

Environmental Health

The Milford Environmental Health Division (MEHD) protects public health and safety through preventive measures designed to identify and control the spread of disease. This is accomplished primarily by the promotion of environmental health through education of the general public and through the enforcement of federal, state and local rules and regulations. The Environmental Health Division provides education, inspections, consultations, and enforcement of appropriate local, state and federal laws, rules, and regulations in accordance with proper policies and procedures.

2018/2019 Highlights

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic Response

March 10, 2020, the Governor of the State of Connecticut declared a public health and civil preparedness emergency for the State of Connecticut. Subsequently, on March 13, 2020 Mayor Ben Blake declared the same for the City of Milford.

On March 13, 2020 in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and to protect the health of the public and MHD employees, in-person routine inspections of establishments and housing complaints unless the reason for entering the establishment or dwelling was emergent, i.e. necessary to assist the Police or Fire Departments, were temporarily suspended. The Environmental Health Division was actively involved in the Milford Health Department response to the pandemic, mitigation strategies implemented to protect public health and safety and to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the community include the following:

- Continuous updates and information about current recommendations and mandates surrounding the pandemic provided to the public and regulated community.
- MEHD staff conducted hundreds of phone calls to food establishments, child care centers and hotels/motels in an effort to push out information, discuss policy and procedural requirements and in most cases, carry out virtual inspections to ensure safety.
- Technical support and guidance on the following topics to the Board of Education, regulated community and the general public to ensure maintenance of healthy environments:
 - Proper cleaning and disinfecting of environmental surfaces, especially frequent touch points, utilizing EPA approved chemicals.
 - Proper hand washing techniques/effective hand sanitizer use.
 - Proper use and limitations on the use of personal protective equipment for residents, employers, employees and the general public.
 - Proper physical/social distancing requirements.
- Reopen Connecticut:
 - MEHD researched and developed policies, procedures and guidelines around food establishment, hair salons, barbershops, personal care establishments and public pool operational plans to ensure public safety, promote physical distancing and prevent the spread of disease.
 - In-depth reviews of food establishment, hair salons, barbershops and personal care salons work safe plans in response to COVID-19. I.e. Take-out/curb side food service and delivery plans and physical layout/social distancing design for resuming outdoor and indoor activities.
 - Enforcement of State Sector rules as they pertain to Reopen Connecticut in response to community complaints and during regulatory inspections.

WHAT WE DO: SERVICES & ACTIVITIES	FY 19/20 TOTALS
COVID-19 Response	
Complaint Investigations	84
Food Establishments – Phone calls	825
Food Establishments – Outdoor/Indoor dining inspections	75
Personal Care Establishments – Phone calls	124
Personal Care Establishments – Inspections	67
Food Protection Program:	
Annual Licenses Issued	375
Routine Inspections	684
Plan Review for new or remodeled establishments	38
Temporary Event Licenses Issued	253
Temporary Event Food Vendor Inspections	192
Legal Orders/Notice of Violation issued	101
Environmental Health Complaint Investigations:	354
Air Quality	29
Asbestos	3
Blight	107
Environmental Hazards	15
Food-borne Illness (Complaints, outbreak investigations)	6
Food Protection	24
Housing	55
Lead	2
Public Health Nuisance/General	62
Salons (Hair, tattoo, nail, massage)	4
Sewage	8
Vectors (Mosquitoes, bed bugs, rabies, vermin, rodents, etc.)	39
Legal Orders/Notice of Violation issued	29
Land Use:	
Planning & Zoning project reviews	3
Subsurface sewage disposal (soil testing/ new and repair permits)	17
Building addition reviews/approvals for homes served by septic systems	8
Building additions/pool reviews for homes served by sanitary sewers	56
Septic system abandonment inspections	51
Beach Monitoring:	
Samples collected	230
Complaint investigations/Sanitary survey	21
Public Swimming Pool Operation and Inspection:	
Inspections	28
Lodging (Hotels/Motels):	
Annual permits issued	17
Routine Inspections	17
Schools & Daycare Centers:	
Daycare Center Inspections	12
Private School Inspections	3
In home Environmental Assessments:	
Healthy Homes Assessment	14
Collaborative for Residential Integrity for the Disabled and Elderly. (C.R.I.D.E.)	
New troubled housing cases	5
On-going cases	9
Closed cases	11
Other Activities:	
Tick specimen delivery to CT Agricultural Experiment Station and resident follow-up	100
Assistance to Fire, Police & State Agencies	3
Freedom of Information Requests (property & establishment record reviews)	270

