

Health Equity in Erie County



**2025 Annual Report
Office of Health Equity
Erie County Department of Health**

Health Equity in Erie County

**ERIE COUNTY, NEW YORK
OFFICE OF HEALTH EQUITY
ANNUAL REPORT
2025**



**Erie County
Department of
Health**



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD.....	2
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS & AUTHORS.....	8
INTRODUCTION.....	17
ECOHE UPDATES & ACTIONS.....	19
Community Engagement.....	19
Emergency Preparedness.....	26
Epidemiology	30
Grants.....	32
Other Technical Assistance	34
Communications & Publications.....	36
Mental Health First Aid (MHFA).....	42
Mindfulness	48
Children and Youth With Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN).....	50
Breastfeeding, Chestfeeding, and Lactation Friendly Erie County	56
Brain Health.....	59
Article 6 Performance Incentive Program	62
Find Fresh Erie County	64
Food Policy Council of Buffalo & Erie County.....	64
Live Well Erie Implementation Team.....	67
NEXT STEPS & RECOMMENDATIONS.....	69
REFERENCES	75
APPENDICES	77
Appendix A: Accessibility Tables.....	79
Appendix B: Erie County Health Equity Act of 2021.....	87
Appendix C: Coalition, Committee, Workgroup, and Task Force list	95
Appendix D: Language Access Tools.....	99

FOREWORD

I am honored to present the 2025 Annual Report of the Erie County Office of Health Equity (ECOHE).

In 2021, the Erie County Health Equity Act of 2021 became a law, formally establishing this Office within the Erie County Department of Health. The law was clear in both its urgency and its vision: Erie County must confront preventable differences in health outcomes that disproportionately impact disadvantaged and marginalized communities, and we must do so in partnership with those communities. The Act requires that we analyze disparities, pilot solutions, educate the public, and deliver an annual report outlining our achievements, populations served, and goals for the year ahead using disaggregated data to illuminate inequities by race, zip code, and other identifiers.

Moving forward, our annual report will adhere strictly to the requirements as defined by law. Epidemiological analyses, data briefs, and all other reports and publications will be published as standalone documents. This approach honors both transparency and accountability while making our work more accessible to and usable by the public and our community partners.

Shifting systems is never simple. The development of the Office's 2024 annual report reflected a steep and necessary learning curve. A significant portion of our effort focused on understanding and meeting ADA compliance standards so that our work is accessible to all Erie County residents. By design, government systems are structured for stability and compliance. They are not always built for innovation. Equity work, however, requires innovation. It challenges long-standing processes, demands new partnerships, and calls for thoughtful disruption and evolution. Change in government can be slow, but it is possible, and we are committed to doing it responsibly and sustainably.

The landscape of equity itself continues to evolve. Just like people, our work is ever changing. We face new challenges. We learn. We adapt. We listen. We progress. Equity is not a static destination; it is a dynamic, ongoing practice that requires a commitment to continuous improvement and shared responsibility.

It is also important to be clear: equity is not the same as DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion). Equity is the outcome we seek. In the words of community leader LaVonne Ansari, PhD, DEI is a tool that can be used in pursuit of that outcome, a strategy that can help institutions examine representation, reduce bias, and improve belonging.

As the American Public Health Association affirms, at its core, public health is about making the healthiest choices the easiest choices. When safe housing, nutritious food, health care, transportation, and economic stability are accessible, health improves. When barriers exist, health suffers. Our charge under the law is to identify those barriers and work collaboratively to remove them.

We do not do this work alone. Equity is not the responsibility of one office or one community. It is a collective commitment. Our office works in collaboration with community organizations and community leaders; we work in cross-sector partnerships and coalitions and with individual Erie County residents. Whether you have been working to address the social determinants of health for decades or are just entering the movement, we cannot achieve health equity without you. My request to you is this: do your part. If we each do our part in our homes, workplaces, schools, congregations, and agencies, we will get there.

I share this not only as Director of the Office of Health Equity, but as someone raised in Buffalo's Hamlin Park and Central Park communities. I know firsthand what it means to grow up in a neighborhood too often defined by its challenges rather than its strengths. Today, I also recognize the privilege I carry—my education, my homeownership, my professional title, even my gender. Privilege can look like a degree that opens doors, financial stability that creates options, English proficiency that helps you navigate systems with ease, or networks that amplify your voice. I use my privilege not only to speak on behalf of my community, but in solidarity with all communities whose voices are too often marginalized. No matter who you are, each of us has the ability to leverage our privilege to advance health equity. Privilege is not something to be denied or weaponized; it is something to be leveraged for collective good.

At the same time, growth requires grace. Many people are entering this work for the first time. This means learning new language, new frameworks, and new histories. Accountability matters—but so does invitation. Our work will be stronger when more of us see ourselves as part of the solution.

Everything in this report, from the acknowledgements to the appendices, is intended for use by more than just the ECOHE or Erie County government. This report is meant to serve as a resource, a reference, and a tool for community members and organizations across Erie County. We encourage you to use it, cite it, challenge it, build upon it, and make it your own. Equity is advanced not by ownership of ideas, but by shared action.

The vision articulated in the Health Equity Act remains our guiding light: that every resident of Erie County has the opportunity to attain their full health potential and that no one is disadvantaged in achieving that potential because of social position or any other socially defined circumstance. That vision is ambitious. It is also achievable—if we remain honest about where we are, firm in our commitments, and uplifting in our belief that better is possible.

Thank you for walking this journey with us.

With respect and resolve,



Kelly Marie Wofford

Director
Erie County Office of Health Equity

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Existing data strongly indicate that inequities in health experiences and health outcomes occur among Erie County residents according to demographic factors. The root causes for these differences in experiences and outcomes are historical, systemic, and largely ongoing. Addressing these inequities requires intentional and tailored efforts and solutions.

The Erie County Office of Health Equity (ECOHE) was established by the Erie County Health Equity Act of 2021^[1]. The ECOHE is a division of the Erie County Department of Health. The vision of the ECOHE is for all disadvantaged, marginalized, and diverse populations in Erie County to achieve maximum health and wellness.

Health disparities and inequities in Erie County prompted the creation of the ECOHE and continue to provide evidence of the continued need for the Office. The community impacts of recent events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the racially motivated mass shooting at Tops Market on May 14, 2022, and the December 2022 blizzard have highlighted the ways in which racism and the social determinants of health influence our safety and well-being.

A recent *Buffalo Business First* article analyzed the stability of the 50 most populated ZIP codes in the eight counties of Western New York.^[2] Their instability index included rates of poverty, school dropouts, and housing vacancies, recognizing economic stability, neighborhood and built environment, and education as key social determinants of health (SDOH). *Buffalo Business First* found that Erie County has 13 of the 25 most unstable neighborhoods in Western New York and named Buffalo's 14201 neighborhood as the most unstable ZIP code in the region.

Achieving health equity means ensuring that who we are or where we live does not limit our ability to live a life of maximum health and wellness. The landscape of equity is constantly evolving as we face new challenges, learn, grow, and progress. Just like people, the work of the ECOHE is ever-changing. As factors that influence our health continue to change and shift on all levels, from national to local, the ECOHE will continue to work towards health equity for all Erie County residents.

Under the Erie County Health Equity Act of 2021, the ECOHE is tasked with reporting annually on the programs and services provided by the Office to advance health equity, data on populations served, and goals for the upcoming year. This report provides an overview of the ECOHE's programs and actions in 2025 as well as next steps and recommendations for 2026 and beyond.

ECOHE PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Focus Group Report

Health Equity in Erie County: 2023 Focus Group Report was published in early 2025. The report presents an analysis and quotes from the focus groups' discussion on health and well-being in Erie County within the context of the social determinants of health. The objective was to learn about health challenges and assets from the perspectives of specific demographic communities—for example, Black Fathers and Rural Older Adults. In August 2025, the ECOHE presented results from the focus groups in a webinar. This webinar was open to the community. The report and the presentation of the findings are available by visiting <https://www3.erie.gov/health/health-equity-focus-group-report>.

Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan

In 2025, the ECOHE's research goals aligned with requirements for the 2025-2030 Community Health Assessment (CHA) and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). New York State requires all counties to complete a CHA-CHIP every six years. For the 2025-2030 cycle, the ECOHE lead the effort for Erie County and collaborated with the local hospital systems. With these partners, the ECOHE conducted community research to explore which community factors that influence health and health conditions residents feel should be prioritized. This research included a community survey; a health care provider survey; a series of focus groups; a series of health care provider interviews; and a series of one-on-one interviews with participants (parents) in the Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN) Program within the ECOHE. To view the 2025-2030 Community Health Assessment (CHA) and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), visit <https://www.erie.gov/CHA>.

Mental Health First Aid

In 2025, the ECOHE continued facilitating Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) trainings throughout Erie County as a part of the Office's efforts to address health disparities and service gaps. MHFA trainings increase the number of community members that are equipped to identify and respond to someone experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge. These trainings are designed to complement broader efforts to increase the number of qualified local mental health professionals who are crucially needed to address mental health in Erie County. The ECOHE continued to offer both Adult MHFA classes (for adults interacting with other adults) and Youth MHFA classes (for adults interacting with youth ages 12-18) in 2025, training approximately 667 community members. For more information about MHFA or to schedule a training, visit <https://www.erie.gov/MHFA>.

Equitable Food Systems Initiative

In 2025, the ECOHE and the Food Policy Council of Buffalo & Erie County (FPC) implemented a \$1.2 million dollar New York Food for New York Families (NYFNFF) grant from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. This funding allowed the ECOHE and FPC to bring fresh, locally produced food products to daycares across Erie County. The FPC and ECOHE worked with FreshFix, a subcontracted local produce packaging and delivery service on this initiative. The Equitable Food Systems Initiative provided free bags of locally produced fresh food items and weekly educational emails with relevant recipes, producer information, and information about preparation, storage, and use of each bag's contents to Erie County childcare facilities that serve no income, low income, and ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) communities. Through this project, the ECOHE and FPC provided over 400 families with free food bags weekly for over 50 weeks. For more information about the Equitable Food Systems Initiative, visit <https://www3.erie.gov/fpc/press/erie-county-designs-innovative-farm-families-project-families-young-children>.

Next Steps

Next steps for the ECOHE include the rollout of Year 1 of the Health to Your Home Pilot Program in 2026. The Health to Your Home Pilot Program will provide two cohorts of 200 Erie County residents with training on a variety of health topics as well as home medical testing supplies to be shared with up to 4 people in their social networks who do not currently engage with or underutilize the health care system. Educational content and materials will be distributed utilizing community-based organizations as community hubs.

Other next steps include the launch of the Health Equity Professionals Training Program. The Health Equity Professionals Training Program is a quarterly, no-cost professional development initiative designed to support businesses and organizations seeking to embed a health equity focus into the fabric of their operations, policies, and service delivery models. The Health Equity Professionals Training Program will advance these objectives by equipping leaders and practitioners with practical tools to operationalize equity within their own institutions.

The ECOHE will continue to serve as a resource to organizations and individuals in the community that are striving to reduce health disparities and increase health equity in Erie County. The ECOHE brings its subject matter expertise in data collection, analysis, and reporting as well as grant writing and grants management assistance to those who would like support in these areas in order to further their health equity work. The ECOHE will continue to provide upstream support including engagement, education, and resources to the Erie County community. Future ECOHE reports will analyze new data collected by the ECOHE team as well as report on findings of analysis of public (federal, state, county, and city) and private data sources.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS & AUTHORS

THIS IS A PUBLICATION OF THE

ERIE COUNTY OFFICE OF HEALTH EQUITY

The Erie County Office of Health Equity's vision is for everyone in Erie County to achieve maximum health and wellness. The Office of Health Equity is located within the Erie County Department of Health.

This report is open for public use. You may use any image, data table, or information in this report. We ask that you reference and cite any use of this report.

We recommend the following citation:

Erie County Department of Health Office of Health Equity. (2026). *Health Equity in Erie County: 2025 Annual Report*.

ERIE COUNTY LEADERSHIP



Mark C. Poloncarz, Erie County Executive

**Gale R. Burstein, MD, MPH (She/Her)
Commissioner of Health**



ERIE COUNTY OFFICE OF HEALTH EQUITY STAFF



**Kelly Marie Wofford, MS (She/Her)
Director - Office of Health Equity**

Name and Title
Margaret Barbalato (She/Her) – Secretarial Typist
Sylvia Blackwell (She/Her) – Public Health Educator
Suzanne Canfield (She/Her) – Project Coordinator
Caitlyn Critharis (She/Her) – Administrative Assistant
Wafa El Solh (She/Her) – Public Health Educator
Mel LeMay (They/Them) – Grant Specialist
Lara Nkurunungi (She/Her) – Epidemiologist
Joel Nicholas (He/Him) – Outreach Aide
Rachel Orton (She/They) – Outreach Aide
Evanna Ramos (She/Her) - Project Coordinator
Danielle Rovillo (She/Her) - Project Coordinator
Betsy Vazquez-Aradio (She/Her) - Public Health Educator
Michael Wiese (He/Him) - Epidemiologist

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Erie County Office of Health Equity would like to begin this report by acknowledging that we, as Erie County residents, are on the land of Indigenous peoples. Traditionally, these lands were home to many nations, including the Neutral, Erie, Wenro, Huron, and other peoples. Today, these lands are still regarded as the traditional homelands of the Seneca and other Haudenosaunee peoples. We respect the treaty rights of the Six Nations—the Seneca, Mohawk, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, and Tuscarora—and the obligation of the United States and New York governments and American society to adhere to them.

We would like to honor the legacy of the many ancestors and elders who made this land their home and infused it with their spirit for thousands of years. We also honor the Original Peoples who remain on the ancestral homelands of Turtle Island and who have survived centuries of colonialism, genocide, and land theft. We honor those whose lives have been impacted by historical and intergenerational trauma across lifespans and generations, including land dispossession, forced relocation, and forced assimilation through boarding schools like the Thomas Indian School, which was located on the Cattaraugus Territory in Erie County. Finally, we honor those who are not here, but who might have been, were it not for this history of violence.

With hearts and minds focused on healing and truth, we remember the powerful example of democracy and federalism set by the Haudenosaunee, embodied in the Great Law of Peace. Through this inspiration, we commit ourselves to advocate for inclusion and acknowledge and address past atrocities. May we all aspire to a world of reconciliation, guided by the example of the Haudenosaunee themselves, so that our weapons of war are buried forever and mutual respect and equality prevail among all peoples and nations.

Thank you to Samantha Nephew for assistance with this acknowledgement.

The above acknowledgement not only reflects the beliefs of the Erie County Office of Health Equity, it is also meant to be read and heard in all settings and to be a tool that can be adapted and used by Erie County groups, organizations, and residents.

ENSLAVEMENT & LABOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Erie County Office of Health Equity (ECOHE) respectfully acknowledges our debt as a society to the people past and present whose labor was and continues to be stolen through unjust practices, including the exploited labor of incarcerated people. We acknowledge our debt to the enslaved people, primarily of African descent, whose labor and suffering built and grew the economy and infrastructure of a state that did not abolish the practice of enslavement until July 4, 1827.^[3] While not a Southern state, New York had the largest population of enslaved people of any Northern state and was second to last in abolishing the practice.^[4]

Erie County, established in 1821, became an integral part of the journey to freedom for enslaved Black people via the Underground Railroad. The homes, businesses, and land of abolitionists were used to assist the enslaved making their way to Canada to live as free people. Landmarks such as Freedom Park are historical hallmarks of the Underground Railroad^[5]. The very land on which the Edward A. Rath Building is built was the former home of abolitionist and attorney George W. Jonson.^[5]

Ramifications from the practice of enslavement in our country are still present today, visible in the systemic racism perpetuated in our institutions, in the segregation of our residents, the exploited labor of incarcerated people, and in many of the inequities in the social determinants of health and health disparities experienced by their descendants. The spirit of freedom embodied by our ancestors, enslaved and free, persists as well, visible in our social justice movements, increased awareness of historical and ongoing inequities, and advocacy for change. The ECOHE will embrace and embody this same spirit of freedom to help eradicate the systemic racism, poverty, and oppression plaguing so many of our Erie County communities.

The above acknowledgement not only reflects the beliefs of the Erie County Office of Health Equity, it is also meant to be read and heard in all settings and to be a tool that can be adapted and used by Erie County groups, organizations, and residents.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION & ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Erie County Office of Health Equity (ECOHE) would like to take this time and space to recognize and acknowledge the often overlooked and forgotten work of community in the fight for equity and justice. Everyday community members, community activists, and organizations have been engaging in equity and justice work long before the term became commonplace. Most of the staff of the ECOHE have their roots in community work and bring that framework to this government setting.

Governments, corporations, organizations, and people in positions of power have a history of erasure, historical revision, and appropriation of the work of others as their own innovation, rather than naming and uplifting and adopting community-grown solutions. We must be purposeful in acknowledging and crediting frameworks and foundations, and intentional in acknowledging the roots upon which we build and grow.

Following in the footsteps of cultures documenting their journeys through storytelling and oral history passed through the generations, we seek to keep the work of those that came before us alive. We are the descendants of people that may never be named or credited for their contributions, yet the work we do is imbedded in our DNA, an intergenerational wealth of knowledge beyond measure.

To name a few community organizations and leaders in this space would be to miss the multitude. There are so many contributors to this work, most of whom have no title or office. The progress our Erie County community has made is rooted in the efforts and accomplishments of countless individuals and community organizations.

The above acknowledgement not only reflects the beliefs of the Erie County Office of Health Equity, it is also meant to be read and heard in all settings and to be a tool that can be adapted and used by Erie County groups, organizations, and residents.

INTRODUCTION

The Erie County Office of Health Equity (ECOHE) was established in compliance with the Erie County Health Equity Act of 2021.^[4] The Act instructs the ECOHE to publish an annual report of the ECOHE's achievements, including but not limited to programs and services provided to advance health equity, disaggregated data on populations served and outcomes achieved, and the ECOHE's goals for the upcoming year. For more information on the Erie County Health Equity Act of 2021, see Appendix B.

The vision of the ECOHE is for all disadvantaged, marginalized, and diverse populations in Erie County to achieve maximum health and wellness. Existing data strongly indicate that inequities in health experiences and health outcomes occur among Erie County residents according to demographic factors. The root causes for these differences are historical, systemic, and largely ongoing. As a result, addressing these inequities requires intentional and tailored efforts and solutions.

The ECOHE's mission is to evaluate a wide variety of specific health outcomes among diverse populations to fully understand the depth and scope of health disparities in Erie County and to partner with community members, health care providers, faith and philanthropic leaders, and organizations to enact programs that help disadvantaged, marginalized and diverse populations in Erie County achieve maximum health and wellness.

The ECOHE is advised by the Erie County Health Equity Advisory Board and operates within the Live Well Erie framework. Live Well Erie is a plan to help all Erie County residents achieve their full potential organized around the idea that Erie County will leave no one behind.^[6] To do this, Live Well Erie focuses on meaningful improvements in the social determinants of health (SDOH) for three populations: children, working families, and older adults. Live Well is framed around 5 guiding principles:

1. A clear focus on the social determinants of health;
2. An integration of the Racial Equity Impact Analysis;
3. An invitation for innovative thinking;
4. An opportunity for the modernization of service delivery; and
5. An expectation of enhanced partnership and collaboration.

Health disparities and inequities in our community both prompted the creation of the ECOHE and provided evidence of the continued need for the office. It was as a result of the stark disparities in the impact of COVID-19 that the Erie County Health Equity Act of 2021 was written into law, founding the ECOHE. Recent tragedies that have befallen our community—like the racially motivated mass shooting at Tops Market on May 14, 2022, and the December 2022 blizzard—highlighted the ways in which racism and the social

determinants of health influence our safety and well-being. A 2024 *Buffalo Business First* article analyzed the stability of the 50 most populated ZIP codes in the eight counties of Western New York.^[2] Their instability index included rates of poverty, school dropouts, and housing vacancies, recognizing economic stability, neighborhood and built environment, and education as key social determinants of health (SDOH). *Buffalo Business First* found that Erie County has 13 of the 25 most unstable neighborhoods in Western New York and named Buffalo's 14201 neighborhood as the most unstable ZIP code in the region.

In 2025, the ECOHE moved to a more upstream approach, shifting the Office's community engagement focus from individuals to organizations. Erie County has an abundance of organizations that are rooted in the community and that are experts in the work that is needed to help achieve health equity. By centering engagement and collaboration with organizations in our work, the ECOHE strives to increase community capacity for health equity across Erie County.

