of Public Health's (DPH) Community Engagement Group.

Please visit the Charles Stewart Mott Department of Public Health (CSMDPH), College of Human Medicine (CHM) at Michigan State University's (MSU) website to read more about the names and faces responsible for some of this trailblazing work and advancements in public health...

From the Editor: Raising the Bar for Community-Led Change

What we see unfolding in Flint is more than community engagement—it is a redefinition of it. This work reflects a shift from short-term, project-based partnerships to a model where community members are co-creators, co-governors, and essential partners in shaping public health systems. Through structures like the Community Co-Governance Council (C3) and the Social Determinants of Health Solutions Lab, Flint is demonstrating what it means to embed community voice into decision-making—not as an external input, but as part of the institutional fabric. This is shared power in practice.

As we launch *Community-Led Change Across Michigan*, this work sets a clear benchmark. It challenges us to think differently: Are we building lasting relationships? Are communities shaping priorities? Are we willing to share decision-making in meaningful ways?

Flint reminds us that community-led change is not about inviting people to the table—it is about redesigning the table itself.

As this series continues, we will highlight communities across Michigan that are not only addressing public health challenges but also reshaping how the work gets done. Please contact mditmyer@svsu.edu if you would like to highlight your story in our next newsletter.

Community Events & Professional Development

2026 Michigan Epidemiology Conference

Date: April 17, 2026

Location: Grand Valley State University

[Click here to register for this event](#)



Michigan Public Health Association Annual Meeting & Summit

Meeting Date: June 25, 2026, 11:3AM to 5:00PM

Location: Lansing Michigan

SAVE THE DATE

ADDITIONAL EVENTS OF INTEREST

29th Annual Michigan Rural Health Conference

Dates: on April 23, 2026 - April 24, 2026

Location: Soaring Eagle Resort & Casino in Mt. Pleasant, MI

[Click here to register for this event](#)

2026 Michigan Association of School Nurses Annual Conference

Meeting Dates: Thursday, May 7, 2026 - Friday, May 8, 2026

Location: DoubleTree by Hilton, Port Huron, MI

[Click here to register for this event](#)

APHA Policy Action Institute

Meeting Dates: June 9-10 (with optional Hill Day June 11)

Location: Arlington, VA

SAVE THE DATE

40th Annual Michigan Premier Public Health Conference

Meeting Dates: Wednesday, October 7, 2026 - Friday, October 9, 2026

Location: Blue Water Convention Center, Port Huron, Michigan

SAVE THE DATE

2026 APHA Annual Meeting & Expo

Meeting Dates: October 31, 2026 to November 4, 2026

Location: San Antonio, Texas

SAVE THE DATE – Registration opens June 1, 2026



How to Get Involved with MPHA?

The Michigan Public Health Association welcomes professionals, students, and community partners who are interested in advancing public health across our state. There are many ways to get involved and contribute to the work of strengthening public health in Michigan. Members can participate by **joining one of MPHA's professional sections**, attending conferences and educational events, contributing to policy and advocacy efforts, or volunteering on committees and working groups that support the association's initiatives. MPHA also provides opportunities for students and early-career professionals to engage with experienced leaders in the field and build valuable professional networks.

Another important way to get involved is by **sharing your work and expertise**. Members can present at conferences, contribute to the Michigan Journal of Public Health, participate in webinars, and collaborate on initiatives that promote evidence-based public health practice across the state. Public health thrives through collaboration, and MPHA serves as a platform for bringing together professionals from across disciplines to share knowledge, strengthen partnerships, and elevate the voice of public health in Michigan.

To learn more about membership, upcoming events, and opportunities to participate, visit the [MPHA website](#) and stay connected with us throughout the year.

Closing Message & Quote

As we reflect on the work taking place across Michigan, I am continually reminded that public health is built on dedication, collaboration, and a shared commitment to improving lives. Every day, professionals across our state, whether working in local health departments, hospitals, universities, community organizations, or state agencies, are making meaningful contributions that strengthen the health and well-being of our communities. Public health often works quietly behind the scenes, yet its impact is seen everywhere: in healthier families, stronger communities, and improved opportunities for people to live longer and healthier lives. The work being done across Michigan demonstrates the power of prevention, the importance of partnerships, and the critical role that a strong public health workforce plays in protecting and promoting health.

As we recognize National Public Health Week and the many initiatives highlighted throughout this issue, it is worth taking a moment to acknowledge the individuals and organizations who continue to move this work forward. Their commitment reflects the very foundation of public health—working together to create healthier communities for all. I remain incredibly proud of the work happening across our state and grateful for the dedication of MPHA members and partners who continue to lead, innovate, and advocate for public health. Together, we are helping to build a stronger and healthier future for Michigan.



Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881)

Selected Quote

“The health of the people is really the foundation upon which all their happiness and all their powers as a state depend.”

— Benjamin Disraeli

Benjamin Disraeli (1804–1881) was a British statesman, novelist, and one of the most influential political leaders of the 19th century. He served twice as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. Disraeli was known for his strong belief that governments have a responsibility to improve the well-being of their citizens. During a time of rapid industrialization and social change in Britain, he argued that the strength of a nation depended not only on its economy or military power but on the health, stability, and welfare of its people.