Public Health Nursing & School Health Services

Immunization Clinics. The Milford Health Department continues to provide monthly Immunization Clinics for the residents of Milford. The immunization clinics at the Milford Health Department are typically held on the second Tuesday of the month from 2:30 – 4:30 pm. Routine immunizations to prevent communicable disease are available for both children and adults. The Milford Health Department is a provider of the *Vaccine for Children* program. This program ensures all children in Milford and throughout the state get the vaccinations they need at no cost to stay healthy. In addition, the Milford Health Department utilizes the CT WiZ immunization tracking program. This program enables providers to maintain complete, accurate, and secure immunization records for all children in CT. The Milford Health Department is able to review previous vaccination data on children at our clinics as a method to ensure that each child is getting the required and necessary vaccinations. Immunizations given at the Milford Health Department are then entered in the CT WiZ database which will allow other medical providers to see the most up to date information on the vaccination status of their clients.

The Health Department also participates in the Connecticut State Department of Public Health “Cocoon Program”. Public health officials recommend pertussis (whooping cough) vaccination for all persons who have close contact with infants. Research has shown that infants with pertussis are often infected by their parents, particularly their mothers, at least half of the time. The Tdap vaccine is available free of charge for new parents, grandparents and other caregivers of infants under one year of age. This strategy is known as “cocooning” thereby forming a “cocoon” of protection against pertussis. The Milford Health Department administered 11 doses of Tdap this year.

Close to 50 children received at least one vaccination at the Milford Health Department this year, and several adults also received immunizations. In addition, the Milford Health Department offers prophylactic rabies vaccination to local veterinary providers for any new employee needing such vaccination.

This past spring, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and with guidance from the Connecticut Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Milford Health Department implemented drive through immunization clinics for May and June. These were held at the Department of Human Service’s circular driveway at 150 Gulf Street. Individuals were able to remain in their car while receiving their needed vaccination by one of the Milford Health Department’s public health nurses. Twelve individuals (both adults and children) received services at these two clinics. The Milford Health Department will continue to utilize the drive through clinic model as it serves as a viable option in providing important and necessary immunization services during this COVID-19 pandemic and in the future.

Hepatitis A Vaccination Campaign. The Milford Health Department concluded its Hepatitis A outbreak response efforts this past December. In partnership with the CT Department of Public Health, the Hepatitis A vaccine was offered free of charge to at-risk individuals consisting of those who use drugs and/or are experiencing homelessness or unstable housing. This initiative was in response to numerous states across the country reporting outbreaks of Hepatitis A illness. The Milford Health Department coordinated numerous clinics and administered 160 Hepatitis A vaccine doses.

Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Program. The seasonal influenza vaccine program was successfully implemented, with 798 doses of the influenza vaccine administered to residents and employees in Milford. The Milford Health Department offered a variety of settings for residents and employees of the city to receive their annual influenza vaccination. Clinics were held at the Milford Senior Center, the City of Milford Health & Wellness Fair, the Milford Police Department, Parson’s Building, as well as a general public clinic at the Health Department.

The Health Department continues to provide a high dose influenza vaccine, Fluzone, which is recommended for individuals over 65 years of age. Fluzone was offered at the Senior Center clinics and at all community clinics. The Health Department administered 221 doses of high dose flu vaccine this season. Regular flu vaccinations were also administered to 209 City employees and 339 Board of Education employees. Community education regarding the importance of receiving an annual influenza vaccine continues to be an important aspect of the Milford Health Department Influenza prevention program.

Influenza Like Illness Surveillance. Following the H1N1 pandemic of 2009-10, the Health Department has continued to monitor our school population for evidence of influenza like illness (ILI) which is described to be fever over 100° plus cough, sore throat or both in the absence of another known cause of disease. This tool proved to be a valuable indicator of

our school population illness and absentee rate in early March when the COVID-19 pandemic was at its infancy. The school nurses utilized this tool on a daily basis until schools closed in mid March. By using this monitoring system, the school nurses were able to constantly survey school illness patterns on a clinical basis. Due to the invaluable information that the ILI and COVID-19 monitoring provides, we will continue this surveillance activity in the year ahead.