2025 also marks a pivot in the structure and content of the ECOHE's reports. Moving forward, the ECOHE annual reports will be limited in scope to the content outlined in the Erie County Health Equity Act of 2021. Each annual report will be "a report of [the EC]OHE's achievements, including but not limited to programs and services provided to advance health equity, data on populations served via [the EC]OHE's outreach, and the Office's goals for the upcoming year," and will include disaggregated data and outcomes achieved in the context of race and ZIP code as stipulated by the law.^[1] Additionally, originally the Erie County Health Equity Act of 2021 charged the ECOHE with developing a specific health disparities report to supplement ECDOH's Community Health Assessment (CHA) and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) for each CHA/CHIP cycle. However, the NYS requirements for the content of the CHA/CHIP have changed to include an increased, integrated focus on health equity, and the New York State Prevention Agenda and CHA priorities are now based on the social determinants of health. Additionally, the ECOHE now co-authors the CHA/CHIP along with local hospital partners. As a result, the entirety of each Erie County CHA/CHIP report will serve as the ECOHE's disparities report.

Achieving health equity means ensuring that who we are or where we live does not limit our ability to live a life of maximum health and wellness. The landscape of equity is constantly evolving as we face new challenges, learn, grow, and progress. Just like people, the work of the ECOHE is ever-changing. As factors that influence our health continue to change and shift on all levels, from national to local, the ECOHE will continue to work towards health equity for all Erie County residents.

Within this report are summaries of all ECOHE programs and focus areas and a discussion of recommendations, next steps, and future priorities of the ECOHE.

ECOHE UPDATES & ACTIONS

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement is a key component of the ECOHE's work to address health disparities faced by minority, marginalized, and underserved populations in Erie County. Community engagement helps the ECOHE increase awareness of health equity topics, reduce stigma around health issues, and provide community education. The ECOHE's community engagement efforts also create opportunities for community involvement and feedback and strengthen community connections.

Community engagement has helped the ECOHE identify specific challenges faced by Erie County residents, including economic, social, and cultural barriers to care. By working closely with residents, community leaders, and organizations, the ECOHE is better able to identify and make recommendations to address these challenges and ensure support reaches those who need it most.

In 2025, the ECOHE participated in 209 community events. The figures below show community events by ZIP code and region.

Figure 1: Number of Community Events by ZIP Code

Event ZIP	Number of Events
14001	3
14004	3
14006	1
14033	1
14043	2
14052	5
14070	1
14075	2
14086	1
14127	1
14150	1
14201	10
14202	12
14203	16
14204	10
14206	4

Event ZIP	Number of Events
14207	10
14208	17
14209	4
14210	4
14211	16
14212	5
14213	13
14214	15
14215	22
14216	4
14218	3
14220	1
14221	2
14222	3
14224	3
14225	5
14226	4
14228	3
14607	1
78205	1

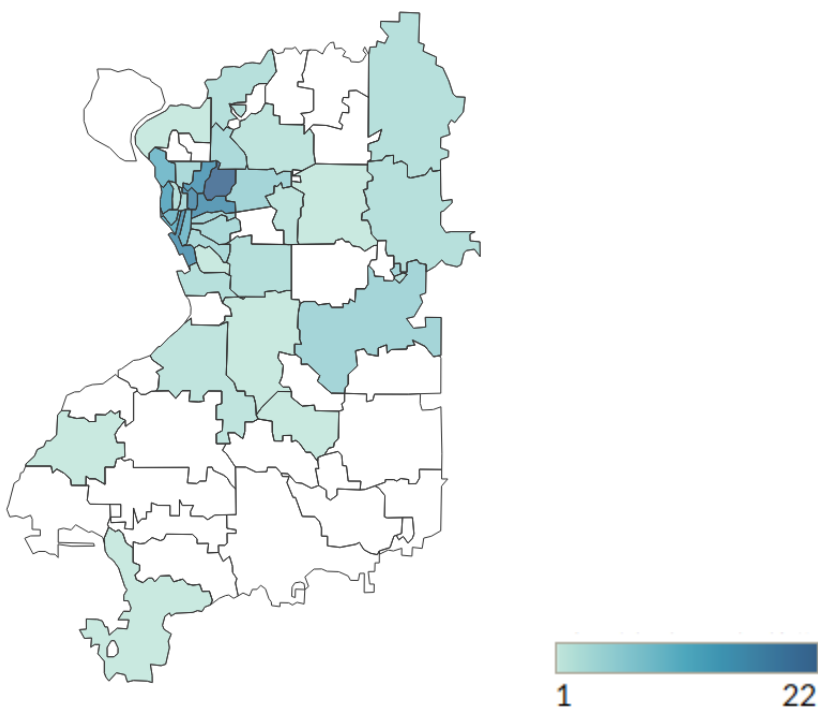
Figure 2: Number of Community Events by Region (Urban, Suburban, or Rural)

	Year		
	2023	2024	2025
Rural	3	6	11
Suburban	19	27	31
Urban	60	202	190

Through these efforts, our staff engaged with about 13,300 community members across Erie County. The map on the next page highlights the locations of attended events. Without isolating any area, our team was able to interact with diverse populations across all parts of Erie County.

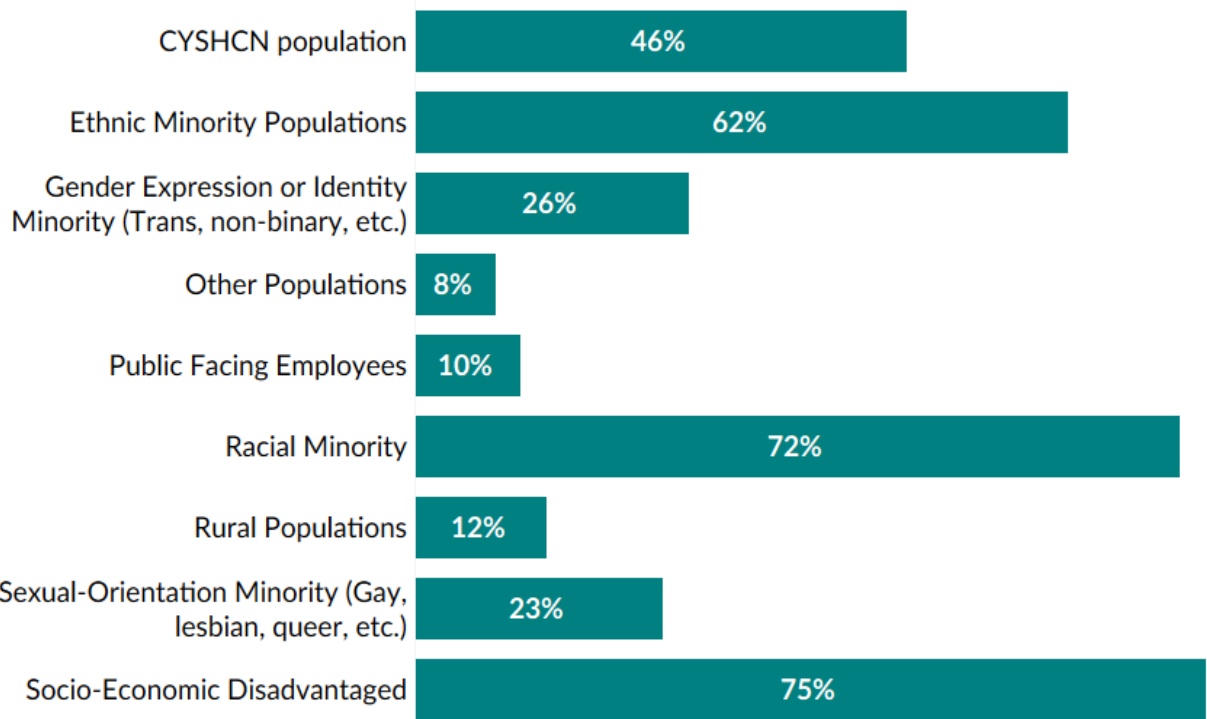
Most events took place in communities where attendees were primarily from priority populations named in the Erie County Health Equity Act of 2021.

Figure 3: Location of Community Events by ZIP Code



Darker shaded ZIP codes indicate higher numbers of events. White colored ZIP codes had no events.

Figure 4: Percentage of Events That Reached Each Priority Population



Erie County's Black communities experience the most health disparities and inequities. Black Erie County residents have the highest rates of chronic health conditions, low birth weight, and poor disease outcomes when compared to residents of other races.^[7] According to the ECOHE's *Health Equity in Erie County: 2023 Annual Report*, Black survey respondents were more likely to report living with physical health conditions like high blood pressure, asthma, and diabetes as compared to respondents of all other races.^[8]

In 2025, the ECOHE partnered with the University at Buffalo Community Health Equity Research Institute (UB CHERI), the University at Buffalo Clinical and Translational Science Institute, and the Buffalo Center for Health Equity to plan and implement the 8th annual Igniting Hope Conference, which focuses on addressing health equity and the social determinants of health for Black community members. The focus of the 2025 Igniting Hope Conference was implementing a community plan for health equity. The following social determinants of health were discussed during the pre-conference virtual series and as breakout sessions during the conference:

- Access to Primary Care;
- Workforce Development;
- Housing;
- Access to Healthy Foods; and
- Education.

The ECOHE also continued to be an active member of the UB CHERI steering committee as well as the African American Health Equity Task Force, a coalition of community leaders, faith leaders, university faculty, and other stakeholders focused on addressing health disparities within the African American community.

Erie County residents in rural communities are more likely to live farther away from specialty medical providers, such as oncologists and obstetricians, and emergency services.^[7] In the ECOHE's *Health Equity in Erie County: 2023 Annual Report*, survey respondents living in rural communities were less likely to report that they felt they had "more than enough money".^[8] For example, while 100% of respondents in Clarence Center said they had "more than enough money" compared to 0% of respondents in Irving, Gowanda, and Chaffee.

Rural populations were the community of focus in 12% of the ECOHE's community engagement efforts in 2024. According to the 2020 Decennial Census, approximately 9.72% of Erie County residents live in rural areas. While not all residents of rural communities experience poor health outcomes, the health of rural populations can be impacted by SDOH factors such as poverty, limited access to transportation, health care provider shortages, food access challenges, and social isolation.^[8]

12% of all community engagement in 2025 was focused on rural communities

In 2024, the ECOHE was an active participant in Good for the Neighborhood (GFTN) events in rural areas of Erie County. GFTN is a community-based wellness program that brings health-related training and tools to areas where access to health care is limited. Sponsored by the Independent Health Foundation, GFTN provides opportunities to bring health and wellness resources to participants where they live, work and play. GFTN events held in rural areas also created opportunities for the ECOHE to connect with community members to better understand and address the barriers and challenges faced by residents of rural areas. In addition, GFTN events enabled the ECOHE to build relationships with rural-serving organizations to support an equitable focus moving forward.

LGBTQ+ communities often have higher rates of certain illnesses, can be at increased risk for some medical and mental health conditions, generally have less access to health care, and can experience worse health outcomes.^[7] In the 2025 Community Survey conducted as part of the 2025-2030 Community Health Assessment, respondents from the LGBTQ community were about 10% more likely to report that they had challenges accessing mental health care, about 7% more likely to have challenges accessing Primary Care, and 2 times more likely to have challenges accessing reproductive care compared to the total pool of respondents.

Safe and affordable housing was ranked as the top priority to be focused on in the 2025 Community Survey by respondents who indicated that their gender is something other than man or woman and #2 by respondents who indicated that their sexual orientation is something other than straight, while the total pool of respondents ranks safe and affordable housing as #3. In 2025, the ECOHE was an active member of the LGBTQ+ Shelter Committee. The focus of this committee is addressing housing as an SDOH for Erie County residents who are LGBTQ+ by establishing an LGBTQ+ shelter. In 2025, this long-term goal was augmented by a shorter-term goal to establish an overnight drop-in space for LGBTQ+ Erie County residents. The ECOHE worked to help identify potential partners and funding sources for this project.

"Out of the past seven new consumers that have come into the Pride Center, six of them have complained of being homeless. Homelessness is eating our community alive."

-2023 LGBTQ+ Focus Group Participant

The ECOHE and Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority (BMHA) organized the third annual ONE-STOP Family Services Resource Fair in August 2025 at Northwest Buffalo Community Center. This event was focused on providing key resources to families with children heading back to school in September, such as backpacks, books, school supplies, haircuts, and family support services. As in previous years, in addition to the community at large, the ECOHE was intentional in prioritizing the New American communities living in the surrounding area in the Black Rock Riverside neighborhood of Buffalo. These communities are primarily made up of Burmese, Karen, and Arabic speaking families. The ECOHE worked with community organizations and cultural institutions to ensure translated flyers reached these community members. BMHA focused on outreach to Jasper Parrish residents and other BMHA communities. Vendors were notified prior to the event that the attendees would likely be multilingual and encouraged to provide materials in Arabic, Bengali, Burmese, English, Karen, Spanish, and Swahili, if available. Vendors were also given a language access resource guide, produced by ECOHE, called Language Access Allies (see Appendix D) that highlighted some free and accessible multilingual communication tools. On event day, vendors were provided signage to indicate what types of multilingual materials they had available (see Appendix D). An interpreter was also available to assist families with their visit. Several organizations tabled with multi-lingual print materials and multi-lingual staff.

387 community members attended the ONE-STOP Family Services Resource Fair. 20 of the 108 families who attended the event were residents of BMHA communities. The event featured 36 organizations representing educational, employment, health, vocational, and social services programs and assistance. Vendors included local businesses, community organizations, government offices, and service providers.

The following feedback on the ONE-STOP Family Services Resource Fair was provided by event vendors:

“Appreciate it when organization bring events to the community.”

“It was great and amazing. Keep doing it.”

“Loved the diversity of the participants.”

“It was well-run and coordinated.”



ONE-STOP Family Services Resource Fair flyer, translated into Arabic



Photo from the ONE-STOP Family Services Resource Fair featuring tabling vendors and translated signage.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

When emergencies happen, minority, marginalized, and underserved communities are often hit the hardest. While only 14% of Erie County residents are Black or African American according to U.S. Census data^[11], over 50% of those who lost their lives in the blizzard that struck the county in December 2022 were Black or African American.^[12] In the ECOHE's report *Winter Preparedness in the City of Buffalo: Survey Results & Findings*, Black survey respondents were significantly more likely to report needing help buying and putting together emergency kits and more information about steps to prepare than White survey respondents.^[13] The goal of the ECOHE's emergency kit distribution efforts is to help ease the struggle of getting basic supplies and provide important emergency preparedness information to those who need it most. As a result, a higher proportion of emergency kits were distributed to community organizations serving predominantly Black communities in Buffalo.

In 2025, the Erie County Department of Health (ECDOH) helped fund the creation of 4,000 emergency kits. The ECOHE intentionally designed the 2025 emergency kits, selecting the components of the kits down to the duffel bag they are assembled in based on community feedback. These kits were assembled with help from volunteers from the United Way of Buffalo & Erie County. Each kit included a duffel bag, emergency food rations, a water filtration straw, a pop-up lantern, a thermal survival blanket, a power bank, disposable hand warmers, reflective tape, an emergency whistle, Narcan, and an emergency preparedness information packet.



Left: United Way of Buffalo & Erie County Day of Caring volunteers assemble emergency kits at Erie County warehouse

Right: Emergency kit contents

To ensure the emergency kits reached those who needed them most, the ECOHE worked with trusted community partner organizations across Erie County. 47 community groups and organizations helped distribute all 4,000 emergency kits by December 31, 2025. The map on the following page shows where the kits were given out. These groups and organizations prioritized distributing kits among members of their communities with the highest need. Kits were distributed throughout Erie County with a focus on distributing kits in communities whose residents are often disproportionately impacted by power outages and weather emergencies including the December 2022 blizzard. These areas included the Delavan/Grider, MLK, Cold Springs, Lovejoy, First Ward, South Buffalo, Kensington/Bailey, and West Side neighborhoods of Buffalo. 85% of kits were distributed to organizations serving these and other urban areas, 5% to organizations serving suburban areas, and 10% to organizations serving rural areas of Erie County.

The ECOHE worked with partner organizations to coordinate distribution and provided on-site kit demonstrations to community members and organizational staff. Several organizations requested more kits due to community need. These requests show the strong need for emergency supplies in communities that are disproportionately impacted by economic stability challenges like disinvestment.

Figure 5: Emergency Kit Distribution by Urban, Suburban, and Rural

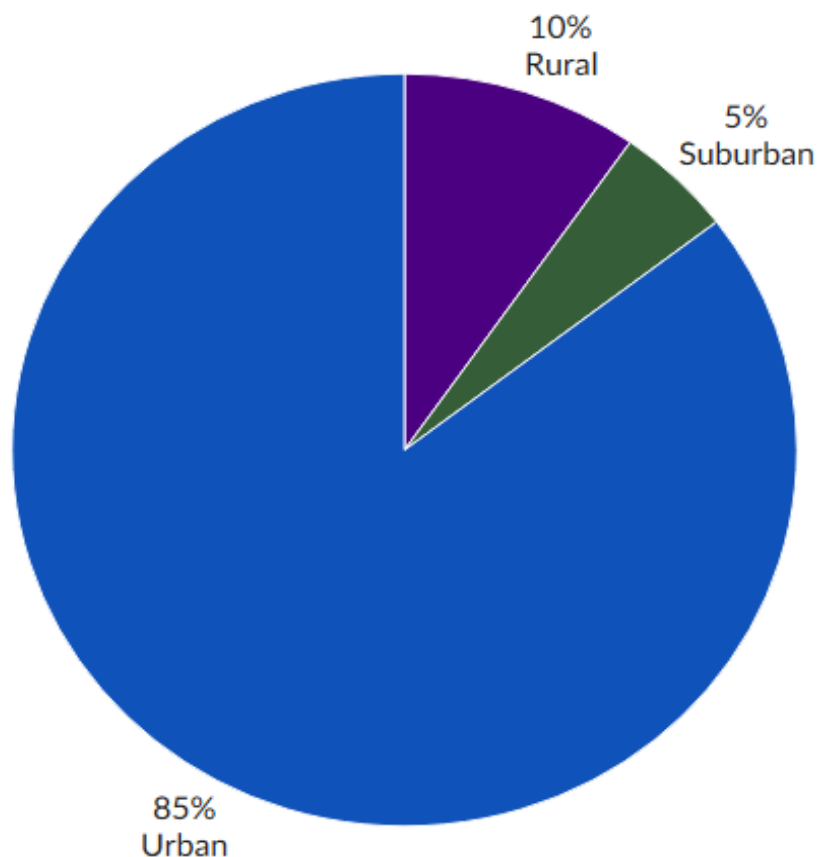
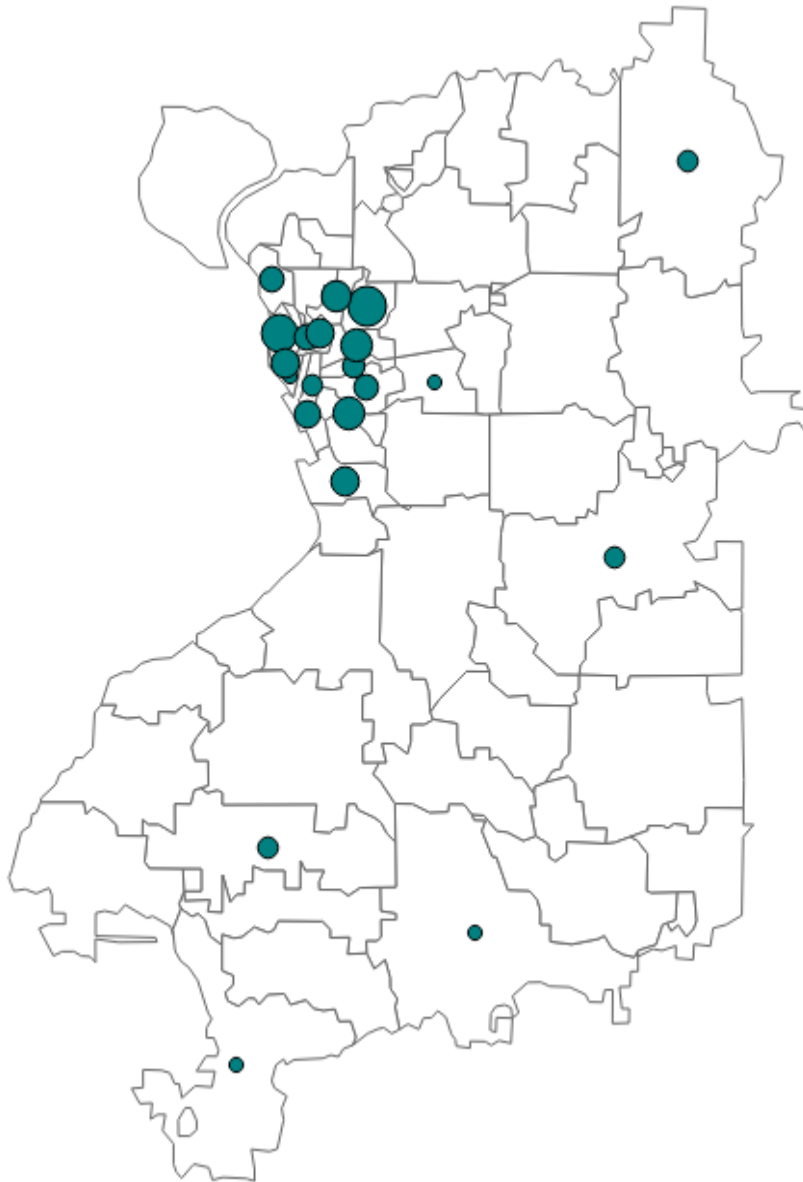


Figure 6: Emergency Kits by Location of Distribution



Many distribution sites were within the City of Buffalo, and their points overlap with each other in this visualization. Larger dots indicate more kits.