School Health Services-Public Health Nursing. The Milford Public Health Nurses continue to provide school nursing services in all of our public and private schools for approximately 6,300 students in grades Pre-K through grade 12 and post graduate programs. Dr. Andrew Carlson continues to serve as the school/community medical advisor.

The goal of school nursing is to have children in school, in class and ready to learn; to that end, the Milford school nurses report that students return to class 92% of the time within 30 minutes of visiting the Health Office, being assessed and treated by the school nurse. The school nurses had approximately 33,000 health office visits by the students in Milford this year through mid March for illness, injury or other health management issues.

There are many students in Milford who have a health condition that require health management by the school nurse to ensure a safe environment for the student. Many of these children require special treatments or procedures to be done during the school day. These procedures may include gastrointestinal tube feedings for students unable to swallow, blood glucose monitoring for diabetic students, respiratory management for asthmatic students or those children unable to cough or clear respiratory secretions by themselves. During the course of this past year through mid March, the Milford school nurses administered close to 11,000 medications, procedures or treatment to students in Milford.

Mandated health screenings (vision, hearing, posture) are conducted at designated grade levels each year to check for abnormalities. These health screenings are also conducted at the request of a parent or teacher. The Milford school nurses performed over 11,950 health screenings during the 2019-2020 school year and referrals were made to the appropriate provider if an abnormality was noted.

The Milford Public School nurses administer emergency care to staff and visitors of the school buildings. They are all trained in the Incident Command System and are ready to assist if needed with emergency shelters, warming centers and mass vaccination clinics for the City of Milford.

During the time from mid-March through mid-June, while distance learning was in place for students, the Milford school nurses continued to be accessible to school families, students and school staff via email serving as a resource for any health related questions or concerns. In addition, they were able to participate virtually in Milford Public School PPT and 504 meetings for those students requiring such meetings.

School Health Services – Oral Health Program. Approximately 1000 students in grades kindergarten through five received oral health services at school this school year with parental permission. Services were provided by dental hygienists who work under the direction of the Director of Nursing and in consultation with a local dentist. These services are designed to augment, not replace, the children’s routine dental health care. Students received oral exams, prophylaxis and sealants as needed. Of the children examined, 24 were referred to a local dentist or dental clinic for follow-up care and treatment. Oral health education was provided by the dental hygienists to over 50 classrooms in the Milford school system as well as to the Milford Family Resource Center and to the toddler *Story Time* group at the Milford Public Library.

Bloodborne Pathogen Training. The Milford Health Department annually reviews the *City of Milford Exposure Control Plan and Bloodborne Pathogen Protocol* and makes revisions as necessary. The Director of Nursing provides Bloodborne Pathogen Training to City of Milford employees as requested by department heads throughout the year. The training involved reviewing important aspects of the Milford Bloodborne Pathogen Policy including the guidelines for exposure control measures and post exposure protocol. This training is provided to eliminate or minimize occupational exposure to bloodborne pathogens in accordance with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration Standards and must be done upon hiring and on an annual basis. In addition, the Milford School/Public Health Nurses provide Bloodborne Pathogen Training to all Milford school teachers and administrators at their assigned schools.

COVID-19 Response. Since the first COVID-19 positive case was identified in Milford on March 16, 2020, the Milford Public Health Nursing team has assisted the Milford Health Department’s response efforts by making phone calls to positive Milford COVID-19 cases and their contacts, giving them the appropriate recommendations on care, treatment,

isolation procedures and environmental cleaning. From March 16th through June 30th, 2020, there were 674 Milford residents identified as having a positive COVID-19 test.

As the pandemic unfolded, the nurses continued to work a rotating schedule at the Milford Health Department reaching out to positive cases and their contacts while also taking calls and providing assistance to concerned Milford residents, medical providers and businesses looking for guidance during this unprecedented time.

In addition, the public health nurses participated in the CT Department of Public Health's training on contact tracing and are now assisting in the statewide contact tracing initiative utilizing the CT Department of Public Health's electronic contact tracing platform – ContaCT. Contacts of positive cases who live in Milford are contacted by phone by one of the nurses for an initial assessment which is entered into the statewide database followed by daily health monitoring via email or text (with the individual's permission) for the recommended time period. Information entered in the ContaCT system will assist the Milford Health Department in helping to stop the spread of COVID-19 in our community.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT ANNUAL REPORT TO THE MAYOR 2019-2020
Public Health Nursing & School Health Services
July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020

	Current Year 7/2019-6/2020	Previous Year 7/2018-6/2019
Dental Hygienists (2)		
Permission Slips sent out	2227	2538
#Oral Screenings Kindergarten	112	165
#Oral exams, cleanings	634	905
#Students receiving sealants	206	400
#Sealants applied	659	895
#Students w/primary decay	23	51
#Students w/permanent decay	1	7
#Students w/ fistulas	0	0
#Referrals made	24	61
Dental Education in Class	51	74
Immunization Clinics	24	43
DTaP	4	10
Hepatitis A	25	155
Hepatitis B	27	112
HIB	0	1
HPV	0	5
Influenza (IMMUNIZATION)	798	829
Mantoux (PPD) Tuberculin Test	113	105
Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR)	9	15
Meningococcal	16	13
Pneumonia Vaccine	0	4
Polio (IPV)	4	10
Rabies	3	6
TD	0	3
Tdap	15	13
Tdap (Cocoon Program)	11	22
Varicella Vaccine	8	19

Community Health Division

Disease Surveillance. From July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020, there were 1048 cases of disease reported to the Milford Health Department which is double the amount reported last year. COVID 19 was the most reported disease, with sixty four percent (64%) of all cases reported this year. The attached table lists the top ten reported diseases during the 2019-2020 year (see Table 1), along with the number of cases reported by month (see Table 3) with April 2020 having the highest number of cases reported for the year.

Increased monitoring of food borne illnesses and follow up investigation/education continues to be a core function of the Health Department. There were 27 cases of food borne illness reported this year, with reports of campylobacteriosis being the most prevalent (See Table 2). Additionally, the Director of Health conducts follow-up investigation and education in conjunction with the Environmental Health Division at multiple facilities that experience outbreaks of gastrointestinal illness during the year. The investigation includes epidemiological surveys, collection of stool specimens and coordination with the CT Department of Public Health. For all cases of food borne illness involving a food establishment worker, day care attendee, and/or health care worker, the Director of Health works with the Environmental Health Division to ensure appropriate control measures were implemented to successfully prevent an outbreak. Safe food handling measures and proper hand washing techniques were stressed with these individuals as well.

Grants Management. The Director of Health and the Community Health Coordinator apply for grants for funding for several projects throughout the year by submitting written applications to various national, state, and local organizations. Both the Director and Community Health Coordinator have written and submitted several grant applications over the past year in addition to applications for funding or continued funding for the grants listed below. The following is a list of the new or renewed grants that the Health Department has received during this fiscal year:

Grants Management	Amount
Asthma Initiatives	\$53,513
Local Public Health Preparedness Planning	\$26,288
Overdose Data to Action (OD2A) in Connecticut Communities	\$64,466
MRC capacity Building	\$2,500
Per Capita	\$56,254
Preventive Health/Healthy Homes Initiative	\$13,472
	Total
	\$216,493

Community Health Programs & Projects. This year, the Director of Health implemented the following health initiatives.

- **Putting on AIRS (POA)** This regional home environmental risk assessment program is designed to improve environmental conditions for asthmatic children in order to decrease asthma-related adverse events. This program is funded by a grant through the CT Department of Public Health, with the Milford Health Department as the lead agency for Asthma Region 6. Participating towns within the region include Branford, East Haven, Hamden, Meriden, Milford, New Haven, North Branford, North Haven, Woodbridge, Wallingford, and West Haven. The program's goal is to improve an individual's asthma control thus decreasing asthma-related adverse events through home-based education regarding environmental triggers, understanding asthma path physiology, medications and tools (i.e. Asthma Action Plans). We have now added a Community Health Worker (CHW) to the program to provide support to assist clients in asthma management. The Community Health Worker also addresses Social Determinates of Health. Education is still provided in the home by a public health nurse or asthma educator and a sanitarian. The program offers up to three (3) home visits, two (2) with a CHW, along with two touch point calls from a CHW and a 6 month follow up after a participant has been enrolled. Due to

COVID 19, in person home visits for this program were suspended and resumed in May utilizing telehealth platforms. During this time the program made revisions in order to begin implementing this program once again. Revisions include but are not limited to; adding telehealth services to be utilized verses going into homes, updating frequently asked questions sheet for providers and referrals, updating the referral form and updating access to materials through the website. The Putting on AIRS asthma program received 89 total referrals for this contract year, with a total of 45 home visits completed in person and 6 visits conducted virtually. The local emergency departments and the medical community continue to be the primary referral source for POA. Milford Health Department chairs the Greater New Haven Area Asthma Coalition. Region 6 remains active in several partnerships throughout Greater New Haven that allows clients to be served additional benefits without financial gain from the grant.