The ECOHE asked Erie County residents and community organizations to share their feedback on the emergency kits through a survey completed during distribution events. Through the survey, residents and community organizations provided positive feedback on the emergency kits and their preparedness for emergency events. According to survey data, 76% of kit recipients would not have had an emergency kit without this effort. The type of emergency that survey respondents were most concerned about was winter

emergencies, followed by power outages and heat emergencies. The ECOHE values community input and will use this feedback in planning for future emergency preparedness kit assembly and distribution.

Feedback from community organizations included:

“Community members on the East Side of Buffalo were given these winter kits. For those that have nothing, these kits are literally life-saving.”

“We are often left out of Erie County services due to being rural. I really appreciate the effort that the department puts in to including our agency and rural Erie County residents.”

“[We were] able to provide kits to the Elders in our community along with those that may not have been able to afford items.”

“We were able to provide these emergency kits to dozens of community members who accessed our drop-in center.”

“We were blessed to distribute the kits to Senior Citizens, homebound individuals who don’t have access to these materials.”

“We were able to give 100 of our food pantry clients emergency kits they would otherwise had not had access to.”

“We hosted Community Education workshops on Emergency Preparedness at our office and distributed the kits to clients after explaining how to use them.”

“Our library was able to distribute much needed information and supplies regarding emergency preparedness to our patrons/county residents. It solidifies our standing in the community as a place for the people to get the resources they need.”

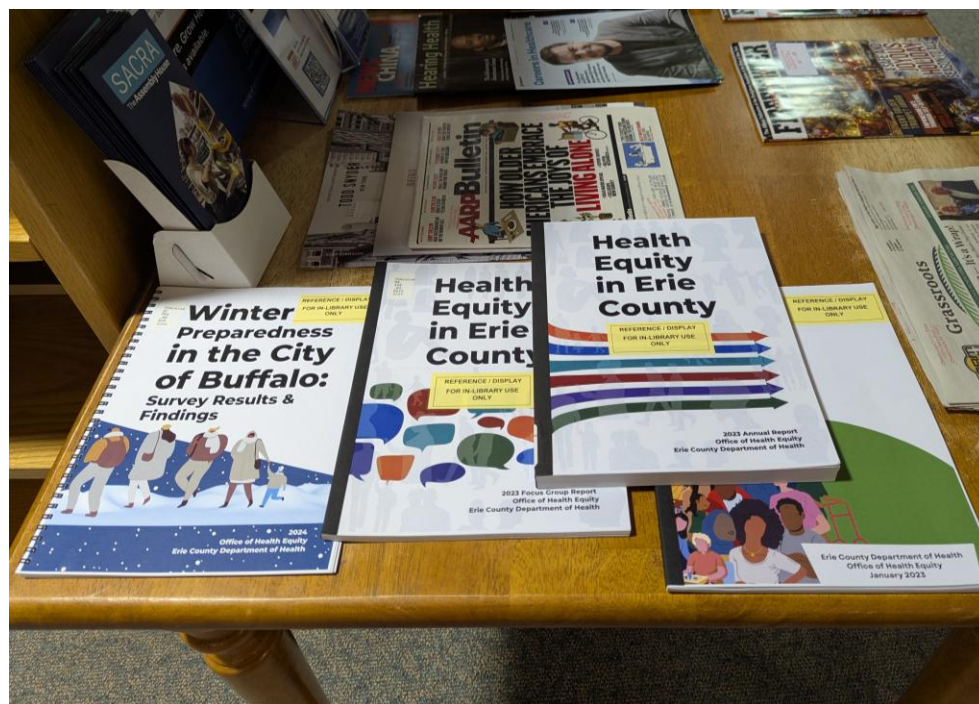
The ECOHE will continue to provide emergency preparedness education and resources to the public through publications like *Let’s Get Ready for Winter* and *Let’s Get Ready for Summer Heat*. The ECOHE will continue to serve as a resource to ensure that future emergency preparedness efforts in Erie County are rooted in equity.

EPIDEMIOLOGY

The epidemiology (“epi”) team leads the research that the ECOHE conducts. The 2021 Erie County Health Equity Act tasks the ECOHE with understanding and connecting the factors that influence health in Erie County. To meet this requirement, every year since its inception, the ECOHE has gathered information directly from the community.

The 2022 ECOHE Community Survey was conducted in 2022. In 2023, the ECOHE gathered 14 focus groups to ask questions like, “What does a good life look like to you?” In May of 2024, the ECOHE published *Health Equity in Erie County: 2023 Annual Report*. The results of the 2022 ECOHE Community Survey were included in this report, as well as a sample of quotes from the focus groups.

The initial goal was to publish findings from both the 2022 ECOHE Community Survey and the focus groups early in 2024. The research process has many steps, from creating a data collection tool to publishing a report. This process took longer than expected. *Health Equity in Erie County: 2023 Focus Group Report* was published in early 2025. The report presents an analysis and quotes from the focus groups’ discussion on health and well-being in Erie County within the context of the social determinants of health. The objective was to learn about health challenges and assets from the perspectives of specific demographic communities, for example, Black Fathers and Rural Older Adults. In August 2025, the ECOHE presented results from the focus groups in a webinar. This webinar was open to the community. The report and the presentation of the findings are available by visiting <https://www3.erie.gov/health/health-equity-focus-group-report>.



ECOHE reports on display at a Buffalo & Erie County Public Library branch

In 2025, the ECOHE's research goals aligned with requirements for the 2025-2030 Community Health Assessment (CHA) and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). New York State requires all counties to complete a CHA-CHIP every six years. For the 2025-2030 cycle, the ECOHE lead the effort for Erie County and collaborated with the local hospital systems. With these partners, the ECOHE conducted community research to explore which community factors that influence health and health conditions residence feel should be prioritized. This research included:

- A community survey, receiving 2,510 responses;
- A health care provider survey, receiving 143 responses;
- 5 one-on-one interviews with participants (parents) in the Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN) Program within the ECOHE;
- A focus group with Silver Pride (a group for the older LGBTQ+ community, located in Amherst);
- A focus group with doulas who work with pregnant and birthing people in Erie County;
- A focus group of new and expectant mothers;
- A focus group with family caregivers of people living with dementia;
- A focus group with residents of the Rural Southwest region of the county; and
- 8 health care provider interviews.

In addition to being included in the 2025-2030 CHA-CHIP, the data collected through this research will be used to inform ECOHE's work and is available for use by other community organizations. To view the *2025-2030 Community Health Assessment (CHA) and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)*, visit <https://www.erie.gov/CHA>.

The ECOHE epi team also offers technical data assistance. This assistance is available to other offices within Erie County and outside groups serving minority and underserved communities in Erie County. Types of assistance offered include survey design, finding data sources, data analysis, and data visualizations. This service has supported organizations with program implementation, needs assessments, grant applications, grant reporting, and other research.

In 2025, ECOHE spent about 21 hours on data assistance requests from 13 organizations outside of the Erie County Department of Health (ECDOH). About 42 hours were spent on requests from various offices within the ECDOH. In 2025, an intake form for data assistance requests was developed and implemented and a flyer advertising this service was created to increase access to this service.

Moving forward, the ECOHE will continue to conduct community research to guide the office programs. ECOHE research will also continue to be available and accessible to the community.

GRANTS

The ECOHE has three main types of grant programs and services: ECOHE grant programs and pilots to improve health disparities, grant technical assistance internal to Erie County departments and offices, and external grant technical assistance to community organizations engaging in health equity work. The ECOHE provides free grant-related technical assistance to local community-based organizations and groups serving minority, marginalized, and underserved communities in Erie County. The Erie County Health Equity Act of 2021 empowers the ECOHE to pilot models and programs to improve health disparities. Organizations that are rooted in the community and are experts in the work that is needed to help achieve health equity in Erie County often do not have the funding, staff, or other resources required to meet community needs. Grant technical assistance services and resources further the mission of the ECOHE by helping build the capacity of these organizations.

The ECOHE's grant technical assistance services also include one-on-one technical assistance with finding grants, applying for grants, and grants management including grant reporting. In 2025, the Let's Talk About Grants workshop, which provides an introduction to grants and covers the basics of grant writing, was recorded as a webinar series. These free videos are available to watch on demand on the ECOHE webpage. To access the videos and other materials, visit <https://www.erie.gov/grantsupport>.

In 2024, Let's Talk About Grants workshop participants identified a need for a similar workshop on grants management to assist them in navigating these systems after they have received grant funding. In response to this feedback, the ECOHE began developing a grants management workshop in 2025 that will be implemented in 2026. Topics covered include:

- Grant awards and timelines;
- Contracts and contract managers;
- Workplans and deliverables;
- Budgets and vouchering;
- Documentation and reporting;
- Evaluation and quality improvement; and
- Community involvement and resources.

Organizations who received grant technical assistance in 2025 serve a variety of communities, including racial minority communities, rural communities, LGBTQ+ communities, children and youth, older adults, people with disabilities, and refugees and immigrants. In 2025, the ECOHE provided 151 hours of one-on-one technical assistance to 70 community-based organizations and groups in Erie County. In 2025, 37 hours of technical assistance were also provided in response to requests from various Erie County departments and offices. As of December 2025, the ECOHE has provided a total of 493 hours of one-on-one technical assistance with 157 community-based organizations in Erie

County. This technical assistance helped community-based organizations navigate pervasive shifts in government and foundation funding that cascaded from federal policy changes in 2025.

70 community-based organizations received grant technical assistance in 2025

Feedback from community organizations who received grant-related assistance included:

"Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me and for following up with all of the resources and opportunities. I truly appreciate the support and the work your office is doing to help organizations like ours better serve the community."

"We are grateful for your outreach and for sharing all the great details, contacts, and materials. We are excited to make use of and showcase the opportunities with our organization and community."

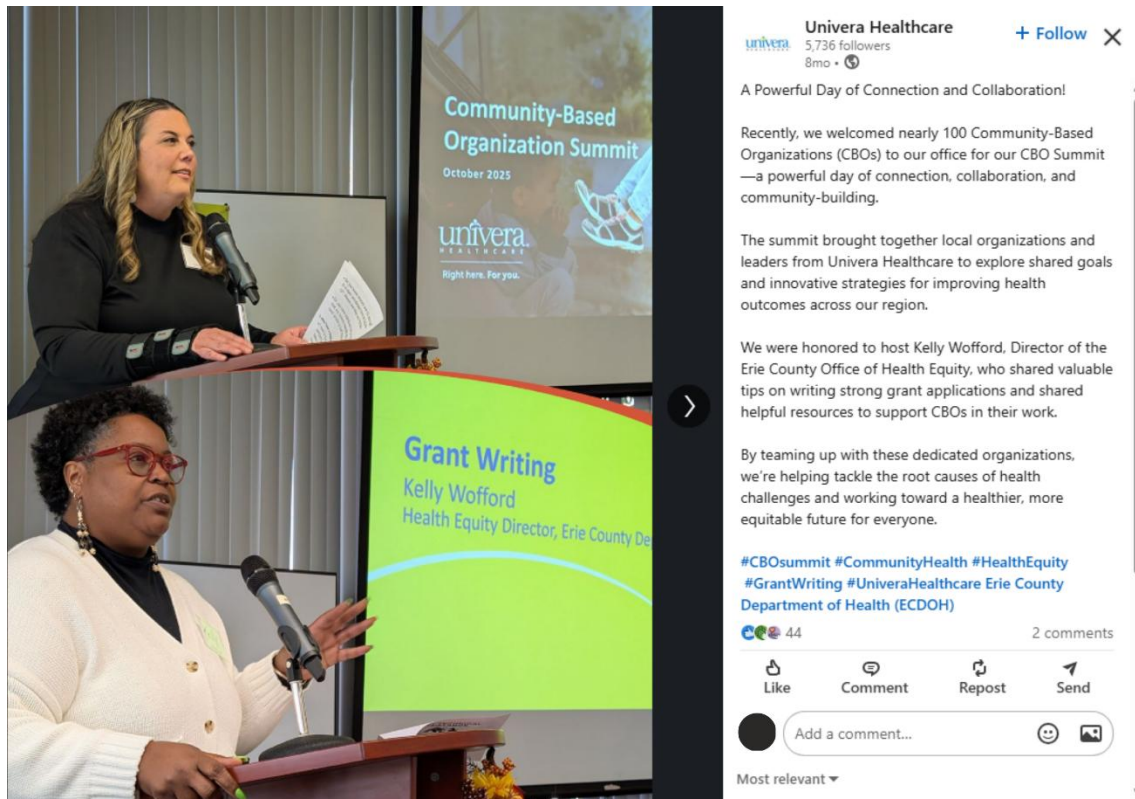
"[ECOHE grant technical assistance] was an excellent resource for our organization. They helped synchronize how to approach funding opportunities and how to strengthen applications released in 2025 but due in 2026. [The ECOHE] is efficient and replies with much needed suggestions for proposals. They helped our organization to build capacity and think strategically about how our organization applies for funding. The tech support is a phenomenal resource that many grassroots organizations are not aware of. It is my pleasure to share out the resource for others to utilize."

"I am grateful for the Erie County Office of Health Equity and their support in assisting my organization with information to inform us about grant funding opportunities available to us."

"Thank you for so many resources! This was so beneficial."

"Thank you for your time today, this meeting was informative and helpful, I look forward to working with you on several projects."

Additionally, in October 2025, the ECOHE presented on the Office's grant technical assistance services and resources and shared select grant writing best practices to nearly 100 community-based organizations at the Univera Healthcare,Community-Based Organization (CBO) Summit.



A social post on the Univera Healthcare LinkedIn page.

Recommendations for the future of the ECOHE's grant programs and services include increasing technical assistance capacity. Continued demand for assistance in 2025 demonstrated that there is a significant community need for grant-related technical assistance among community-based organizations and groups serving minority, marginalized, and underserved communities in Erie County. The creation of an additional staff position within the ECOHE would help meet this need.

OTHER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

In addition to assistance with data and grants, the ECOHE also provided additional technical assistance to various community organizations in 2025. This technical assistance included presentations and one-on-one assistance related to health equity and the social determinants of health; language access, translation, and interpretation; communications, plain language, and design including diversity in imagery; and social determinants of health and health equity in a variety of contexts including food access, access to essential services like SNAP, employment and economic stability, and emergency preparedness.

Technical assistance provided in 2025 on topics other than grants and data included:

- Presenting on health equity and the social determinants of health to 250 Catholic Health leaders, including medical providers;
- Presenting on the history and cumulative effects of racial disparity and otherness for the University at Buffalo School of Nursing;
- Connecting the Buffalo Bills Foundation, Legends Global, and the Erie County Office of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) to over 70 MWBE-eligible food system businesses, including growers, producers, caterers, and restauraners;
- Advising the County Executive on communicating the impacts of SNAP on Erie County residents;
- Working with the National Active and Retired Federal Employee Association to support their work in preparing the local chapter members for emergencies;
- Consulting with the Office of Consumer Protection on language access and contracted translation services;
- Consulting with Office of Harm Reduction on engaging the public in an electronic newsletter, writing a joint publication, and communicating in plain language;
- Consulting with NYS Department of Health regarding contracted translation services for public health materials;
- Consulting with the University at Buffalo Department of Psychiatry regarding plain language and diversity in imagery for their clinical services flyers;
- Working with health equity professionals at Catholic Health to access ECOHE resources for staff;
- Consulting with the Erie County Department of Environment and Planning about accessing disaggregated demographics for Erie County;
- Consulting with the Erie County Office of Mental Health on the Erie County Language Access Act of 2023;
- Consulting with a doctoral student on their research topic titled, "A Personalized Dietary Intervention for Black Women with Food Insecurity, Obesity and Prediabetes" (research project was not funded for 2025); and
- Consulting with the UB School of Public Health and Health Professions regarding webinars for public health students on working in government.

The ECOHE will continue to offer technical support and guidance to Erie County agencies related to the work and expertise of the Office, including implementing equitable policies and practices, offering plain language materials and materials in languages other than English, and advocating for agencies to increase their reach by designing materials reflective of the communities they aim to serve. These measures will result in populations that are more readily connected to public health information. The impacts of this interconnectivity can be measured in public health outcomes over time, through the 2025-2030 Community Health Assessment and related focus groups, as well as the qualitative feedback the ECOHE receives.

COMMUNICATIONS & PUBLICATIONS

The ECOHE team works hard to accomplish communication goals and to provide information in a way that is intentionally evolving to reach and understand Erie County residents exactly as they are. The ECOHE continues to expand the collective understanding of effective communication styles, plain language, accessible visual displays of data, visually diverse imagery, preparing documents for translation, and ADA compliance.

These efforts have helped increase the ECOHE's reach in communities with low literacy levels and communities that speak languages other than English, pushed the ECOHE to better understand cultures represented in Erie County, and provided support to populations that are eager to receive materials that they can understand and access.

In Erie County, understanding health information and accessing health care are nearly impossible without literacy skills and English language proficiency, making navigating the health care system extremely difficult for residents with lower literacy levels or Limited English Proficiency (LEP).

A significant percentage of Erie County adults have limited reading and writing skills. With recognition of the literacy rate in Erie County, the ECOHE focuses on plain language communication. This style of writing and speaking allows the work of the ECOHE to reach Erie County residents regardless of educational attainment level or English language comprehension status. All educational publications that the ECOHE distributes are developed within grade 4-7 reading levels using the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level test. All acronyms, jargon, and complex terms are defined using simple phrases and commonly understood words. This allows for greater comprehension for many, including residents with lower literacy levels and residents who are learning English or reading translated materials.

In response to a diverse population speaking over 80 languages countywide, the ECOHE offers materials in the top languages spoken and understood in Erie County. Using a combination of U.S. Census data, ECOHE data, and community feedback, the ECOHE plans to determine and review a list of top languages annually and revise as needed or in accordance with any language access policies Erie County puts in place. The ECOHE also employs design standards that aim to visually represent a wide audience of individuals by ensuring diversity of skin tone, body type, age appearance, physical ability, family makeup, and more.

As the ECOHE helps carry out the 2025-2030 CHIP, makes recommendations, and pilots models and programs for Erie County, the Office will ensure Erie County's diverse populations and those with low literacy levels or LEP are not left behind. Public awareness is not possible without materials and messaging that are understandable and accessible for all Erie County residents.

In 2025, the ECOHE allowed e-newsletter subscribers to sign up for specific interest lists, including data, grants, Mental Health First Aid, and Children and Youth With Special Health Care Needs. The ECOHE communications team also created automated workflows for e-newsletter communications that sent welcome communications for each of these interest list subscribers.

In 2022, the ECOHE launched a series of publications that are designed to inform, remind, and connect communities in Erie County to resources and knowledge relating to the social determinants of health. Each edition is titled *Let's Talk About [a topic]*, with the intent of inspiring Erie County residents to begin or deepen the conversations they have around that topic. Topics include food access, mental health, economic stability, chronic disease, and emergency preparedness. ECOHE publications offer upstream support that addresses health equity issues by putting the power of information in the hands of the residents of Erie County in a way that is positive, inviting, culturally connected, and representative of a diverse population.

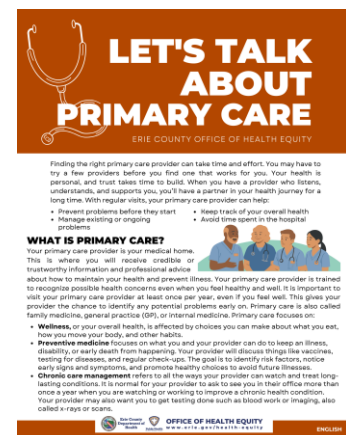
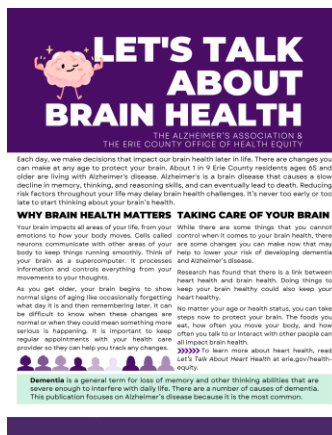
The *Let's Talk About* series is distributed in the top languages spoken and understood in Erie County. In 2025, those languages were Arabic, Bengali, Burmese, English, Spanish, and Swahili. This series is distributed primarily in digital formats on erie.gov, through the ECOHE email newsletter, and Erie County social media outlets. Additionally, over 15,000 print copies of each edition are sent out to community-based organizations across Erie County. Print copies are distributed at locations where Erie County residents and visitors come together within their community, including public libraries, health centers, community centers, and nonprofit service providers.

The *Let's Talk About* series is intended to be culturally responsive and is written in plain language to meet Erie County residents where they are at in terms of identity and literacy, respectively. This work aims to “eliminate racial, economic, sexual/gender, and geographic-based health inequities that shorten or negatively-impact lives by changing the social and economic conditions that cause illness and shorten lives.”^[1]

For example, in *Let's Talk About Primary Care*, information that is often challenging to navigate or subject to gatekeeping is simplified in a way that makes it accessible and understood by more people. Additionally, in *Let's Talk About Heart Health*, the ECOHE explains that health behaviors are not the only factor that contribute to a person's health status and normalizes exploring the typical symptoms of chronic illness. In *Let's Talk About Brain Health*, the ECOHE and Alzheimer's Association (ALZ) describe early signs and symptoms of Alzheimer's and other dementias and share changes and actions that people can take to take care of their brain at any age. These publications connect the reader to information and support that is welcoming to all and easily understood by many. Other educational tools covering chronic illness tend to focus on concerning test results such as high blood pressure and cholesterol and make recommendations without considering an individual's access to support, services, or care.

In 2025, the ECOHE fully or partially produced and distributed three editions: *Let's Talk About Heart Health*, *Let's Talk About Brain Health*, and *Let's Talk About Primary Care*. *Let's Talk About Primary Care* also included 5 additional one-page inserts on related topics: *Let's Talk About Primary Care for Children*, *Let's Talk About Primary Care for Older Adults*, *Let's Talk About Specialized Care*, *Let's Talk About Reproductive Health*, and *Let's Talk About Emergency and Urgent Care*. *Let's Talk About Heart Health* was drafted in 2024 but was finalized, translated, and distributed in 2025. *Let's Talk About Primary Care* was drafted, translated, and partially distributed in 2025, but was not fully distributed until 2026.

Publications took more time to produce in 2025 compared to previous years due to factors that included increased efforts to ensure that ECOHE publications meet new Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) for digital media and the collaborative production process to create *Let's Talk About Brain Health*.



2025 ECOHE publications

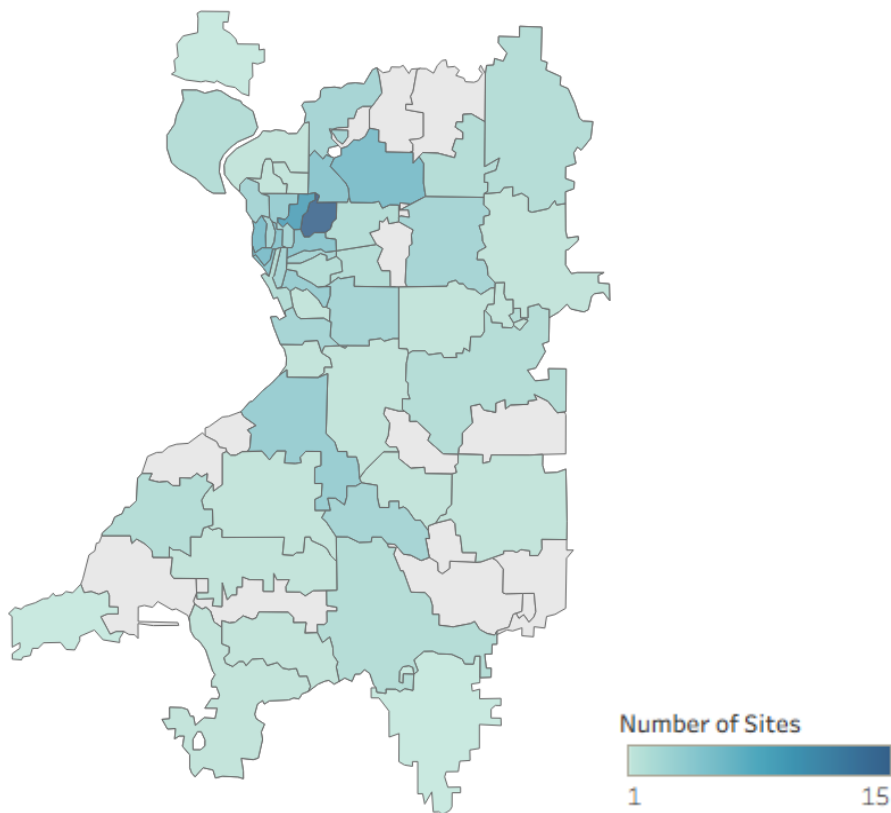
The *Let's Talk About* series digital distribution reached approximately 1,700 individual email subscribers as well as countless website and social media visitors in 2025. Print distribution of ECOHE publications reached approximately 17,000 visitors to libraries, health centers, community centers, and nonprofit service providers. In print, the *Let's Talk About* series of publications produced in 2025 reached 50 ZIP codes and 146 unique locations.

The *Let's Talk About* series digital distribution reached approximately 1,700 individual email subscribers as well as countless website and social media visitors in 2025. Print distribution of ECOHE publications reached approximately 17,000 visitors to libraries, health centers, community centers, and nonprofit service providers. In print, the *Let's Talk About* series of publications produced in 2025 reached 50 ZIP codes and 146 unique locations.

Figure 7: Distribution of Health Equity Publications 2025

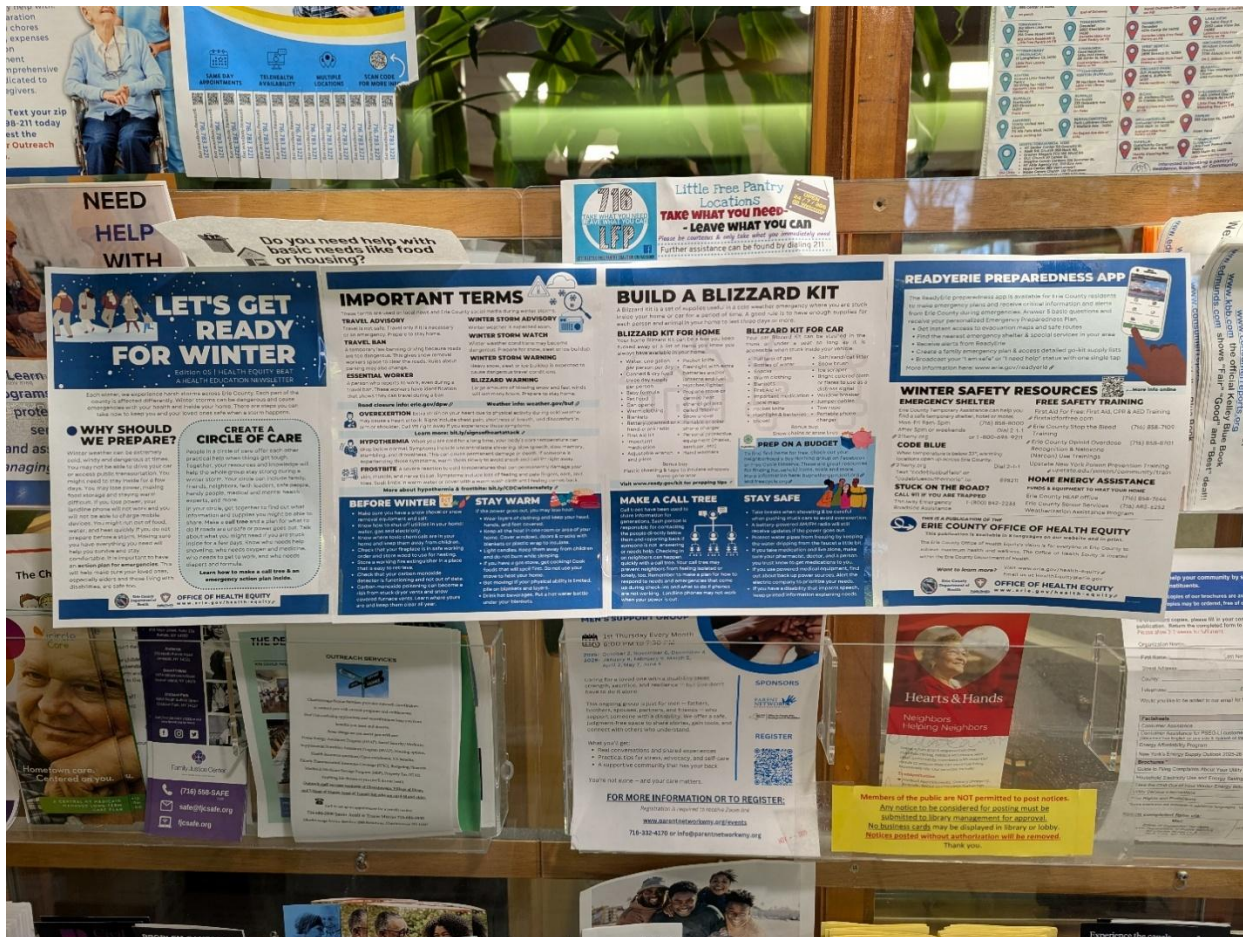
Edition Name	Number of Digital Email Sends	Number of Print Copies Distributed	Number of Partner Organizations Distributing Print Copies
2025 Totals	15703	64545	
Let's Talk About Mental Health	0	4720	24
Let's Talk About Grief	0	1181	109
Let's Talk about Food Access	0	1394	36
Let's Talk About Living with Disabilities	0	870	18
Let's Talk About Working in Government	1639	357	12
Let's Get Ready for Winter	2126	1947	39
Do You Know Your Health Numbers?	0	725	25
Let's Talk About Pregnancy	0	878	16
Let's Get Ready for Summer Heat	0	1130	20
Let's Talk About Lead	0	1350	33
Let's Talk About Grants	0	452	9
Let's Talk About Health Equity	0	885	22
Let's Talk About Diabetes	0	1110	32
Let's Talk About Vaccines	8716	1713	39
Let's Talk About Heart Health	1500	17392	189
Let's Talk About Brain Health	1722	14888	203
Let's Talk About Primary Care	0	13553	127

Figure 8: Distribution of Health Equity Publications Developed in 2025 by ZIP Code



It is difficult to definitively measure the total number of people served as the distribution of these ECOHE publications has a snowball effect, with more and more groups and organizations sharing this content digitally and photocopying and printing their own copies to distribute. For example, in 2025:

- *Let's Talk About Vaccines* was utilized by ECDOH outreach staff during COVID and flu vaccine clinics held in May, June, and October 2025.
- A team member from the Erie County Department of Personnel brought print copies of *Let's Talk About Working in Government* to a meeting with New York State. The team member shared that new employees really like the publication and that the department relies on it to explain some aspects of civil service work.
- An ECOHE team member presented on *Let's Talk About Brain Health*, *Let's Get Ready for Winter*, and *Let's Talk About Health Equity* at two local block clubs.
- NYSDOH created an adapted New York State version of *Let's Talk About Brain Health* for NYSDOH and ALZ to distribute.
- The Erie County Commissioner of Health, an ECOHE team member, ALZ, and NYSDOH presented to the New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO) about BOLD, highlighting *Let's Talk About Brain Health*.



ECOHE publication on display at a Buffalo & Erie County Public Library branch

Feedback on the ECOHE publications included:

- St Mary's School for the Deaf sent an email of appreciation for the multilingual ECOHE publications that they display in their Family Resource Center, include in their welcome packets, and make available at events like teacher conference night.
- A resident wrote a letter of appreciation to the Erie County Executive after an ECOHE team member hand-delivered copies of *Let's Get Ready for Winter* and other publications and materials.

"We've seen firsthand how valuable [the ECOHE publications] are in our Seneca Babcock neighborhood—especially given that our ZIP code is flagged as higher risk for lead exposure, and according to the city's open data portal, 66% of our neighbors don't have access to Wi-Fi. These [publications] help bridge critical information gaps in communities that need it most."

- Seneca Street Community Development Corporation

The social determinants of health connect the vast corners of our lives to our overall well-being. The potential for the ECOHE to publish information regarding the social determinants of health is great. ECOHE publications are responsive to a variety of needs of residents and visitors in Erie County. These publications offer a wealth of information and connections to valuable resources. For these reasons, the ECOHE recommends continuing to produce these publications in perpetuity, at a frequency that complements staffing availability, and with the understanding of a need to collaborate with Erie County departments and CBOs that offer relevant programs and services.

It is a goal of this program to ensure that all areas of Erie County that are experiencing health disparities have access to ECOHE publications. In 2026, the ECOHE will continue to work to expand distribution, focusing on digital distribution and connections to CBOs.

Moving forward, the ECOHE will maintain a standard of communication that evolves with the needs of County residents, is reflective of the County's diverse populations, and is compliant with ADA standards. All publication content will be embedded into erie.gov webpages. This project was started in 2025 and will be completed in 2026. This will increase WCAG accessibility as well as allow the content to be translated into over 70 languages with the Google Translate widget.

Additionally, the ECOHE will continue to advocate for plain language communication among all County departments and local healthcare agencies. This work is integral to maintaining a standard of public health communication that reaches many.

MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID (MHFA)

Mental health is an essential part of overall health. It not only shapes our emotional well-being but also directly influences our physical health and our ability to connect, contribute, and actively participate in our communities. Research shows that people are less likely to receive high-quality mental health care if they are members of racial or ethnic populations, have lower socio-economic status, or reside in a rural community.^[7] According to the NYS Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS), adults who identify as LGBTQ+ were significantly more likely to experience frequent mental distress, were more often diagnosed with a depressive disorder, report heavy or binge drinking, and were less likely to have no personal healthcare provider.^[14] According to the ECOHE's *Health Equity in Erie County: 2023 Annual Report*, 73% of respondents who indicated that they were transgender or nonbinary reported having anxiety or depression.^[6] This is much higher than the percentages of respondents who indicated they were cisgender men (22%) or women (34%).

Intersectionality is an important factor when understanding health disparities based on gender identity along with other identities, such as race. These overlapping systems of identity and discrimination can compound and deepen inequities. As a result, individuals at these intersections often experience more significant and complex health disparities.

For example, a study in the American Journal of Preventative Medicine highlighted that Black LGBTQ+ individuals were more likely to report longer periods of being physically or mentally unwell than Black individuals who are heterosexual and cisgender.^{[\[15\]](#)}

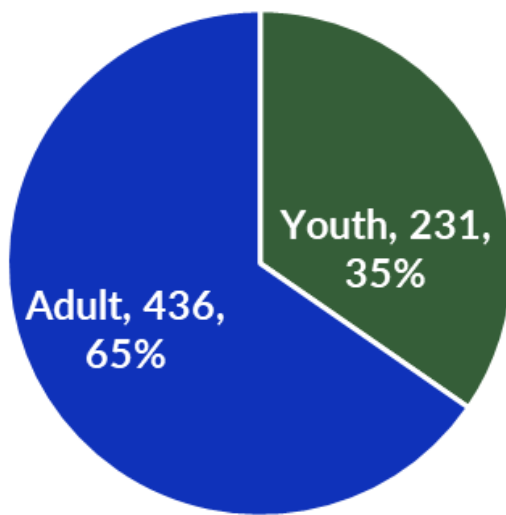
In 2025, the ECOHE continued facilitating Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) trainings throughout Erie County as a part of the Office's efforts to address health disparities and service gaps. When it comes to mental health, many health disparities exist, and the prevalence of mental health distress is higher within the marginalized and minoritized communities named in the Health Equity Act of 2021, including racial and ethnic minority groups, sexual and gender minority groups, and residents of rural areas. Though the prevalence of mental health distress is high, there are not enough providers to meet the demand for mental health services, particularly in the City of Buffalo, which remains a HRSA-designated Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) for mental health. MHFA trainings increase the number of community members that are equipped to identify and respond to someone experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge. These trainings are designed to complement broader efforts to increase the number of local qualified mental health professionals who are crucially needed to address mental health in Erie County.

Many people are not prepared to assist someone who may be experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge. MHFA teaches participants how to recognize signs of mental health or substance use challenges, how to offer and provide help, and how to guide a person toward appropriate care. This learning opportunity helps community members become better prepared to start conversations about mental health or substance use by increasing understanding and providing an action plan. The ECOHE continued to offer both Adult MHFA classes (for adults interacting with other adults) and Youth MHFA classes (for adults interacting with youth ages 12-18) in 2025.

By the end of 2025, the ECOHE trained approximately 667 community members, including 48 Erie County employees, in Mental Health First Aid (MHFA). The figures on the following pages show MHFA participation by year and type of training.

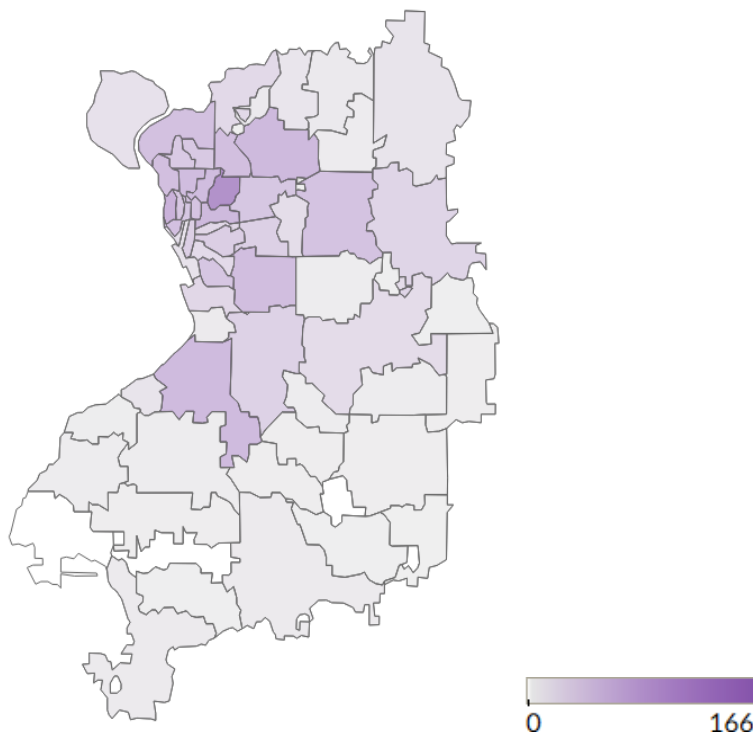
**The ECOHE trained 667
Mental Health First Aiders in 2025**

Figure 9: Number of Participants of Each Type of Mental Health First Aid



2025 MHFA participants were demographically diverse in many ways, including age, education, gender, race, sexual orientation, and residential location. 2025 MHFA participant demographic data is shown in the figures in the pages that follow. Note: The following data excludes the six participants who opted out of the demographic form.

Figure 10: Number of MHFA Participants by Erie County ZIP Code



This figure does not include the 19 MHFA participants who work or study in Erie County but reside outside of Erie County.