- ***Parent Trust Fund Grant.*** Previously the Milford Health Department was awarded a grant to implement the Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI) in Milford. This curriculum has been utilized for nearly ten years in Milford. This year PLTI alumni and the Design team decided in the best interest of the community to implement a different curriculum call Parent Supporting Educational Excellence (Parents SEE). Parents SEE is a 13 week leadership program through the CT Center for School Change. It is designed to facilitate partnerships with district & school personnel to address school improvement, increase all students' achievement, and increase civic parent leadership. The mission is to grow the skills and understandings of families to lead and partner in education at the school, district and state level. Unlike PLTI which enables parents to become leading advocates for children in their community through participation in many phases of training in 20 weeks and concludes with the completion of a community project. The overall mindset for this change was to provide parents and caregivers opportunities to lead in the community without constraint. Along with the fact that a majority of our parents who did PLTI focused their concerns and projects on issues related to school. The program started in February with 16 participants. Due to COVID 19 this program has been postponed until further notice. We applied for funding for this program through the State Education Resource Center (SERC) however they did not fund anyone for this curriculum. Similar to before with limited funding and knowing the importance and benefits of a parent leadership program in Milford we utilized other funding revenue to carry out this program. The funding announcements for the 2020-2021 grant has not been released however MHD plans to submit an application to SERC in the hopes of receiving funding to assist in future parent leadership programming.
- ***SIM (State Innovation Model)/ Preventative Services Initiative Grant.*** The Milford Health Department was awarded a grant to participate in a Prevention Service Initiative for Community Based Organizations (CBO) that concluded in February. This State Innovation Model (SIM) project was developed and funded through the Connecticut Office of Health and Strategy and the Department of Public Health. The goal of this initiative was to move closer to a sustainable model of delivering evidence-based community prevention services to improve chronic disease outcomes and population health. This grant allowed us to partner with a Health Care Organization (HCO)-Fair Haven Community Health Center (FHCHC) to deliver Putting on AIRS services to the community. This partnership allowed for the MHD to receive referrals from the FHCHC and receive payment based an agreed upon case definition for reimbursement. This project has processed over 100 referrals and over \$26,000 to increase capacity for asthma services to clients. Although this project ended early 2020 this partnership has still maintained in sharing referrals.
- ***Overdose Data to Action (OD2A) in Connecticut Communities Grant (OD2A).*** The Milford Health Department in collaboration with Qualidigm has been awarded a grant to participate in The Connecticut Department of Public Health Overdose Data to Action (OD2A) in Connecticut Communities. Qualidigm is a national collaborative healthcare consulting company providing innovative and scientifically-based solutions to transform care and improve care delivery and patient outcomes. Qualidigm will assist in data collection, analysis and dissemination. This partnership will look to implement drug overdose data surveillance and prevention activities within local communities. Working with the Department of Public Health and local partners, awardees will take a leadership role within their local areas to improve capacity to respond to drug overdoses and initiate and strengthen public health system interventions necessary to improve protective behaviors and reduce harmful use of prescription and illicit drugs in order to reduce drug overdose morbidity and mortality.
- ***Public Health Accreditation Board.*** The Milford Health Department will be applying to become an accredited health department through the Public Health Accreditation Board. Voluntary national public health accreditation

enables us to improve our quality, services and better meet the needs of our community. In order to apply, we must complete three core tasks: A Community Health Assessment (CHA), Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) and a Strategic Plan. Our Strategic Plan is complete and will help guide the work we do that will assist in improving health and wellness in the Milford community for the next 3-5 years. We are now working on our CHA and CHIP with completion of goals in 2022. The MHD is now collaborating with both the Partnership of Greater New Haven and the Health Improvement Alliance to complete action steps created in our CHA and CHIP plans to continuously work on accreditation. Our priorities areas to address in our CHIP include: access to care, healthy lifestyles and mental health and substance abuse. For each priority area there are work groups, goals and strategies that we are working to complete. Due to COVID 19 assembling our CHIP workgroups have been postponed. However, with this shift we are documenting and adding new strategies and priorities to demonstrate additional work conducted due to COVID 19.