Figure 11: Number of MHFA Participants by Age Group

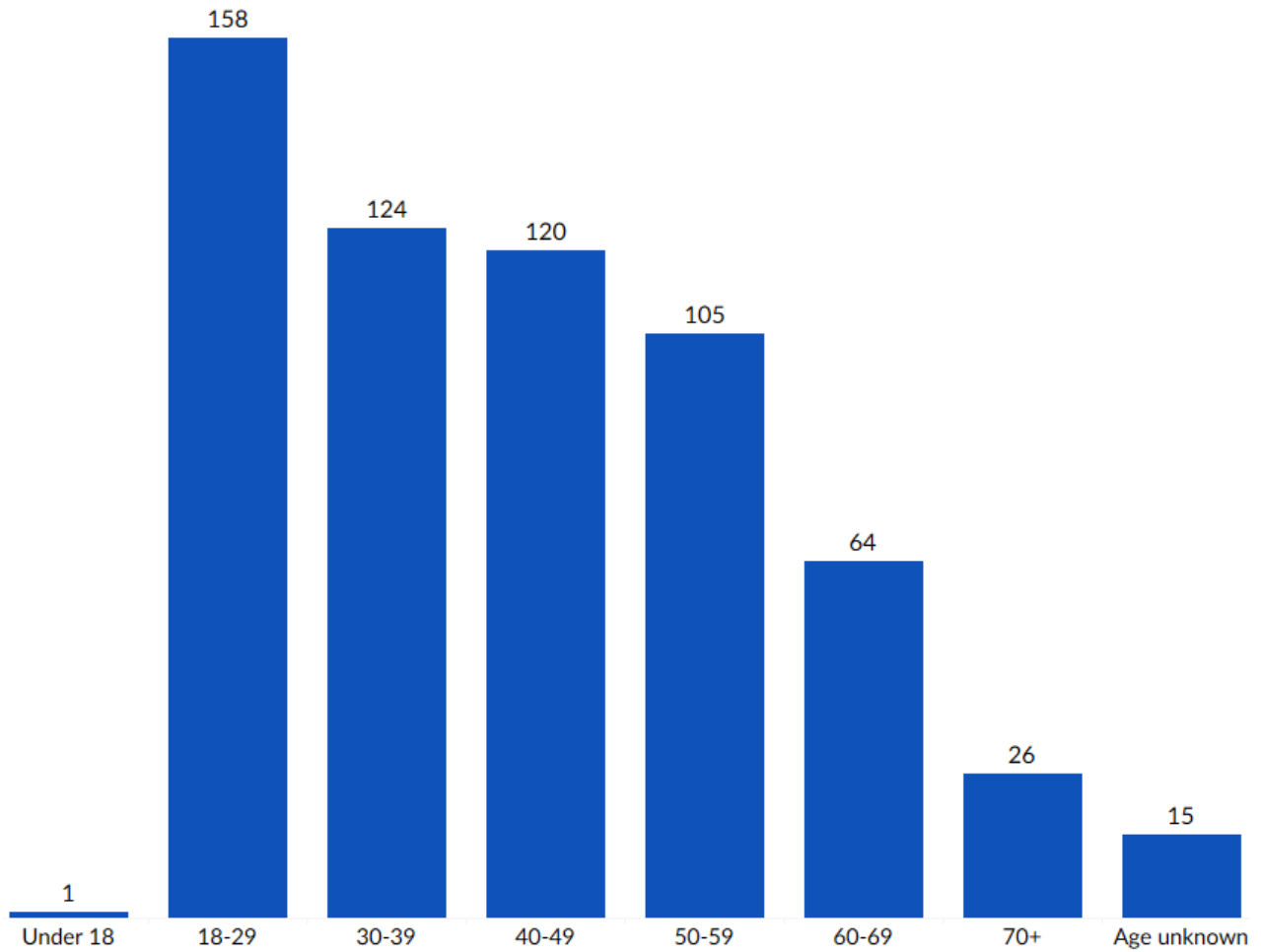


Figure 12: Percent of MHFA Participants by Gender and Year

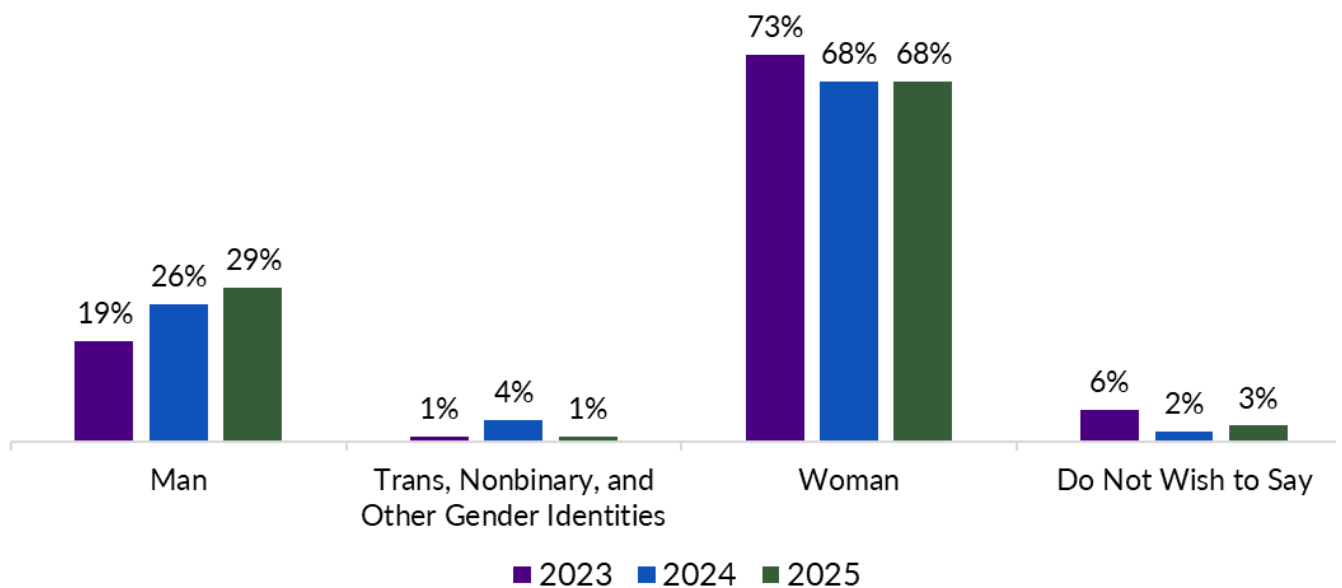


Figure 13: Percent of 2025 MHFA Participants by Race

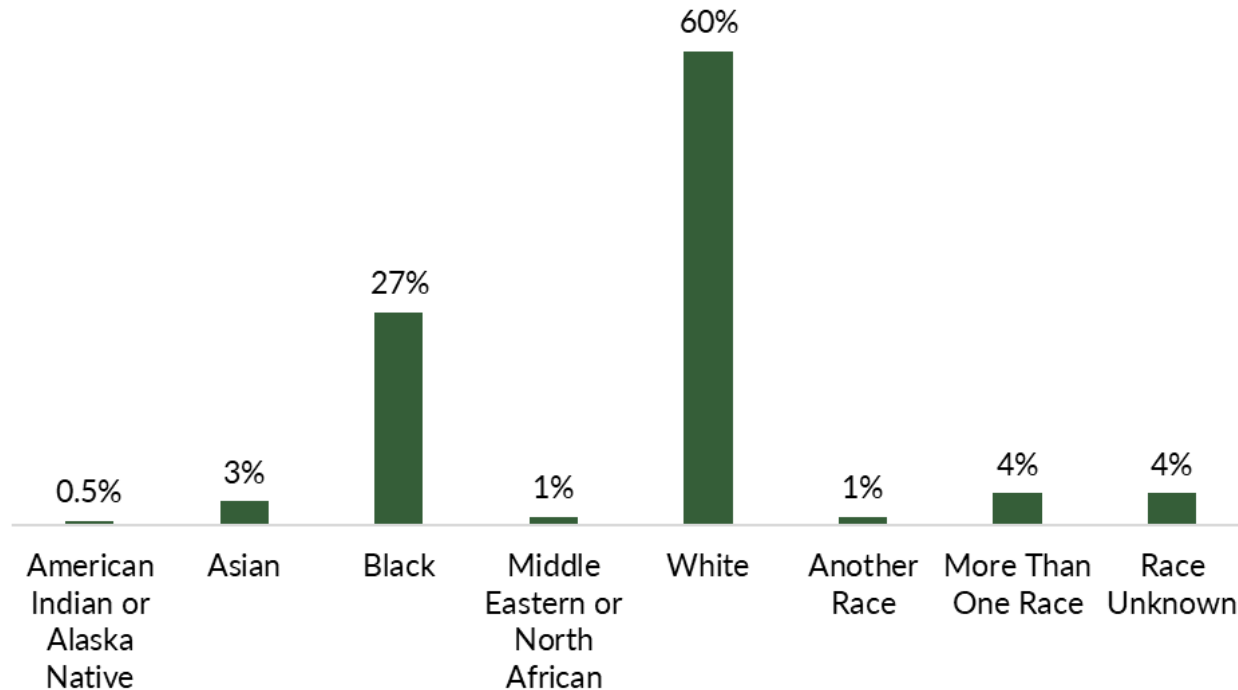


Figure 14: Percent of MHFA Participants by Race and Year

Race	2023	2024	2025
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.8%	0.3%	0.5%
Asian	3.0%	5%	3%
Black	28%	20%	27%
Middle Eastern or North African	0.5%	1%	1%
White	54%	64%	60%
Another Race	0.7%	0.5%	1%
More Than One Race	5%	4%	4%
Race Unknown	5%	5%	4%

The ECOHE strives to create safe spaces for open and honest discussions during MHFA trainings to help reduce stigma around mental health. This allows the ECOHE to receive feedback from community members about community needs and barriers, including government mistrust due to negative experiences and historical injustices.

Feedback received from certified Mental Health First Aiders has been overwhelmingly positive.

One Mental Health First Aider who works as a school athletic trainer shared that they never thought they would apply what they learned the same week they completed the

training. They were able to assist two students, one of whom was experiencing suicidal ideation and the second was engaging in nonsuicidal self-injury. The participant stated that if it wasn't for Youth Mental Health First Aid training, they would not have known how to approach those situations with confidence.

Other feedback from Mental Health First Aiders included:

"Thank you so much for the wonderful training that you provided to our staff. We truly appreciate the time, care, and dedication you both bring to educating others about mental health. We hope to have the opportunity to work with you again in the future as we continue training our staff and volunteers." - Buffalo History Museum

"Thanks again for the stellar programming you all are offering us - it's been very helpful and you both are very skilled at what you do." - Mental Health First Aider

"I just wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed the class with you this week. It was very informative and I feel like I will be able to be more in tune with people in my family and whoever I run across to help them out." - Mental Health First Aider

"I am glad I took this training not only to help me deal with conflicts as an HR manager but also it is very important for my own self-care because now I know how to recognize the signs and symptoms of a mental health challenge and how to de-escalate various situations." - Mental Health First Aider and HR Manager

"Thank you for the valuable training on MHFA! I was truly looking forward to it and found it very beneficial." - Mental Health First Aider

"Thank you so much for this training. I am learning so much from it and it will help me with my own children and grandchildren." - Mental Health First Aider

"First off, THANK YOU for teaching the Mental Health First Aid class. It was very informative, and it will help me at work and outside of work." - Mental Health First Aider

Providing reliable information is a key part of the MHFA action plan. Each Mental Health First Aider received a copy of the MHFA manual and participant processing guide for the training they completed at no cost, as well as resource lists and other helpful information that can be shared with others. Instructors ensure that participants have accurate details about available resources and services, including other ECOHE and Erie County Department of Health (ECDOH) programs.

The ECOHE's MHFA instructors continue to expand and deepen their capacity to facilitate MHFA trainings with community members and professionals across Erie County. In 2025, the ECOHE's team of instructors completed additional certifications to train in the specialty areas of:

- Public safety professionals;
- Corrections professionals;
- Higher education;
- Fire and EMS;
- Military and veterans;
- Rural communities;
- Older adults; and
- Youth MHFA for tribal communities and Indigenous peoples.

The ECOHE will continue to provide MHFA programming as part of the Office's efforts to strengthen community resilience among Erie County's minority, marginalized, and underserved populations. The ECOHE's goal is to expand community-based support and resilience by certifying more Mental Health First Aiders each year, particularly in minority and rural communities. The ECOHE will also focus on expanding MHFA training for employers across Erie County to promote workplace equity.

MINDFULNESS

Mental health was ranked as the top priority by the majority of Erie County community members surveyed for the 2025-2030 Community Health Assessment (CHA).^[16] According to the ECOHE's *Health Equity in Erie County: 2023 Annual Report*, the most reported health condition was "Anxiety or Depression," with 1 in 3 survey respondents selecting this response option.^[8]

The ECOHE's mindfulness program is a series of free workshops that help people from minority, marginalized, and underserved populations in Erie County learn about mindfulness. The mindfulness program explains what mindfulness is and some of the benefits of mindfulness. It includes basic mindfulness techniques they can use for their own practice or share with others, such as blowing bubbles to practice mindful breathing. It is important to provide inviting methods of introducing mindfulness such as blowing bubbles due to the stigma around addressing mental health. The mindfulness program has two formats:

1. A workshop for individuals to learn mindfulness; and
2. A workshop for individuals to learn how to incorporate mindfulness into their programming or classroom.

The ECOHE mindfulness program aims to help marginalized, minority, and underserved communities in Erie County learn about mindfulness. Mindfulness may help people feel less anxious or sad, sleep better, focus longer, and be more able to deal with pain. Mindfulness is a form of self-care that can help address social and community context as a social determinant of health.

In 2025, the ECOHE taught mindfulness to about 276 Erie County residents at 16 community events. Many of the participants were from minority and marginalized communities, including older adults and people with lower incomes, or served these communities in their roles as educators or other professionals. Each program participant received a mindfulness activity packet and a bottle of bubbles. Programs were held for Buffalo Public School #74 Hamlin Park Claude & Ouida Clapp Academy; Buffalo Public School #76 Herman Badillo Bilingual Academy; Buffalo Federation of Neighborhood Centers (BFNC); Buffalo Psychiatric Center; Buffalo Public Schools Adult Education Division; Danceability, Inc.; Gerard Place; and Northwest Buffalo Community Center. Audiences included K-2 students, camp and school staff, adult residents with mental health conditions, adult ESL and GED students, students with special needs, teachers, and parents.

The mindfulness program goals for 2025 were to teach 3 formal mindfulness programs to school children, 3 to adult groups, and 2 to youth program staff, all with participants who are either from marginalized groups or work with marginalized groups. The ECOHE exceeded this goal, delivering 16 mindfulness programs in 2025. The table below shows the number of programs completed in 2025 as well as the number of participants and partner organizations.

Figure 15: Number of Mindfulness Programs and Participants

Event Location	Number of Programs	Number of Participants
BPS #74 Hamlin Park Claude & Ouida Clapp Academy	4	114
BPS #76 Herman Badillo Bilingual Academy	1	8
Buffalo Federation of Neighborhood Centers	1	4
Buffalo Psychiatric Center	1	40
Buffalo Public Schools Adult Education Division	5	53
Danceability, Inc.	1	6
Gerard Place	1	16
Northwest Buffalo Community Center	2	35

Feedback on the mindfulness program has been positive. Feedback included:

"Thank you! You don't know how much I need this."

"Blowing bubbles are good for panic attacks."

"I'm going to do the 5-4-3-2-1 activity with my son."

One participant who is working on quitting smoking loved getting a bottle of bubbles and learning that it is a relaxing activity, stating,
"[Blowing] bubbles: hand to mouth substitute for smoking."

In 2025, the ECOHE created a webpage on the ECDOH website that explains what mindfulness is, its benefits, and activities that people can do to enhance their quality of life. Additionally, content from the mindfulness program was integrated into an updated version of the ECOHE's *Let's Talk About Mental Health* publication, which will be reissued in 2026.

In 2026, the ECOHE will enhance mindfulness program offerings and resources by adding simple mindfulness activities to the ECOHE Mindfulness program webpage. This online resource will help adults and children practice mindfulness anytime anywhere.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH SPECIAL HEALTH CARE NEEDS (CYSHCN)

Children and adolescents face unique health related challenges. In Erie County, like many other areas of the country, youth are more diverse and therefore more likely to belong to a racial or ethnic minority community or to be foreign born compared to older individuals. This often puts them at risk for poor health outcomes.^[7] Financial stability can be a major barrier to a healthy childhood and, in Erie County, 19.0% of children under the age of 18 live in poverty.^[10] In the ECOHE's *Health Equity in Erie County: 2023 Annual Report*, survey respondents reported numerous challenges to finding childcare including affordability, availability and the quality of care.^[8] Additionally, 25% of respondents who have young children report that lack of childcare is a challenge to accessing health care.

The Erie County Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN, pronounced "shin") Program seeks to improve the coordination of care for children and youth who have special health care needs. This program serves families with infants, children, and youth from birth to 21 years old who have serious or chronic medical, physical, behavioral, emotional, or developmental conditions. A diagnosis is not required for enrollment in the Erie County CYSHCN Program.

The CYSHCN Program matches families with community resources and provides referrals to community programs. The CYSHCN Program can also help by providing advocacy with health care providers and school districts, linkage with medical providers and specialists, and assistance with health insurance. The CYSHCN Program can assist with linkage to special education services, support groups, play groups, educational resources, and job and vocational counseling. The CYSHCN Program can also assist older youth with the transition from pediatric to adult services.

CYSHCN programs are administered by local health departments across New York State. Because of its unique location within the ECOHE, Erie County's CYSHCN Program is setting the standard for navigating special health care needs through an equity lens. This includes addressing the social determinants of health and structural barriers such as racism and other forms of discrimination that affect CYSHCN and their families. The CYSHCN program began calendar year 2025 with 100 enrolled participants. During the year, 16 additional participants were enrolled. Fourteen cases were closed due to participants moving out of the county (1), being lost to follow-up (11), or at the request of a parent or caregiver (2). As a result, the program ended calendar year 2025 with 102 active participants. In 2025, 58% of the children and youth enrolled in the Erie County CYSHCN Program were male and 42% were female. 95% of participating households spoke English as their primary language. In The figures below and on the next page show additional 2025 participant demographic data for the Erie County CYSHCN Program.

Figure 16: Percent of Erie County CYSHCN Participants in 2025 by Age Group

Age	Percent of Participants
0-5	35%
6-11	41%
12-17	20%
18-21	4%

Figure 17: Erie County CYSHCN Participants in 2025 by Race and Ethnicity

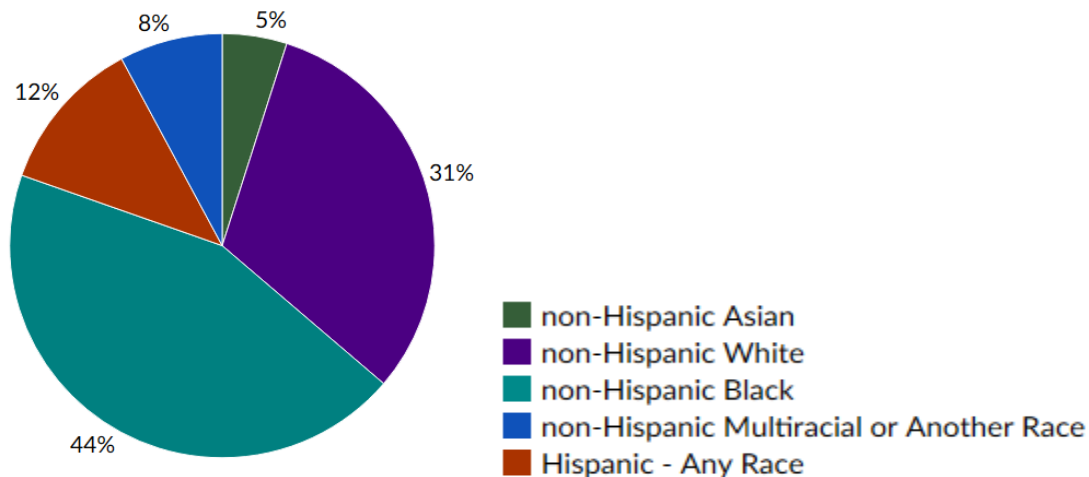
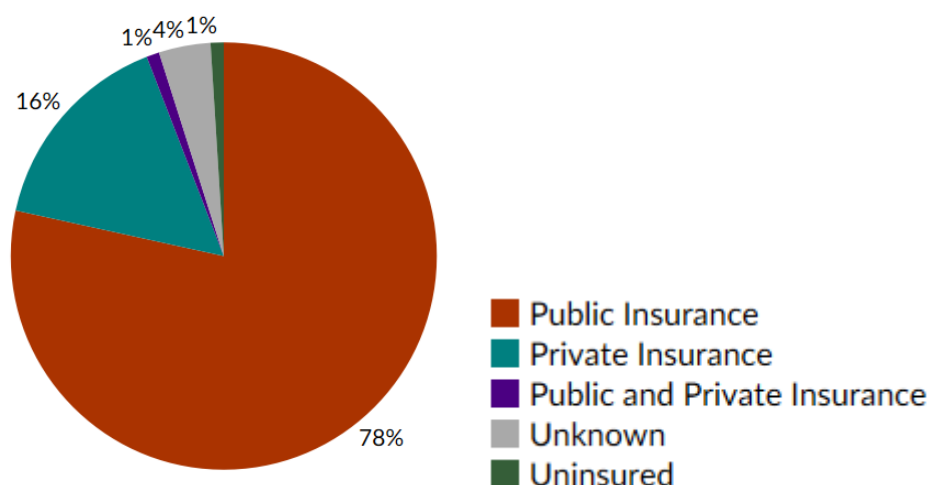


Figure 18: Erie County CYSHCN Participants in 2025 by Insurance Coverage



In 2025, the CYSHCN Program continued to focus on improving outreach and engagement to better reach eligible families and to use data to inform service design and delivery. The program remains committed to providing trauma-informed, culturally specific, gender-responsive, timely, and individualized services that reflect community needs, while actively involving caregivers in program planning and improvement efforts. In August 2025, a part-time Outreach Aide was hired to support the CYSHCN Program's outreach and engagement initiatives. This position was created to expand outreach efforts, increase program visibility, update and maintain resources, assist families with information and referrals, and strengthen partnerships with medical providers, daycare centers, schools, and community organizations across Erie County.

In 2025, the Erie County CYSHCN Program continued to prioritize efforts to ensure that families with CYSHCN had opportunities to connect with resources and services that meet their needs. To facilitate this, the CYSHCN Program hosted the Night at the Museum

(NATM) with CYSHCN Family Resource Fair in August 2025 at the Buffalo Museum of Science. NATM was a free event designed to assist families with accessing resources while offsetting childcare costs by offering families free access to the museum. NATM created an environment where a variety of organizations and agencies were available to families all in one location. There were 149 CYSHCN family members and 24 community organizations in attendance. These organizations provided resources and information about mental health care, childcare, health insurance, health care, dental care, parent support, legal support, workforce development, recreation, and more. While children explored the museum, parents and caregivers were able to ask questions, learn about new services, and connect with local organizations.