Community Health Services

July 1, 2019-June 30, 2020

Table 1. Top Ten Reportable

Top 10 Reportable Diseases	Total	Percentage %
COVID 19	673	64%
Influenza	62	6%
Hepatitis C	51	5%
Lyme Disease	43	4%
MRSA	35	3%
Chlamydia	27	3%
Campylobacteriosis	12	1%
Gonorrhea	8	1%
Salmonella	6	1%
Syphilis	5	<1%

Table 2. Food borne Illness Reports Communicable Diseases

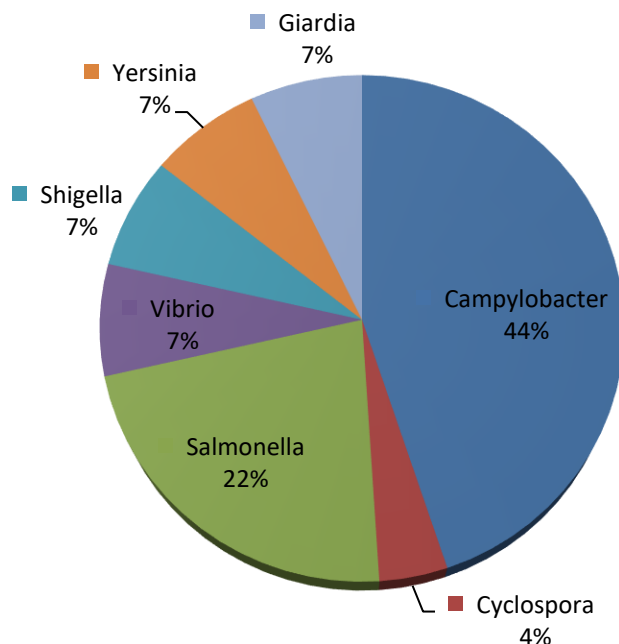
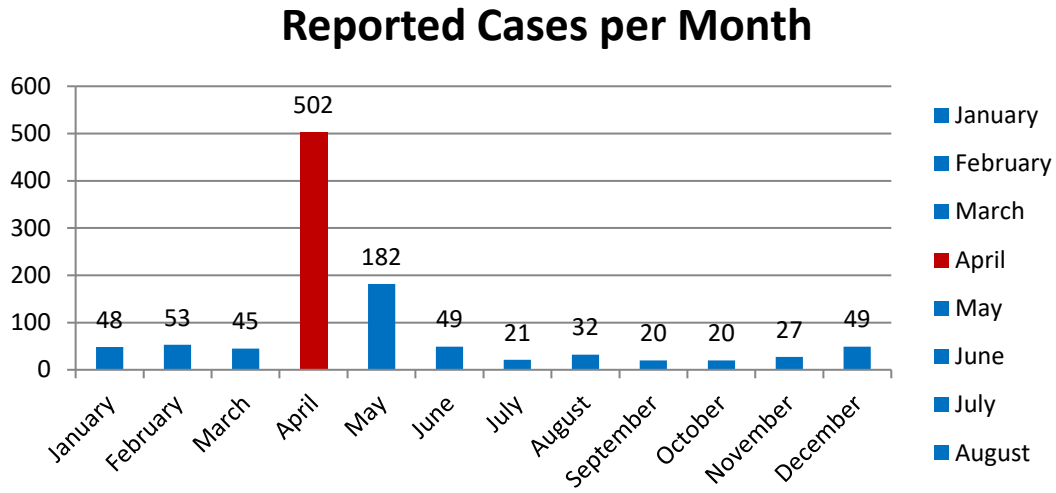


Table 3. Number of cases reported by month



Total Cases reported 2019-2020 (total of 1048)

Division of Public Health Emergency Preparedness & Response

The Milford Health Department (MHD) continuously plans for and adapts to ongoing and emerging public health threats. The last six months undeniably has tested years of planning and preparedness as MHD and the City of Milford under a Unified Command structure respond to the emerging infectious disease known as Coronavirus 2019, more commonly known COVID-19. MHD remains on the front lines of COVID-19 preparedness, response, and re-opening recovery efforts in addition to maintaining daily continuity of operations to serve the Milford community.

On January 24, 2020, MHD received notification of weekly Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) phone calls with state and local health department partners to address preparedness efforts around the COVID-19 outbreak. CDC began calls as the first presumed positive cases by public health officials in the United States were identified on January 14, 2020. Notification of federal collaboration sparked the CT Department of Public Health (DPH) to begin a weekly statewide conference call. These calls included: epidemiological updates, information around laboratory testing and capability, traveler notifications and contact tracing and implementing community mitigation strategies.

Milford is a regional planning and response partner in CT Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (CT DEMHS) Region 2/New Haven County. Regional meetings of Emergency Support Function (ESF) 8, Public Health & Medical for DEMHS Region 2 began early in the preparedness phase and continue to be held regularly through response and recovery. MHD's Director of Health leads the meetings in coordination with the DEMHS Coordinator and Co-Chair. Meetings are attended by representatives from local health departments, emergency management/fire departments, hospitals, emergency medical services (EMS) as well as additional emergency response and healthcare partners. Discussion around response and coordination included: responder safety and health, personal protective equipment (PPE) needs and availability, risk communication of cases between health officials and first responders, hospital testing and establishment of alternate care locations/sites. Inter-agency collaboration in response to COVID-19 is unprecedented.

During initial preparedness efforts MHD staff got to work reviewing, updating and modify existing Emergency Operation Plans specific to pandemic respiratory and emerging infectious disease protocols. These included evaluation of: Pandemic Influenza Response Plan, Milford's Ebola Virus Disease/Emerging Infectious Disease (HIP/EID) Protocol, MHD Continuity of Operations Plan, Milford Public Schools Pandemic Action Kit, Milford Business Guide for Continuity of Operations and Region 2 High Impact Pathogen & Emerging Infectious Disease Plan. An Emerging Infectious Disease, COVID-19 specific protocol was developed as the situation evolved around the spread of the virus in the United States.

Local response to COVID-19 quickly surpassed the use of many existing emergency operations plans. City response, guided by the Governor's Executive Orders, rapidly escalated including closing schools, implementing social distancing, canceling community events & non-essential meetings, closing non-essential businesses and limiting city interaction with the public while continuing provision of essential services.

The health department is an essential city service. Efforts to meet the demands of an effective response are ongoing and to date include: Director of Health; designated as Incident Commander, point person for all issues City-wide related to COVID-19, Public Information Officer in coordination with Mayor's office, continues role of ESF 8 lead for Region 2, vetting community health information to mirror the constantly evolving CDC and World Health Organization (WHO) websites; Director of Nursing, Community Health & School Nurses, School Nursing Division; Operations Lead, point person for clinical response, conducting contact tracing, positive case tracking and patient interviews, coordinating information with local Long Term Care (LTC) facilities, responding to community calls around testing requirements, questions about potential exposures and all requests for clinical guidance; Environmental Health Chief & Registered Sanitarians, Environmental Health Division; Logistics Lead, point persons for all environmental questions and concerns, communication ongoing to all licensed and/or permitted inspected facilities including: food service establishment, day care centers, congregate residential settings, public pools, hotels and motels, public and elderly housing, salons and barber shops, and massage and personal care facilities; the environmental sanitarians continue to field individual phone calls and guidance around Governor's Executive orders with respect to suspension and re-opening of business and community operations; this division continues to field inquiries related to cleaning and disinfection, questions related to environmental and/or food and water borne risks associated with COVID-19 and questions around implementation of Sector Rules released by the State of CT Re-open Team.

Unique challenges arose with the speed at which response efforts needed to be taken. This include: data tracking and management associated with the high volume of cases, specifically around long term care (LTC) facility cases,

information control of LTC facility outbreaks, risk communication; daily evolving situation making for a significant amount of time spent just around managing information, technical issues for staff working remotely, managing exposure risk for first responders, a plan for self-quarantine protocol and locations, support to Milford Public Works for effective disinfecting practices in City buildings, support to Milford Police Department around disinfecting vehicles, crime scene processing and evidence processing equipment, support to Milford Public Schools for cleaning and disinfecting, support to Milford Public Schools Food Service for guidance around safe food practices during drive through pick up operations, support to Beth El Center including Emergency Response Plan review, best practices for social distancing in congregate living settings and providing to-go food service only, support to Milford Housing Authority for cleaning, disinfecting and best practices to institute social distancing, limited community testing initially available, support to Milford youth sports league to re-open safely, support to youth camps on development of summer camp operational plans, coordination of a regional response to PPE distribution and tracking, launch of CT Volunteer database CT Responds without adequate leader training or communication to local health department by the state on the plan for data use.