NATM attendees were able to learn life-saving skills through hands-only CPR trainings provided by UBMD Orthopedics and Sports Medicine and Buffalo Black Nurses as well as Narcan trainings provided by the Erie County Office of Harm Reduction. As a result of the event, 29 families received life-saving training in Narcan administration, CPR, or both. A registered dietician presented fun and interactive “bite size science” nutrition activities including making fruit caviar and color-changing fizzy lemonade. The event also included two bubble shows for family-friendly, science-based entertainment.



CYSHCN Program families engage with community organizations at Night at the Museum.



CYSHCN Program families enjoy a bubble show from “The Bubbleman” Doug Rougeux.



CYSHCN Program families learn hands-only CPR.

It was crucial that NATM address barriers experienced by families with CYSHCN. To address the issue of transportation, families were provided with free NFTA day passes, and a nutritious meal to help address the social determinants of health that impact CYSHCN and their families. Restrictions, allergies, and accommodations were addressed. Families were able to utilize a comfort room on the main floor of the museum for resting and quiet time, and sensory bags that included noise-reducing headphones and fidget tools were available at no cost from the museum.

All feedback received to date has been positive, with participating families unanimously rating the event as 5 out of 5 (Excellent). Feedback from participating families included:

"[What I liked best was] how organized and friendly everyone I encountered was."

"The bubble show, all the resources, and pizza was really good."

"I didn't see a single flaw."

"Arrange this program every year in the same place."

Feedback from participating partner organizations included:

"Everything about this event was phenomenal—from the staff to the space to the planning. We would happily do this again. The food was great too!"

"Great engagement with families. A schedule of activities at each table was helpful. Very smooth!"

"This was a well-resourced event with a great flow that allowed meaningful conversations. The sensory tools were a hit, and families were extremely grateful."

"The quality and care shown to each participant was outstanding. Keep up the amazing, intentional work!"

"This was an amazing event, and I can't wait to participate in more in the future!"

In 2025, the CYSHCN Program developed a Holiday Considerations Tip Sheet to support families in navigating the holiday season while caring for children with special health care needs. This resource was designed to provide practical guidance, promote family support, and help families manage typical holiday challenges, reinforcing the CYSHCN Program's commitment to responsive, family-centered support.

The Erie County CYSHCN Program strives to advance health equity by reducing structural barriers, including racism and other forms of discrimination, that impact the health and wellbeing of children and youth with special health care needs and their families and will continue to advocate for an equity-centered approach to services and care. In the future, the Erie County CYSHCN Program will continue to connect with community organizations and partners, such as school systems, childcare providers, and medical providers to identify unmet needs and challenges for CYSHCN and their families. With the addition of the Outreach Aide position, the CYSHCN Program aims to improve outreach and engagement to reach eligible families and to use data to improve service design. The CYSHCN program also strives to center parent and caregiver voices in program planning and improvement and will implement listening sessions with parents and caregivers in 2026.

BREASTFEEDING, CHESTFEEDING, AND LACTATION FRIENDLY ERIE COUNTY

The goal of Breastfeeding, Chestfeeding, and Lactation Friendly Erie County is to create more equitable systems of support and protection for breastfeeding and chestfeeding in Erie County, particularly among marginalized and underserved populations and communities. This initiative is a partnership with Catholic Charities WIC and the United Way of Buffalo & Erie County and is funded through the NYS Department of Health's Breastfeeding, Chestfeeding, Lactation Friendly New York (BFFNY) grant. The initiative recruits and establishes New York State designated Breastfeeding, Chestfeeding, and Lactation Friendly Worksites across Erie County, providing support for employees to express milk at work. Grant funds can be used to help a worksite acquire necessary lactation room items such as a mini-refrigerator, door lock, table, chair, or room dividers. The initiative also provides community education around breastfeeding, chestfeeding, and lactation, with a focus on marginalized and underserved populations and communities. The cities and towns in Erie County covered by the BFFNY Grant are Buffalo, Lackawanna, Tonawanda, Brant, Cheektowaga, Collins, and Concord.

Breastfeeding, chestfeeding, and lactation have health benefits for both babies and parents. Babies who drink human milk have a lower risk of asthma, obesity, and type 1 diabetes. Breastfeeding, chestfeeding, and lactation can also reduce a parent's risk of breast and ovarian cancer, type 2 diabetes, and high blood pressure.^{[\[18\]](#)}

According to the *Erie County Community Health Assessment (CHA) 2022-24*, disparities in breastfeeding and chestfeeding exist by race, income, and place of residence.^[19] Rates of exclusive breastfeeding and chestfeeding were lower among non-Hispanic Black families and Hispanic families than among families of other races. Exclusive breastfeeding and chestfeeding rates were also lower among low-income families. The lowest percentages of exclusive breastfeeding occur in more rural and more highly urban areas of Erie County. Barriers to breastfeeding and chestfeeding for parents who were unable to for as long as they wanted or at all included access to lactation education, professional support, peer support, workplace support, and free or low-cost supplies.

In 2025, the ECOHE, the United Way of Buffalo & Erie County, and Catholic Charities WIC worked together to plan and execute a panel discussion about breastfeeding, chestfeeding, and lactation. Deputy County Executive Lisa Chimera and United Way of Buffalo & Erie County's President & CEO Trina Burruss were the guest speakers. There were panelists from Care Management Coalition of WNY, Kaleida Health, Hodgson Russ LLP, and Catholic Charities WIC. Local businesses and organizations were invited to come and learn about the updated NYS Labor Law Section 206-c, the ECDOH's process for designating workspaces, the benefits of having lactation spaces for employees, and how to set up a lactation program. Resources distributed at the event included the ECOHE's



Two social media posts highlighting the Breastfeeding, Chestfeeding, and Lactation Friendly Erie County panel discussion



Let's Talk About Pregnancy and *Let's Talk About Mental Health* publications. The ECOHE's goal was to have at least 16 organizations attend the panel discussion. A total of 16 people from 7 organizations joined the event. Two organizations applied for and received the designation after attending the program.



Breastfeeding, Chestfeeding and Lactation Friendly Erie County Worksite Seminar for HR Personel, Business Owners and Leadership Staff

Wednesday, April 2, 2025 9am-10:30am
United Way, 742 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14209

Expert panel discussion about compliance with the NEW 2025 New York State and Federal Labor Laws with perspectives from health care providers, human resources, community and business representatives.

Learn how your business or organization can earn the Breastfeeding, Chestfeeding and Lactation Friendly Worksite designation from the Erie County Department of Health.

For more information or to register for the free event:

Email: healthequity@erie.gov

Call: 716-858-4752

Visit: <https://www3.erie.gov/health/form/breastfeeding-chestfeeding-event>



UNITED WAY
Buffalo & Erie County

**ERIE COUNTY
OFFICE OF HEALTH EQUITY**



**Erie County
Department of
Health**



www.erie.gov/health-equity

Breastfeeding, Chestfeeding, and Lactation Friendly Erie County panel discussion flyer

In 2025, the ECOHE designated 11 worksites: 6 in Buffalo, 3 in Amherst, 1 in Hamburg, and 1 in Orchard Park. The designated sites are:

- Buffalo Convention Center, Buffalo;
- Jericho Road Community Health Center, Buffalo;
- West Side Bazaar/WEDI, Buffalo;
- West Side Community Services, Buffalo;
- Beechwood Continuing Care - Beechwood Homes, Amherst;
- Buffalo Federation of Neighborhood Centers - Admin Offices, Buffalo;
- Mental Health Advocates of WNY, Buffalo; and
- BestSelf, Amherst (2), Hamburg, Orchard Park.

For a full list of Breastfeeding, Chestfeeding and Lactation Designated Worksites in Erie County, visit <https://www3.erie.gov/health/breastfeeding-chestfeeding-and-lactation-designated-worksites-erie-county>.

Feedback from employees of Breastfeeding, Chestfeeding and Lactation Designated Worksites in Erie County is included below.

"So far, I'm the only employee that has made use of it and definitely appreciate having it available to me when I need it. Having a comfortable private space at work to be able to express breastmilk has made me feel incredibly supported as a new mother and valued as an employee. The ability to easily pump at the office has helped me keep up my breastfeeding journey for 21 months and counting!"

"It was great to have a private room available to pump. I do not have any complaints to report. Thanks for organizing the room!"

In 2025, the ECOHE began drafting a publication on breastfeeding, chestfeeding, and lactation that will be published and distributed in 2026. In 2026, Breastfeeding, Chestfeeding, and Lactation Friendly Erie County will continue to prioritize site designation for workplaces that recruit employees from marginalized groups, as well as to concentrate efforts in Brant, Collins, Concord, Cheektowaga, Tonawanda, and Lackawanna because these places have few or no special worksites.

BRAIN HEALTH

Alzheimer's and other dementias disproportionately affect Black, Latino/Hispanic, Asian, and American Indian/Alaska Native individuals as well as members of the LGBTQ+ community.^[20] Black individuals are about two times more likely and Latino/Hispanic individuals about 1.5 times more likely than White individuals to have Alzheimer's and

other dementias. Challenges with economic stability and neighborhood and built environment, including neighborhood disadvantages and persistent low wages, have been linked with higher dementia risk.

Building Our Largest Dementia Infrastructure for Alzheimer's Act (BOLD) is a federal law that directs the CDC to strengthen the U.S. public health infrastructure. Through BOLD, the CDC has allocated funding to the states to create a strong public health infrastructure that supports and promotes dementia risk reduction, early detection and diagnosis, prevention of avoidable hospitalizations, and dementia caregiving.

The activities outlined in BOLD are designed to create a strengthened national public health infrastructure with a focus on:

- Reducing risk;
- Increasing early detection and diagnosis;
- Preventing avoidable hospitalizations; and
- Supporting dementia caregiving.

In 2024, NYSDOH received funding from the CDC to pilot BOLD initiatives across NYS in partnership with the Alzheimer's Association. NYSDOH chose Erie County as the first pilot location for this project. A planning team consisting of members from NYSDOH, Alzheimer's Association of WNY (ALZ), ECDOH, ECOHE, and SUNY University at Albany was assembled to carry out the pilot.

On September 18, 2024, NYSDOH and the Alzheimer's Association of WNY held a training titled Advancing Brain Health and Risk Reduction Strategies: A Public Health Approach to Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias (ADRD). As a result of the initial BOLD training in 2024, the Work Group for Advancing Brain Health (Work Group) was established to continue brain health work and outreach in Erie County. Several ECOHE staff, NYS DOH, ALZ staff, and other county entities comprised the Work Group.

The BOLD collaboration also led to the joint authoring of the *Let's Talk About Brain Health* publication with ALZ in 2025. The development of this publication was collaborative. ALZ identified key topics and provided source information and images. The ECOHE drafted the publication utilizing the Office's established content, design, and plain language standards and practices, then worked with the ALZ to finalize the draft. This publication was then adapted by ALZ for use across New York State. The *Let's Talk About Brain Health* publication was shared at community events and distributed to community partners. For more information on the ECOHE's publications, including *Let's Talk About Brain Health*, see page 36.

The Work Group for Advancing Brain Health met monthly through 2025. The Work Group evolved throughout the course of the year to center CBO leaders and local ALZ chapter staff with local and state health departments shifting into more supportive roles. The ECOHE continues to be represented in the Work Group and continues to encourage CBOs

to participate. One key request of the Work Group was to create a home for brain health information on [erie.gov](https://www3.erie.gov/health/brain-health). The content from the *Let's Talk About Brain Health* publication, along with resources from ALZ were posted on <https://www3.erie.gov/health/brain-health>.

This work continues to move forward in Erie County and across NYS. NYSDOH continues to utilize what they learned in the Erie County BOLD pilot to model the curriculum and efforts in other counties. In 2025, Team Keeley of Cohort 10 of the Health Foundation for Western & Central New York's Health Leadership Fellows program created the 10-10-3 Brain Health Challenge in collaboration with ALZ and the ECOHE. The 10-10-3 Brain Health Challenge helps community members learn the 10 early signs and symptoms of dementia and the 10 healthy habits for brain health. The 10-10-3 Brain Health Challenge invites participants to choose 3 of the 10 healthy habits. Grounded in the idea that anyone can make 3 small changes, this strategy was designed to make the 10 healthy habits for brain health more attainable. In June 2025, the ECOHE presented on the *Let's Talk About Brain Health* publication to an attentive and engaged audience at a meeting of the Norfolk Ave Block Club #1.

During Diabetes Awareness Month in November 2025, the Erie County Department for the Aging (ECDA) hosted three brain food cooking demonstrations to highlight that healthy eating can support both brain health and diabetes management. Because the Work Group helped participants understand the connections between brain health interventions and other chronic illness interventions, the ECDA invited ALZ, the ECOHE, and the Buffalo Center for Health Equity to participate in this workshop series. The ECOHE attended and presented at each of the following events:

1. November 7, 2025, at the William-Emslie YMCA;
2. November 14, 2025, at Schiller Park Senior Center; and
3. November 20, 2025, at the Buffalo Urban League Senior Center (Clemmon H. Hodges Senior Community Center).

During each one-hour session, attendees explored the strong connection between diet, diabetes prevention, and long-term brain health. Experts highlighted that type 2 diabetes is not only a major health concern on its own, but also a significant risk factor for developing Alzheimer's disease and other dementias

In December 2025, the Commissioner of Health, the ECOHE, NYSDOH, and ALZ offered NYSACHO information about promoting brain health and shared accomplishments from the pilot program and partnership.

ARTICLE 6 PERFORMANCE INCENTIVE PROGRAM

In 2012, New York State changed Article 6 of the Public Health Law to include statewide programs that provided an incentive award for county health departments who met set deliverables related to a statewide goal set by the NYSDOH. In 2024, ECDOH completed deliverables for and was granted a Year 12 award. The statewide goal of the Year 12 Performance Incentive Program was to prevent long-term health problems by encouraging people to be physically active in their communities.

In Erie County, only about 75% of adults participate in any leisure-time physical activity.^[17] Barriers to exercise can include cost, lack of access to gym, feeling unsafe to exercise, lack of time, pre-existing medical conditions, lack of exercise knowledge, or lack of interest. According to the ECOHE's *Health Equity in Erie County: 2023 Annual Report*, survey respondents who had no access to a personal vehicle were much more likely to report that lack of gym access is a barrier to exercise.^[8]

18% of people who did not report any use of a personal vehicle reported that lack of transportation is a barrier to recreation. Therefore, improving access for residents in Erie County and addressing transportation issues can help promote physical activity in safe outdoor spaces. Many communities experiencing this challenge are in the city of Buffalo, which is home to a diverse group who are often overlooked.

With the \$24,486 award Erie County received from this incentive program, the ECOHE focused on raising awareness, improving transportation access, and supporting events that encourage healthy living in underserved communities. In 2025, the Erie County In Motion campaign was created to meet the goals of the Year 12 incentive. The Erie County In Motion campaign includes a webpage that serves as an information hub as well as specially designed commuter bags. This initiative focuses on chronic disease prevention through increased physical activity and improved access to healthy, outdoor spaces. Through Erie County In Motion, community members can explore resources for obtaining a bicycle, joining local bike clubs, accessing public parks and trails, and so much more all in one place.

Year 12 incentive funds were used to purchase 400 Erie County In Motion branded universal backpacks to give away to promote self-sufficiency, community, and wellness and overall healthier lifestyle. Organizations serving communities most impacted by health disparities will be prioritized. Distribution will be implemented through community organizations that promote physical activity while addressing barriers such as limited safe spaces to exercise, financial constraints, long working hours, or caregiving responsibilities, demonstrating that achieving healthy movement doesn't have to be perfect or time consuming. Community members are also encouraged to complete specified activities in a checklist to be entered in a drawing for commuter bags, encouraging opportunity and health promotion for all Erie County residents. For more information on Erie County In Motion, visit erie.gov/inmotion.



Erie County In Motion commuter bag



Erie County In Motion flyer

In 2025, ECDOH also completed deliverables for and was granted a Year 13 award. The statewide goal of the Year 13 Performance Incentive Program focuses on climate change and public health and is currently being planned for 2026. The ECOHE is eager to help raise awareness and promote topics related to climate and health. The ECOHE is working to make sure these programs are available to everyone, especially those in underserved communities, to improve health and wellness for all.

FIND FRESH ERIE COUNTY

In 2024, the ECOHE applied for and received a \$99,708 grant award from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for a Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP). Implementation of the ECOHE FMPP grant project, Find Fresh Erie County, began in 2025 and will continue in 2026 in partnership with the Food Policy Council of Buffalo (FPC) and Erie County and 211 WNY (VIA). Find Fresh Erie County is a two-pronged campaign to connect residents with local farmers and farmers markets for fresh foods. Grant activities include creating a promotional campaign for farmers markets within low food access communities and utilizing 211 WNY's information text services to help Erie County residents find nearby locations selling fresh produce using a live database of local fresh food purchasing locations. This pilot program is designed to improve health outcomes and food access while supporting the local agricultural community.

In 2025, the project team assembled all relevant fresh food data for 211 WNY's system and webpages for the Find Fresh Erie County texting campaign and related ad campaign. With concerns about access to critical programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) due to the onset of the federal government shutdown in the fall of 2025, the ECOHE and 211 WNY worked together to pivot the function of the texting campaign to provide additional emergency food resources to callers and those opting into the texting platform, thus improving the resource's usefulness. By the time the ad campaign was fully installed, the Find Fresh Erie County resource page included additional links to emergency food resources. Those opting into the texting platform were given the option to receive both resources.

The Find Fresh Erie County texting campaign will continue in 2026 with an additional related ad campaign during the 2026 growing season. The promotional campaign for farmers markets within low food access communities will launch in spring of 2026. For more information on Find Fresh Erie County, visit <https://www3.erie.gov/health/find-fresh-erie-county>.

FOOD POLICY COUNCIL OF BUFFALO & ERIE COUNTY

In Erie County, 12.3% of the population did not have access to a reliable source of food during the past year.^[10] Only 51.1% of adults in Erie County with an annual household income of less than \$25,000 have perceived food security.^[17] Additionally, 33% of adults in Erie County report consuming no fruits or vegetables daily.^[10] When asked about

challenges to eating healthy in the 2022 ECOHE Community Survey, affordability was listed as a challenge by 38% of Latino/Hispanic respondents. Additionally, the survey found the 57% of respondents from racial and ethnic minority groups indicated that they use SNAP/WIC to buy food compared to only 38% of White respondents.^[8]

The Food Policy Council of Buffalo and Erie County (FPC) is an advisory body seated within Erie County government and comprised of appointed members and community stakeholders. This group of County staff, food system professionals, and community leaders makes policy recommendations, shares important food system knowledge, and advises on key food access issues across Erie County. The body is led by chairperson Sarah Gatti, Principle Planner in the Erie County Department of Environment and Planning (DEP), with staff support from the Erie County Office of Health Equity (ECOHE), Erie County Department of Social Services, Erie County Senior Services, Erie County Board of Health, and the Deputy County Executive's Office.

The FPC has representation from a large number of community organizations and institutions including but not limited to:

- Buffalo Bills Foundation;
- Buffalo Go Green;
- City of Buffalo Office of Strategic Planning;
- Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County;
- FeedMore WNY;
- Food For All;
- FreshFix Buffalo;
- Greater Buffalo Urban Growers Group;
- Groundwork Market Garden;
- Harvest NY;
- Springville Board of Trustees;
- University at Buffalo; and
- WNY Food as Medicine Coalition.

In 2025, the FPC and the ECOHE implemented a \$1.2 million dollar New York Food for New York Families (NYFNFF) grant from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (AGM). This funding allowed the FPC and ECOHE to bring fresh, locally produced fresh food products to daycares across Erie County. The Equitable Food System Initiative (EFSI) was a two-pronged approach designed to develop and strengthen local food systems and address food insecurity in Buffalo and Erie County. The EFSI utilized two complementary strategies to balance urgently needed action and change with careful and intentional planning and sustainability efforts. For the Farm to Families Project, the direct-action component of this initiative, the FPC and ECOHE worked with FreshFix, a subcontracted local produce packaging and delivery service on this initiative. The Equitable Food Systems Initiative provided free bags of locally produced fresh food items

and weekly educational emails with relevant recipes, producer information, and information about preparation, storage, and use of each bag's contents to Erie County childcare facilities serving no income, low income, and ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) families. Through this project, the FPC and ECOHE provided over 400 families with free produce bags weekly for over 50 weeks. Simultaneously, the EFSI's Policy, Advocacy, & Education efforts worked to build sustainable infrastructure, networks, systems, and policies, as well as to increase education and awareness around food equity and justice at every level of the community.

In 2025, federal budget cuts placed significant strain on food systems nationwide. These disruptions were felt deeply in Western New York. The FPC played a crucial role in ensuring that Erie County was as prepared as possible to respond during a year of significant instability. With support and guidance from the FPC, Erie County leadership was able to take decisive action, including allocating \$1 million to FeedMore WNY, to stabilize the emergency food system during a time of severe strain. The FPC also launched and coordinated the Erie County Food Drive, supporting FeedMore WNY with 2,000+ pounds of food and financial contributions amidst ongoing gaps in SNAP benefit timing and persistent food insecurity.