MHD's ongoing response efforts and successes include: established inter-department relationships and unified command system in place, effective risk communication of case data between health and first responders in the interest of responder safety and health, established relationships & open communication between MHD, local hospital and Milford LTC facilities, MHD maintains a stockpile of PPE, MHD able to provide PPE to Fire, Police, Public Works, City administrative offices and Milford Public Schools to ensure employee protection, established MHD Respiratory Protection Plan including up-to-date fit testing for all MHD staff and school nurses, establishing a system for inventory and re-distribution of PPE to local healthcare providers, acquiring from the state 4,000 Kinsa Smart Thermometers of which over 750 have been distributed to Milford residents to date, up to date contact information for most if not all licensed facilities, established emergency response protocols for call tracking, traveler and/or patient interviewing, contact tracing, information sharing over the phone (i.e. how to take temperatures), established and exercised Emergency Response Plans, documents adapted to address novel emerging infectious disease pandemic, established emergency call back system for Milford residents and an established emergency response training plan for all health department staff.

MHD core staff and school nurses have training in the National Incident Management System (NIMS) Incident Command System (ICS). Hands on training for staff on the use of N95 respirators and fit testing was conducted in early 2019. The purpose of fit testing is to ensure employees are physically able to wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), an N95, in response to an infectious person(s). The Public Health Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, Director of Nursing and Environmental Division Chief are all trained Fit Testers.

MHD continues to focus on maintaining and developing emergency response plans and working with local health and medical agencies who are involved in the current public health emergency response. Staff members of the health department participate on a wide variety of local and regional specialty committees, some of which have been postponed due to pandemic response. These include Local Emergency Management meetings, the city's Hazard Mitigation Committee, School Safety and Security Committee, individual school Safety and Security meetings and the General Government Safety Committee focusing on responder (employee) safety and health. MHD staff continue regional participation on the Family Assistance Center (FAC) committee. CT DPH tasked local health departments with the responsibility of operating a Family Assistance Center (FAC) in the event of a mass causality event. The regional plan developed last year was activated in coordination with the American Red Cross CT to set up a virtual FAC in response to COVID-19.

The next phase of public health preparedness efforts will be to re-invigorate a regional operational plan to streamline mass dispensing specifically around mass vaccination distribution. High Impact Pathogen (HIP)/infectious disease planning and response remains a local health initiative as emerging pathogens such as Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) and COVID-19 continue to surface in the United States and across the globe. Efforts to participate cross-jurisdictionally for medical countermeasures (MCM) drills have shown to be successful and will be a concentrated effort for mass vaccination efforts moving forward. Planning partners include local health, state Epidemiology staff, local and state Emergency Management/fire, acute care hospitals, law enforcement and Emergency Medical Services (EMS).

MHD environmental emergency response constitutes a significant portion of the department's responsibilities. Response situations include all chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and/or explosive (CBRNE) incidents. In addition to conventional environmental threats such as unsafe housing, water, air and/or ground contamination related, MHD responds to reports of unknown agents, potential hazardous materials and white powder. MHD responds to at least one white powder or CBRNE incident a year. MHD maintains a *White Powder Protocol* in coordination with Milford Police, Milford Fire/Emergency Management, CT Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (CT DEEP) and the

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). MHD staff participate annually in the Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) update training hosted in coordination with CT State Police, CT DEEP and CT Department of Public Health (CTDPH) State Laboratory. Training is attended to ensure City protocols are in line with Federal and State recommendations for response to white powder and all CBRNE threats.

MHD continues to focus on volunteer training and hosted programs for CPR, first aid, Stop the Bleed and “Until Help Arrives” prior to the start of the COVID pandemic. The CT DPH goal for volunteer management and initiatives has shifted to a regional focus. During the pandemic response CT DPH launched the release of CT Responds, a statewide public health volunteer registry. Milford did not lose our public health volunteers but, with the individual’s permission, the state would be able to request Milford volunteer activation as needed. Opportunities for activation and training are collaborated through the Milford Director of Health and Emergency Manager at the local level. Milford currently has over 175 MRC and/or CERT volunteers registered. To date volunteers have assisted in pandemic response by getting meals to homebound Milford residents.