Meanwhile, the FPC was able to maintain momentum, support local agriculture, and integrate food systems considerations across County programs and planning efforts. The FPC sponsored a local government training, NYS Agricultural Districts and Farm-Friendly Zoning, providing essential knowledge for 45 municipal officials. The FPC continues to meaningfully shape County strategy, programs, and tools. In 2025, FPC insights directly supported:

- Find Fresh Erie: Ad campaign promoting a text service connecting residents to fresh food resources, alongside a farmers market coupon component.
- Erie Grown: Webpage strengthening local producer visibility and agritourism connections.
- Integrated Reviews: Land use review protocol now ensures that food systems are considered during review.
- Advocacy: Worked with producers to write a letter to NYS AGM advocating for an updated definition to the regulated term, 'farm operation', that includes collaborative farming models and would make such business operations eligible for farmland protections and funding resources.

Additionally, in collaboration with the Bills Foundation and the Erie County Office of Equal Employment Opportunity, the FPC organized two informational sessions on Minority- and Women-owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) certification. Over 200 food system businesses were invited and 70 participated. Businesses participating in these info sessions were invited to receive 1:1 support from the Bills Foundation's consultant, Developments by JEM, with the goal of achieving MWBE certification and/or business

expansion in 2026. The FPC coordinated a tour of MWBE-eligible producers, processors, and food-related business owners for the Highmark Stadium concessionaire, Legends Global, advancing equitable local procurement and visibility for underrepresented growers. Participants were also connected directly with Legends in alignment with the New Highmark Stadium Community Benefits Agreement (CBA). In order to meet the CBA, Legends is expected to launch initiatives to maximize the participation of local businesses in retail, maintenance, and concessions, including contracting with MWBEs.

It is recommended that the FPC continue to work with the ECOHE, other Erie County Departments, and the County Executive's office to expand food access, influence food policy, and provide food system outreach, technical support, and education for Erie County residents and visitors.

LIVE WELL ERIE IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

Live Well Erie (LWE) is a collaborative vision in which Erie County government and our many partners will work together to develop community strategies to help residents be healthier and better able to realize their full potential. It is designed to focus on meaningful improvements in the social determinants of health and wellbeing in three populations: children, working families, and seniors.

The LWE Implementation Team is comprised of leadership positions, chairs, and co-chairs of each working group. The LWE Implementation Team sets the vision, coordinates meetings, reviews process and metrics, and provides any other needed support to operations of LWE.

The ECOHE has three staff members that sit on the LWE Implementation Team. These staff ensure that LWE maintains a clear focus on health equity and the social determinants of health, and that no Erie County residents, especially those from marginalized or minority groups, are left behind. ECOHE staff on the LWE Implementation Team also provide data expertise to help decision making, goal and progress tracking, and accountability.

NEXT STEPS & RECOMMENDATIONS

NEXT STEPS

Next steps for the ECOHE include the rollout of Year 1 of the Health to Your Home Pilot Program in 2026. The Health to Your Home Pilot Program will utilize social networking as a novel strategy to address health care access among three key minority, marginalized, and disadvantaged populations as defined by the Erie County Health Equity Act of 2021: Black residents and the LGBTQ+ community in Year 1, and rural populations in Year 2. The pilot will provide two cohorts of 200 Erie County residents with training on a variety of health topics as well as home medical testing supplies to be shared with up to 4 people in their social networks who do not currently engage with or underutilize the health care system. Home medical testing supplies will directly relate to health disparities in serious, chronic, and often preventable diseases with a focus on heart health and respiratory health. Educational content and materials will be distributed utilizing community-based organizations as community hubs.

Other next steps include the launch of the Health Equity Professionals Training Program. The Health Equity Professionals Training Program is a quarterly, no-cost professional development initiative designed to support businesses and organizations seeking to embed a health equity focus into the fabric of their operations, policies, and service delivery models. Developed in alignment with the Erie County Health Equity Act of 2021, this ECOHE program reflects the Act's mandate to analyze disparities, promote public awareness, and improve delivery and access to health services for county residents most impacted by poor health outcomes. The Health Equity Professionals Training Program will advance these objectives by equipping leaders and practitioners with practical tools to operationalize equity within their own institutions.

The ECOHE will continue to serve as a resource to organizations and individuals in the community that are striving to reduce health disparities and increase health equity in Erie County. The ECOHE brings its subject matter expertise in data collection, analysis, and reporting as well as grant writing and grants management assistance to those who would like support in these areas in order to further their health equity work. The ECOHE will continue to provide upstream support including engagement, education, and resources to the Erie County community. Future ECOHE reports will analyze new data collected by the ECOHE team as well as report on findings of analysis of public (federal, state, county, and city) and private data sources.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONS

Under the Erie County Health Equity Act of 2021, the ECOHE is tasked with understanding and connecting factors that contribute to health outcomes and making recommendations for improving delivery and access to health services. Every system, organization, and individual can help advance health equity in Erie County through actions large and small. If each of us does our part within the scope of our role, we can address health disparities and achieve health equity in our communities. See *Health Equity in Erie County: 2024 Annual Report* for previously recommended actions, including:

- Use plain language in communications;
- Reduce or eliminate formal education requirements for employment;
- Create or update workplace lactation policies;
- Consider adopting or expanding paid parental leave policies;
- Revise gender identity policies in compliance with GENDA;
- Utilize language access resources;
- Disaggregate minority populations when collecting data; and
- Expand opportunities for community input and feedback.^[21]

The ECOHE also recommends the following actions and policies to address SDOH factors driving Erie County's health outcomes.

Credible Sources, Data Availability, Shifting Reliability, Archiving Information

Public health depends heavily on the use of credible, transparent, and well-documented data sources. Anyone working in the field of health equity relies on accurate data to track disease trends, identify disparities, and evaluate the effectiveness of policies and interventions. Using credible sources—such as government surveillance systems, peer-reviewed research, and established data repositories—ensures that analyses are grounded in reliable evidence rather than anecdote or misinformation. When data sources are well documented and methodologically sound, they enable consistent comparisons over time and across jurisdictions. This credibility is especially critical in public health, where data often guide decisions about funding, policy, and interventions that affect entire populations.

However, in 2025 the availability of public health data became increasingly uncertain due to shifts in federal priorities, funding decisions, and policy directives. Changes in administrative priorities have resulted in the removal, alteration, or suspension of a substantial number of federal health datasets and webpages. For example, analyses found that more than 200 datasets—about 13% of those hosted by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)—were removed from public access within a few weeks in early 2025.^[22] These changes occurred alongside broader removals of thousands of government webpages and datasets across federal agencies, affecting topics such as health equity, reproductive health, HIV, and social determinants of health. In addition to

removals, some surveillance programs and reporting systems were delayed or paused due to staffing cuts and shifting funding priorities, creating gaps in national health monitoring.^[23] The ripple effects of these changes extend beyond federal agencies. When national data systems are disrupted, state and local organizations that depend on these data may no longer be able to maintain or update tools like public health dashboards.

These developments also raise concerns about the reliability of online public health information. Historically, many researchers and practitioners assumed that federal websites and widely used data portals would remain stable, transparent sources of information. Recent events demonstrate that online data sources can change rapidly due to political, financial, or administrative pressures. Datasets may be removed, terminology may be modified, or documentation may not fully reflect updates. Researchers have noted that a significant share of altered federal datasets lacked clear documentation explaining the changes, making it difficult for analysts to determine whether differences in results reflect real trends or alterations to the underlying data.^[24] As a result, public health professionals must increasingly verify the origin, methodology, and update history of data sources rather than assuming that long-standing websites will remain consistent.

In this environment, archiving and data preservation have become essential practices for researchers and public health institutions. When datasets or web resources are removed or modified, archived copies can preserve historical data and allow analysts to reproduce earlier analyses. Universities, libraries, journalists, and independent data preservation projects have increasingly begun downloading and storing public datasets to safeguard them against future loss. Archiving not only protects the integrity of past research but also ensures that policymakers and communities retain access to evidence needed to evaluate long-term trends in health outcomes, environmental exposures, and SDOH.

In an era of shifting data availability, the ECOHE encourages community organizations to maintain local copies of critical datasets, check and document data sources carefully, and support digital preservation initiatives.

Collaborate Across Differences

Bridging is the process of building connections across differences. It involves recognizing and appreciating the commonalities and differences that exist among people, groups, or cultures, and finding ways to communicate, collaborate, and learn from each other. Bridging is key to building more equitable communities.

The benefits of collaboration should not be overlooked. Organizations that work together can increase their reach and impact, build community capacity, increase innovation and resilience, utilize collective knowledge and expertise, and share resources including grant funding. Collaboration is even more impactful across differences. Organizations with different communities of focus can work together towards common goals. Collaborating organizations from different sectors that listen to and work directly with their

communities can multiply their impact compared to what they can accomplish working separately. Multisector collaboratives—partnerships between diverse stakeholders like nonprofits, small businesses, local government, community members, schools, and health care organizations—can leverage their collective strengths and assets to promote equity and address more complex, systemic challenges.

The ECOHE is an active participant in a variety of multisector collaboratives addressing health equity for Erie County residents and encourages community organizations to actively explore, build, and maintain collaborations that increase the impact of their work.

Continue to Be Values-Driven

Every organization is driven by core values that guide and underpin every action taken, big or small. The ECOHE encourages Erie County organizations to remain committed to mission, vision, and core values that drive and guide them. Regardless of whether those values are focused on service, success, growth, or social responsibility, an organization thrives when the community in which it is rooted thrives. It is important to understand what drives health disparities because healthier communities are better for individuals and for organizations. Equity work contributes to organizational success whether or not equity is explicitly named within an organization's mission or values. No matter what brings an organization to this work or what the work is called, values-driven organizations build more equitable communities, and more equitable communities support flourishing community organizations.

Use Free or Built-In Tools to Increase Accessibility

Since its founding, the ECOHE has striven to create publications, media, and education that is legible to and inclusive of as many Erie County residents as possible through the use of plain language, visually diverse imagery, and translation into the most commonly spoken and understood languages in Erie County. The ECOHE continues to expand the collective understanding of effective communication styles, plain language, accessible visual displays of data, visually diverse imagery, preparing documents for translation, and American Disabilities Act (ADA) and WCAG compliance.

To accomplish these goals, the ECOHE utilizes a variety of tools and resources, many of which are available for free or are built into programs already widely utilized by community organizations of all sizes. Examples of free or built-in tools for use by Erie County community organizations include:

- Checking plain language and readability:
 - Flesh-Kincaid Grade level readability statistics function in Microsoft Word:
<https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/get-your-document-s-readability-and-level-statistics-85b4969e-e80a-4777-8dd3-f7fc3c8b3fd2>

- Flesh-Kincaid Grade level readability statistics function in Microsoft Outlook: <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/get-your-email-s-readability-and-level-statistics-aa374906-2a39-45e5-a735-7c7361c8fb07>
- Checking color contrast:
 - WebAIM contrast checker: <https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker>
 - AccessibilityChecker.org's color contrast checker: <https://www.accessibilitychecker.org/color-contrast-checker>
- Comprehensive accessibility testing:
 - Microsoft Office Accessibility Checker for Outlook, Word, PowerPoint, and Excel: <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/check-accessibility-while-you-work-in-office-apps-ae9e8ea7-1f22-41af-ad04-cc2919daebae>
 - Adobe Acrobat Pro Accessibility Checker: <https://helpx.adobe.com/acrobat/using/create-verify-pdf-accessibility.html>

REFERENCES

1. The Erie County Health Equity Act of 2021. Local Law Intro No. 3-1-2021 (2021). https://www2.erie.gov/legislature/sites/www2.erie.gov/legislature/files/uploads/Session_Folders/2021/15/LL%20Intro.%203-1%20%282021%29.pdf
2. Meehan, S. P. (2024, December 30). These are the 25 most unstable neighborhoods in Western New York. *Buffalo Business First*. <https://www.bizjournals.com/buffalo/news/2024/12/30/unstable-neighborhoods-western-new-york.html>
3. Historical Society of the New York Courts. (n.d.). *When did slavery end in New York?* Retrieved January 11, 2024, from <https://history.nycourts.gov/when-did-slavery-end-in-new-york/>
4. Scarsdale Historical Society. (2021). *Slavery in New York and Scarsdale*. <https://www.scarsdalehistoricalsociety.org/slavery-in-new-york-and-scarsdale>
5. Buffaloresearch.com. (n.d.). *Buffalo Underground Railroad sites*. Retrieved January 11, 2024, from <https://buffaloresearch.com/ugrr/>
6. Live Well Erie. (2021, September 21). *Live Well Erie at a glance*. <https://www4.erie.gov/livewellerie/live-well-erie-glance>
7. Erie County Department of Health, Office of Health Equity. (2023). *Health equity in Erie County: An initial disparities report*. <https://www3.erie.gov/health/sites/www3.erie.gov/health/files/2023-02/healthequityreport.pdf>
8. Erie County Department of Health, Office of Health Equity. (2024). *Health equity in Erie County: 2023 annual report*. <https://www3.erie.gov/health/health-equity-annual-report>
9. U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). 2020: DEC Demographic and Housing Characteristics [Data set]. U.S. Department of Commerce. <https://data.census.gov/table/DECENNIALDHC2020.H2?q=rural&g=050XX00US36029>
10. New York State Department of Health. (November 2024). *Erie County health indicators by race and ethnicity, 2020-2022*. https://www.health.ny.gov/community/health_equity/reports/county/erie.htm
11. U.S. Census Bureau. (2024). *QuickFacts, Erie County, New York*. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/eriecountyny/PST045224>
12. Watson, S. T. (2024, December 2). Death toll in Buffalo blizzard rises to 47 people. *The Buffalo News*. https://buffalonews.com/news/local/article_04c578e0-9814-11ed-b391-dbf7d2370f3d.html
13. Erie County Department of Health, Office of Health Equity. (2024). *Winter preparedness in the city of Buffalo: 2024 survey results & findings*. <https://www3.erie.gov/health/sites/www3.erie.gov/health/files/2024-11/winterprepbuffaloreport.pdf>
14. Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. (2022). *Sexual orientation and gender identity: Demographics and health indicators, New York State adults, 2019-2020*. New York State Department of Health. Retrieved November 30, 2022, from https://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/brfss/reports/docs/2022-16_brfss_sogi.pdf

15. Lett, E., Dowshen, N. L., & Baker, K. E. (2020). Intersectionality and health inequities for gender minority Blacks in the U.S. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 59(5), 639–647. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2020.04.013>
16. Erie County Department of Health Office of Health Equity. (2025). *Erie County community health assessment (CHA) & community health improvement plan (CHIP), 2025-2030*. <https://www3.erie.gov/health/sites/www3.erie.gov.health/files/2026-01/2025-2030-cha-chip-erie-county-doh-final.pdf>
17. New York State Department of Health. (2025, February). *New York State Prevention Agenda dashboard - county level: Erie County*. https://webbi1.health.ny.gov/SASStoredProcess/guest?_program=/EBI/PHIG/apps/dashboard/pa_dashboard&p=sh
18. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023, December 14). *Breastfeeding benefits both baby and mom*. <https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/features/breastfeeding-benefits.html>
19. Erie County Department of Health. (n.d.) *Erie County, NY, community health assessment community health improvement plan 2022-2024*. Retrieved February 11, 2025 from <https://www3.erie.gov/health/sites/www3.erie.gov.health/files/2022-06/cha.pdf>
20. Alzheimer's Association. (2025). *Health equity*. <https://www.alz.org/professionals/public-health/public-health-topics/health-equity>
21. Erie County Department of Health Office of Health Equity. (2025). *Health equity in Erie County: 2024 annual report*. https://www3.erie.gov/health/sites/www3.erie.gov.health/files/2025-12/health-equity-in-erie-county_2024-annual-report_english.pdf
22. Freilich, J., Price III, W. N., & Kesselheim, A. S. (2025). Disappearing data at the U.S. federal government. *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 392(24), e55. <https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMp2502567>
23. Jacobs, J. W., Booth, G. S., Brewer, N. T., & Freilich, J. (2026). Unexplained pauses in Centers for Disease Control and Prevention surveillance: Erosion of the public evidence base for health policy. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 179(3). <https://doi.org/10.7326/ANNALS-25-04022>
24. Wen, L. S. (2026, March 5). Why it matters that the government is messing with health databases. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2026/03/05/cdc-federal-health-data-research/>

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ACCESSIBILITY TABLES

Figure 19: Number of 2025 Community Events by ZIP Code

Event ZIP	Number of Events
14001	3
14004	3
14006	1
14033	1
14043	2
14052	5
14070	1
14075	2
14086	1
14127	1
14150	1
14201	10
14202	12
14203	16
14204	10
14206	4
14207	10
14208	17
14209	4
14210	4
14211	16
14212	5
14213	13
14214	15
14215	22
14216	4
14218	3
14220	1
14221	2
14222	3
14224	3
14225	5
14226	4
14228	3
14607	1

Figure 20: Percent of Events That Reached Each Priority Population in 2025

Priority Population	Percent of Events
CYSHCN population	46%
Ethnic Minority Populations	62%
Gender Expression or Identity Minority (Trans, non-binary, etc.)	26%
Other Populations	8%
Public Facing Employees	10%
Racial Minority	72%
Rural Populations	12%
Sexual-Orientation Minority (Gay, lesbian, queer, etc.)	23%
Socio-Economic Disadvantaged	75%

Figure 21: 2025 Emergency Kit Distribution by Urban, Suburban, and Rural

Geographic Classification	Percent of Kit Distribution
Rural	10%
Suburban	5%
Urban	85%

Figure 22: 2025 Emergency Kits Distributed by ZIP Code

ZIP Code	Number of Kits
14001	100
14052	100
14070	55
14111	100
14141	50
14201	200
14202	50
14203	175
14204	105
14206	140
14207	150
14208	200
14209	150
14210	260
14211	250

ZIP Code	Number of Kits
14212	125
14213	330
14214	225
14215	375
14218	200
14227	50

Figure 23: Distribution of Health Equity Publications Developed in 2025 by ZIP Code

ZIP Code	Number of Sites
14001	2
14004	1
14006	2
14025	3
14031	2
14033	1
14034	1
14052	2
14057	1
14059	1
14070	1
14072	2
14075	4
14080	1
14086	3
14102	1
14111	1
14127	1
14136	1
14141	2
14150	1
14171	1
14201	6
14202	5
14203	2

ZIP Code	Number of Sites
14204	3
14206	2
14207	3
14208	3
14209	5
14210	4
14211	5
14212	3
14213	6
14214	9
14215	15
14216	4
14217	1
14218	3
14219	1
14220	1
14221	6
14222	3
14223	1
14224	3
14225	2
14226	5
14227	2
14228	3
14304	1

Figure 24: Number of Participants of Each Type of Mental Health First Aid in 2025

Program	Number of Participants
MHFA	403
MHFA - Youth	211

Figure 25: Number of 2025 MHFA Participants by Erie County ZIP Code

ZIP Code	Number of Participants	ZIP Code	Number of Participants
14001	16	14150	66
14004	36	14170	5
14006	5	14201	68
14025	3	14202	22
14026	1	14203	18
14030	1	14204	45
14031	6	14206	47
14032	9	14207	70
14033	3	14208	62
14034	2	14209	58
14037	2	14210	28
14043	25	14211	79
14047	4	14212	33
14051	14	14213	92
14052	26	14214	73
14055	2	14215	166
14057	5	14216	74
14059	5	14217	52
14068	9	14218	33
14070	7	14219	8
14072	19	14220	59
14075	76	14221	78
14080	3	14222	57
14085	16	14223	54
14086	64	14224	72
14102	2	14225	58
14111	3	14226	70
14127	41	14227	44

ZIP Code	Number of Participants
14139	5
14141	8
14145	3

ZIP Code	Number of Participants
14228	31
14260	1
Unknown	104

Figure 26: Number of 2025 MHFA Participants by Age

Age Group	Number of Participants
Under 18	1
18-29 years old	158
30-39 years old	124
40-49 years old	120
50-59 years old	105
60-69 years old	64
70 years and older	26
Do not wish to say	15
Left blank	6

Figure 27: Percent of MHFA Participants by Gender and Year

Gender	2023	2024	2025
Man	19%	26%	29%
Woman	73%	68%	68%
Trans, Nonbinary, and Other Gender Identities	1%	4%	1%
Do Not Wish to Say	6%	2%	3%

Figure 28: Percent of MHFA Participants by Race and Year

Race	2023	2024	2025
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.8%	0.3%	0.5%
Another Race	0.7%	0.5%	3%
Asian	3%	5%	27%
Black	28%	20%	1%
Middle Eastern or North African	0.5%	1%	60%
More Than One Race	5%	4%	1%
White	54%	64%	4%
Do not wish to say	5%	5%	4%

Figure 29: Erie County CYSHCN in 2025 by Race and Ethnicity

Race and Ethnicity	Percent of Participants
Non-Hispanic Asian	5%
Hispanic	12%
Non-Hispanic Black	44%
Non-Hispanic Multiracial or Another Race	8%
Non-Hispanic White	31%

Figure 30: Erie County CYSHCN Participants in 2025 by Insurance Coverage

Insurance Type	Percent of Participants
Public Insurance	78%
Private Insurance	16%
Public and Private Insurance	1%
Unknown	4%
Uninsured	1%

APPENDIX B: ERIE COUNTY HEALTH EQUITY ACT OF 2021

COUNTY OF ERIE

LOCAL LAW INTRO. NO. **3-1**-2021
 LOCAL LAW NO. _____-2021

THE ERIE COUNTY HEALTH EQUITY ACT OF 2021

A Local Law establishing an Office of Health Equity in the Erie County Department of Health dedicated to supporting, educating, and planning for the provision of public health to persons from disadvantaged backgrounds, including, but not limited to, racial and ethnic minorities, as well as persons from rural areas.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE COUNTY OF ERIE AS
 FOLLOWS:**

Section 1. Legislative Findings and Intent

Erie County is ranked in the bottom 25% of counties in New York State for health outcomes. A county's health outcome ranking is determined by the average life expectancy of county residents, the self-reported health status of individuals, and the percentage of low-birth weight newborns.

Within Erie County, there is a significant disparity between the health outcomes of white residents and residents of color. More than 50% of the minority population in Erie County die prematurely, whereas only 35% of the white population in Erie County die prematurely.

The health disparities between races is further exemplified when accounting for the cause of death, as the racial disparities between disease-related deaths as compared to injury-related deaths are significant, and persons of color die from disease-related factors at a much greater rate than corresponding white persons.

These disparities are just some of the factors that led the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to declare racism a serious public health threat this year. Racism's impact on public health is not limited to discrimination based on the color of a person's skin, as it includes the structural barriers that have been constructed over years of segregation and inequitable investment of public dollars.

In addition to mortality and disease related data, there are also significant disparities in participation in public health programs and services. This is currently being seen in COVID-19 vaccination rates where vaccination rates for persons of color and positive COVID cases and COVID-related deaths appear to have correlations (i.e. persons of color have lower vaccination rates and COVID factors are disproportionately affecting persons of color).

In 2019, the New York State Department of Health reported that in the East Side of Buffalo and Western Cheektowaga, elevated numbers of colorectal, kidney, prostate, oral, esophageal and lung cancers were present among residents. A higher use of tobacco, as well as obesity, lack of

physical activity and alcohol consumption, which are also more common in the area, may also have contributed to the cancer cluster.

Residents of rural areas also suffer from health inequities which contribute to premature death and poorer life outcomes. Factors contributing including lifestyle, as well as a shortage of health professionals and the effects of poverty.

LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, and intersex) persons experience health disparities, especially among youth. The effects of these disparities are seen in the areas of behavioral health, physical health, and access to care and are closely tied to sexual and social stigma.

According to CDC's 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), sexual minorities were more likely to report experiencing bullying, felt sad or hopeless, seriously considered suicide, used illicit substances, misused prescription drugs, and being forced to have sex (<https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/disparities/health-disparities-among-lgbtq-youth.htm>).

According to CDC, Gay men are at higher risk of HIV and other STIs, especially among communities of color, and are less likely to have health insurance than heterosexual or LGB individuals.

Transgender individuals have a high prevalence of HIV/STIs, victimization, mental health challenges, and suicide. Youth who identified as transgender in the CDC YRBS were more likely to report violence victimization, substance use, suicide risk, and sexual risk behaviors.

Although resources exist in Erie County to address health and social needs of some LGBTQ residents, a concerted effort to measure these health disparities in Erie County and collaboratively address these disparities and services gaps among Erie County agencies does not exist.

The University of Buffalo's Community Health Equity Research Institute was established in 2019 "in response to the crisis of race-based health disparities, especially in African Americans who live on the city's East Side. Remarkably, compared to White residents of Buffalo, life expectancy of African Americans is 12 years shorter, and serious, chronic, and often preventable diseases, like heart disease, diabetes, asthma and cancer are 300% greater. The primary reason for these disparities is the social determinants of health, which refer to the conditions in which people live, work, learn, play and worship."

A partner organization, the Buffalo Center for Health Equity, was also created in 2019 to act on the pioneering work of the African American Health Equity Task Force. The Center for Health Equity's mission is to "eliminate race, economic, and geographic-based health inequities in Western New York by changing the social and economic conditions that cause illness and shorten lives among the sickest of the region."

It is the intent of this legislation to create an Office of Health Equity ("OHE") within the Erie County Department of Health as well as to establish an Erie County Health Equity Advisory Board. This will establish a foundation for Erie County as a place where every resident has the opportunity to attain their full health potential and no one is disadvantaged in achieving this potential because of social position or any other socially defined circumstance.

The OHE will help ensure all minority and disadvantaged residents have equal access to preventive health care and to seek ways to promote health and prevent diseases and conditions that are prevalent among minority, marginalized, and disadvantaged populations. The OHE provides access to health care, health care education, and preventive care resources to underserved and marginalized communities and communities of color.

There is an urgent need to work to eliminate racial, economic, sexual/gender, and geographic-based health inequities that shorten or negatively-impact lives by changing the social and economic conditions that cause illness and shorten lives.

Section 2. Definitions

1. **Racial/Ethnic Minority or Person of Color:** A person or persons who identify as a member of one of the following:
 - a. Black or African-American having origins in any of the Black African racial groups;
 - b. Hispanic/Latino persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Dominican, Cuban, Central or South American of either Indian, African or Hispanic origin;
 - c. Native American or Alaskan native persons having origins in any of the original peoples of North America;
 - d. Asian and Pacific Islander persons having origins in any of the Far East nations, South-East Asia or Pacific Islands.
2. **Sexual/Gender Minority:** A person or persons who identify as a member of one of the following:
 - a. LGBTQ: Individuals who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or queer/questioning
 - b. Gay/bisexual: Persons who are attracted to or have sexual contact with someone of the same sex.
 - c. Transgender: Individuals whose current gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.
3. **Disadvantaged or Marginalized Person or Community:** A group whose members have been subjected to prejudice based on their race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic, sexual orientation, gender expression and identity, or other prejudice because of their identity as members of the group without regard to their individual qualities.
4. **Health Disparity:** A preventable difference in the burden of disease, injury, violence, or opportunities to achieve optimal health that are experienced by disadvantaged persons or populations.
5. **OHE:** The Erie County Department of Health's Office of Health Equity.

Section 3. Amending Article 5 of the Erie County Administrative Code

Erie County Local Law No. 1-1960, as amended, constituting the Erie County Administrative Code, is hereby amended at Article 5 to add a new Section 5.08 to read as follows:

LL Intro. 3-1
7/20/2021
Page 3 of 109

Section 5.08 Office of Health Equity.

There shall be within the Erie County Department of Health's Division of Health an Office of Health Equity headed by a Director of Health Equity. The Director of Health Equity shall assist the Erie County Commissioner of Health in carrying out the following functions of the Office of 'Health Equity:

- a. Analyze disparities in health, health care, and availability/accessibility to health care services among disadvantaged and marginalized Erie County populations.
- b. Understand and connect factors that contribute to health outcomes including the physical environment, the social determinants of health, access to clinical care, and health behaviors;
- c. Make recommendations for improving delivery and access to health services for disadvantaged and marginalized populations working within the Live Well Erie framework and supporting Live Well Erie objectives for improving the social determinants of health to relevant local health care agencies, and to the County Executive, County Legislature, and Commissioner of Health.
- d. Pilot models and programs to improve health disparities
- e. Promote public awareness and coordinate educational events in partnership with other health agencies with the goal of supporting healthy lifestyles in disadvantaged and marginalized communities and groups.
- f. Publish an initial needs assessment report within 18 months of the effective date of this Local Law. Such report shall present baseline data describing health disparities among racial and sexual minority populations in Erie County. The report will highlight gaps in available data and services. On an annual basis thereafter, the Commissioner of Health shall deliver to the County Executive and County Legislature a report of OHE's achievements, including but not limited to programs and services provided to advance health equity, data on populations served via OHE's outreach, and the Office's goals for the upcoming year. This annual report shall include disaggregated data to account for identifiers, including but not limited to race and zip code. The report shall also identify outcomes achieved in the context of race and zip code.
- g. Collaborate with the ECDOH Community Health Assessment (CHA) to develop a specific health disparities report as part of ECDOH's CHA prepared every three years as required by NYS and to monitor and incorporate other health disparity data already collected in the region by organizations including (but not limited to) the University at Buffalo and the Buffalo Center for Health Equity.

Section 4. Vision Statement and Mission Statement

Vision Statement:

The Office of Health Equity's vision is for all disadvantaged, marginalized, and diverse populations in Erie County, who presently experience higher rates of poor health outcomes, to achieve maximum health and wellness.

Mission Statement:

The Office of Health Equity's mission is to evaluate a wide variety of specific health outcomes among diverse populations to fully understand the depth of health disparities in Erie County and to partner with community members, healthcare providers, faith and philanthropic leaders, and organizations to enact programs that help disadvantaged, marginalized, and diverse populations in Erie County achieve maximum health and wellness.

Section 5. Erie County Health Equity Advisory Board

There shall cause to be created an Erie County Health Equity Advisory Board ("Board"). The seven (7) member Board shall serve as an advisory board to the OHE Director and the Erie County Commissioner of Health. The members of the Board shall advise Erie County in best practices on administering health care, fiscal allocations of health resources and health education to disadvantaged communities and communities of color.

Membership:

A. All appointees shall have worked in/on health issues for minorities or disadvantaged persons or have special knowledge or experience with minority or disadvantaged health issues. The Board members shall include at least one person with a medical degree or master's degree in public health.

B. The Board shall consist of seven (7) members to be appointed by the County Executive subject to confirmation by the County Legislature as follows:

1. Two (2) members to be recommended for appointment by the County Executive.
2. One (1) member to be recommended by each of the County Legislators whose legislative districts have the two highest rates of poverty according to the most recent US Bureau of the Census data.
3. One (1) member to be recommended for appointment by the Dean of the University of Buffalo's School of Public Health and Health Professions.
4. One (1) member to be recommended for appointment by the National Medical Association - Buffalo Chapter

5. One (1) member to be recommended for appointment by a community organization in Erie County with a recognized public health focus in its mission. Such organization shall submit its recommendation by letter of consideration directed to the Erie County Legislature.

C. All members of the Board shall serve three-year terms.

D. Any vacancy on the Board shall be recommended for filling by the appropriate recommending authority within 30 days of the position becoming vacant. The County Executive must appoint and County Legislature must act on the appointment within 30 days of the County Executive receiving the recommendation to fill the vacancy.

Section 6. Effective Date

This Local Law shall take effect upon filing with the New York State Secretary of State.

Section 7. Severability

If any clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivision, section or part of this law or the application thereof to any person, individual, corporation, firm, partnership, or business shall be adjudged by any court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid or unconstitutional, such order or judgment shall not affect, impair or invalidate the remainder thereof but shall be confined in its operation to the clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivision, section or part of this law, or in its specific application.

Sponsors:

April N.M. Baskin
Timothy J. Meyers
Jeanne Vinal
Howard Johnson

APPENDIX C: COALITION, COMMITTEE, WORKGROUP, AND TASK FORCE LIST

Coalition, Committee, Workgroup, or Task Force Name
1115 Waiver
African American Health Equity Task Force
CHAN Project Team Meeting - CDC Foundation (VISION Thrive)
COAD
COAD: Communications Sub Workgroup (Additional focused committee)
COAD: Preparedness Sub Workgroup
COAD: Response Sub Workgroup
COAD: Recovery Sub Workgroup
Community Health Needs Assessment Work Group
Commuter Coalition
CTSI CAB
East Side Transformation Project
ECLIPSE
Erie County Extreme Temperature Plan
Food as Medicine Think Tank - Symposium Planning Committee
Food Policy Council Action Planning Committee
Food Policy Council (FPC) Voting member
FPC Executive Committee
FPC Governance Committee
FPC Outreach Committee
FPC Procurment Working Group
Gun Violence Prevention Task Force
HealthELink & LHD
HealthLink Regional Health
HealthLink Maternal Health
Healthy Community Store Initiative (HCSI)
Igniting Hope Conference Planning Committee
Lead Poisoning Prevention Task Force
Leadsafe Erie County
LGBTQ+ Shelter
Live Well Erie Children's Working Group
Live Well Erie Implementation Team
Live Well Erie: Older Adults
Live Well Erie: Working Families
MHFA Instructors Group via Compeer (formerly MHFA Collaborative)
PREPARE CAB

Coalition, Committee, Workgroup, or Task Force Name
ReCAST Community Coalition
Starting Line Healthy Births Coalition
Starting Line Healthy Births Coalition: Breastfeeding Friendly Erie County Subcommittee
Starting Line Healthy Births Coalition Worksite Implementation Team
Suicide Prevention Coalition
Talk Saves Lives-Latinx WNY Chapter
UB Psychiatry CAB
United Way: Startline Youth Access Coalition
Upstate NY Black and Latino Pride Board
WNY Food as Medicine Symposium Steering Committee
WNY Food as Medicine Think Tank
WNY Public Health Alliance Public Health Staff
WNY Refugees with Disabilities Task Force
WNY Refugees with Disabilities Task Force Family & Education subcommittee
Workgroup for Advancing Brain Health
Lackawanna Stakehold Coalition
Lackawanna Stakehold Coalition Government Subcommittee
Women's Health
Vaccines (COVID Clinics)
Extreme Temperature Plan Steering Committee
CHW Stakeholder Group
Youth Mental Health Project Workgroup
CHAN Project-Best Practices
BPS Immunization Task Force
Clarence Family Support Center Advisory Meeting
United Way of Buffalo & Erie County Advisory Council

APPENDIX D: LANGUAGE ACCESS TOOLS

LANGUAGE ACCESS ALLIES



Nearly 150,000 adults in Erie County have a hard time reading and writing the English language. This includes people born and raised in Erie County. When someone struggles to read English, they will also struggle to understand written instructions, public health and safety messages, and other important materials. Literacy is the ability to read, write, speak and listen in a way that lets us communicate effectively. Literacy is a survival skill individuals need to make informed decisions.

DO YOU KNOW THE DIFFERENCE?

INTERPRET

To translate orally or into sign languages the words and meaning of a person speaking or signing a different language.

TRANSLATE

To express the sense and meaning of text from one language into another.



PLAIN LANGUAGE

Communication that is clear and easy to understand for its intended audience, regardless of language or medium used to communicate. Plain language text is free from slang, idioms, and references.

FOR YOUR WIRELESS DEVICE

Free apps that help with accessibility, translation, and interpretation from your smartphone or tablet.

[Apple Translate App](#)

Live translates text or talking. High quality audio playback (for pronunciation). Sounds like a real human talking. Available in 12 languages for download to use offline.

[Google Translate App](#)

Live translates text or talking in 73 languages. High quality audio playback. Available in 60 languages for download to use offline.

[Microsoft Translate App](#)

Live translates text or talking. High quality audio playback with audio slow down playback speed. Includes a phrasebook with many commonly used phrases. Available in 45 languages for download to use offline.

LOCAL SERVICES

[International Institute of Buffalo](#)

Professional interpretation and translation services.

translation@iibuff.org

716-898-1594

[Journey's End Refugee Services](#)

Professional interpretation & translation services.

interpreting@jersbuffalo.org

716-882-4963
ext. 201

OTHER SERVICES

[Language Line Solutions](#)

Professional interpretation & translation services.

www.language.com

1-888-445-0761

NEED MORE SUPPORT?

[International Institute of Buffalo](#)

Offers training for those needing to provide interpretation and/or translated materials as well as written and oral proficiency exams in many languages.

THIS FREE RESOURCE IS OFFERED BY THE ERIE COUNTY OFFICE OF HEALTH EQUITY

The Erie County Office of Health Equity's vision is for everyone in Erie County to achieve maximum health and wellness. The Office of Health Equity is located within the Erie County Department of Health.



Erie County
Department of
Health



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

OFFICE OF HEALTH EQUITY
www.erie.gov/health-equity

ENGLISH

MULTILINGUAL SERVICES & PROGRAMS

ReadyErie is Erie County's preparedness app. It is available for residents to make emergency plans and receive critical information and alerts from Erie County during emergencies. Answer 5 basic questions and receive your personalized Emergency Preparedness Plan.

- Get instant access to evacuation maps and safe routes.
- Find the nearest emergency shelter & special services in your area.
- Receive alerts from ReadyErie.
- Create a family emergency plan & access detailed go-kit supply lists.
- Broadcast your "I am safe" or "I need help" status with one single tap.

Visit: www.erie.gov/readyerie

Erie Path is Erie County's smartphone app that helps parents and caregivers address mental and behavioral health challenges faced by children and adolescents. To explore, scan the code below or visit www.erie.gov/eriepath.



➤ ➤ ➤ **ReadyErie and EriePath both use a Google Translate widget to make information available in over 60 languages.** ⬅ ⬅ ⬅

**MEDICAL EMERGENCIES
SUICIDE PREVENTION & CRISIS LIFELINE**

**DIAL 911
DIAL 988**

Both 911 and 988 are available using TTY services and in 240+ additional languages through Language Line Solutions. When requesting a language with many dialects, try to share your country to help them decide which interpreter to connect you with.

211 WNY: Health and Human Services

Dial 211

211 WNY is a 24-hour free and confidential link to health and human services. Connect to services and assistance related to food and nutrition, health and wellness, housing, legal aid, mental health, substance use, support groups, domestic abuse, tax preparation, and more.

211 WNY is available in English and Spanish. Operators have access to an interpretation service to accommodate additional languages.

The Erie County Office of Health Equity offers **FREE** Mental Health First Aid Training for Adults Interacting with Other Adults AND Adults Interacting with Youth.

[716-858-2385](tel:716-858-2385)

For more information on Mental Health First Aid, visit www.erie.gov/mhfa.

THIS FREE RESOURCE IS OFFERED BY THE



Erie County
Department of
Health



OFFICE OF HEALTH EQUITY
www.erie.gov/health-equity

ENGLISH



LANGUAGE IDENTIFICATION TOOL



هنا نتحدث اللغة العربية

ARABIC IS SPOKEN HERE

☐

تحتوي هذه الطاولة على منشير باللغة العربية

THIS TABLE HAS PRINTED MATERIALS IN ARABIC

☐

تحتوي هذه الطاولة على جهاز للمساعدة في الترجمة الفورية

THIS TABLE HAS A DEVICE TO HELP WITH INTERPRETATION

☐☐

এই সারণীতে ভাষার নাম মুদ্রিত সামগ্রীরয়েছে।

THIS TABLE HAS PRINTED MATERIALS IN BENGALI

☐

এখানে বাঙ্গালী ভাষায় কথা বলা হয়।

BENGALI IS SPOKEN HERE

☐

এই টেবিলে ব্যাখ্যা করার জন্য একটি ডিভাইস রয়েছে

THIS TABLE HAS A DEVICE TO HELP WITH INTERPRETATION

☐

အောက်ပါဇယားကွက်တွင် မြန်မာဘာသာ ဖြင့်
ပုံနှိပ်ထုတ်ဝေထားသော စာရွက်စာတမ်းများရှိပါသည်။

THIS TABLE HAS PRINTED MATERIALS IN BURMESE

☐

ဤနေရာတွင် ဗမာဘာသာစကား အသုံးပြုနိုင်ပါသည်။

BURMESE IS SPOKEN HERE

☐

ဤဇယားတွင် အဓိပ္ပါယ်ပြန်ဆိုရန် အကူအညီပေးသည့်
စက်တစ်ခုရှိပါသည်။

THIS TABLE HAS A DEVICE TO HELP WITH INTERPRETATION

☐

ESTA MESA TIENE MATERIAL IMPRESO EN
ESPAÑOL

THIS TABLE HAS PRINTED MATERIALS IN SPANISH

☐

SE HABLA ESPAÑOL

SPANISH IS SPOKEN HERE

☐

ESTA MESA TIENE UN DISPOSITIVO PARA AYUDAR
CON LA INTERPRETACIÓN

THIS TABLE HAS A DEVICE TO HELP WITH INTERPRETATION

☐

JEDWALI HILI LIMECHAPISHA VIFAA KATIKA
KISWAHILI

THIS TABLE HAS PRINTED MATERIALS IN SWAHILI

☐

KISWAHILI KINAZUNGUMZWA HAPA

SWAHILI IS SPOKEN HERE

☐

JEDWALI HILI LINA KIFAA CHA KUSAIDIA
KUTAFSIRI

THIS TABLE HAS A DEVICE TO HELP WITH INTERPRETATION

