Fall 2026



PROVIDER UPDATE

News from your local Health Department

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Northern Michigan Child & Family Therapy Services Corps

Therapy Corps- Now Accepting Referrals

Therapy Corps is a Behavioral Health Initiative dedicated to increasing access to free mental health services for Medicaid-insured (we do not bill insurance), uninsured, and underinsured youth ages 0–25 across northern Michigan. Built in response to the long waitlists and limited availability of behavioral health services in our region, Therapy Corps connects children, adolescents, and young adults with qualified volunteer therapists. We are now accepting client referrals and encourage you to consider this resource for the youth and families your organization serves.

Providers and families may submit referrals through two pathways: the Agency Referral Form, designed for professionals making referrals on behalf of their organization, and the Self-Referral Form, which allows families to submit information directly. Once a referral is received, our team matches the client with a therapist based on clinical expertise, availability, treatment needs, and the family's preference for tele-therapy or in-person sessions. After a match is made, we share the therapist's contact information with the family and notify the referring organization; to comply with HIPAA, families make the initial outreach. We then follow up to ensure a successful connection and provide an update to the referring provider.

To meet growing demand and expand access to timely services, Therapy Corps is seeking additional volunteer mental health clinicians, including fully and limited licensed professionals. Volunteers play a crucial role in reducing barriers to care for youth who may otherwise face significant delays in accessing support. More information about client referrals and volunteer opportunities is available at https://mitherapycorps.org/, and we welcome your partnership in strengthening behavioral health access throughout northern Michigan.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT of Northwest Michigan
800-432-4121
www.nwhealth.org

Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department
Caring for our Communities
231-882-4409
www.bldhd.org

District Health Department No. 4
Prevent. Promote. Protect.
989-356-4507
www.dhd4.org

Between January 2024 and May 14, 2026:

112 Michigan Cases

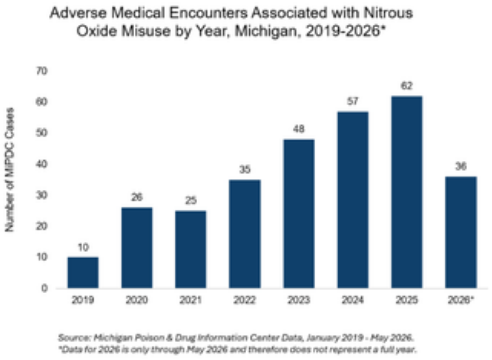
99 Hospital Presentations

38 Admissions

10 ICU Admissions

Nitrous Oxide

Growing misuse of nitrous oxide is sending more Michigan residents to the hospital. Nitrous oxide can have benefits in medical or dental settings. However, when it is used recreationally (repeatedly or in large amounts) it can lead to anxiety, depression, memory problems, blood clots and injuries related to impaired judgement. Recreational nitrous oxide products may include small metal whipped-cream chargers, sometimes called "whippets" or "whippits," as well as larger flavored nitrous oxide tanks. Products may also be marketed using terms such as NOS, Galaxy Gas, or other brand and product names.



These products have become widely available to consumers and has led to some life-threatening cases. Data from the Michigan Poison and Drug Information Center (MiPDC) shows a sharp increase in nitrous oxide-related health emergencies in recent years. There have been 112 cases identified between 2024 and May 2026. Nearly half of all reported cases resulted in medically significant outcomes including numbness, trouble walking, and confusion.

Increased Rabies Exposures and Post-Exposure Prophylaxis Use in Michigan

On September 10, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a Health Alert Network (HAN) Health Advisory in response to increase reports of human exposures to rabid or possibly rabid animals and rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (RPEP). Since July 2026, multiple states, including Michigan, have reported local increases in human rabies exposures involving known rabies vectors, or animals in which rabies are less commonly reported. Michigan has seen a significant increase in the number of animals, especially bats, submitted to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Bureau of Laboratories for rabies testing during June, July, and August of this year compared to the number of submissions in 2024 and 2025. During July and August 2026, rabies-related inquiries were 17% higher than during the same period in 2025. During this time frame, CDC also received reports from at least eight state health departments of increased rabies PEP use, PEP administration errors, or both.

Rabies PEP is lifesaving, when necessary, but it is also complex and expensive. CDC reports that a typical course of PEP can cost approximately $11,000-$14,000 per person. When a potentially exposing animal is available for testing, a timely negative result can prevent unnecessary treatment and substantial healthcare costs.

Rabies Submissions

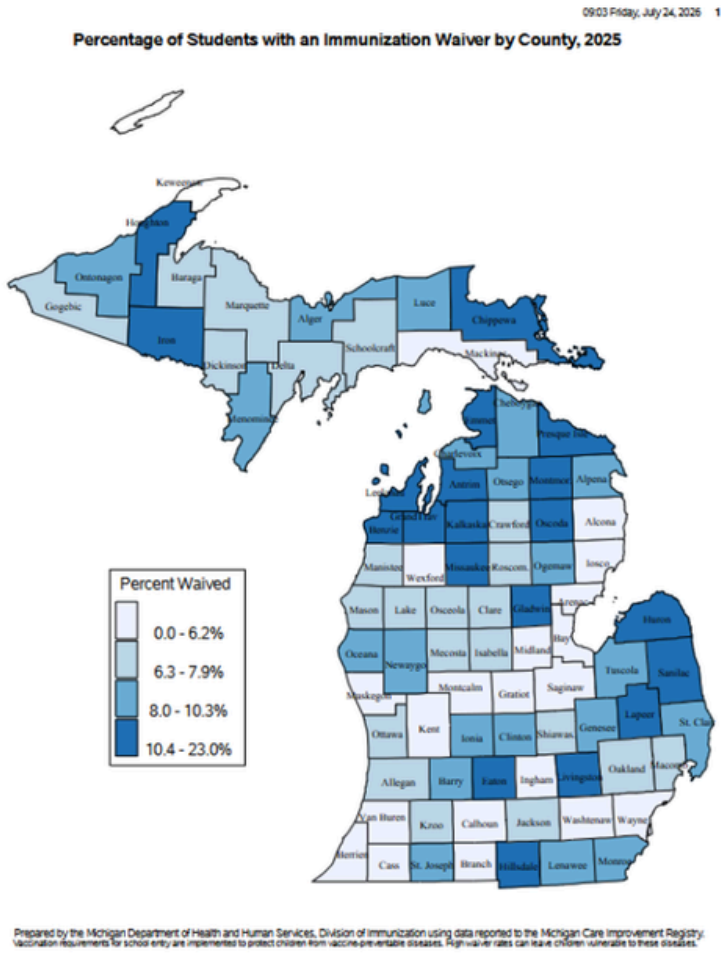
Benzie-Leelanau
2025: 25
2026: 33

District Health Department no. 4
2025: 45
2026: 40

Health Department of Northwest Michigan
2025: 44
2026: 61

Immunization Waiver Rates

To prevent outbreaks in schools and other places where children gather, a high percentage of children must be immunized. Over time, Michigan has implemented laws and rules to ensure children are protected against vaccine preventable diseases, with the most recent being in 2014. For Michigan parents opting their children out of getting vaccines before entering school, there is an educational requirement. The Joint Committee on Administrative Rules approved a new rule that allows parents/guardians to have the opportunity to speak with a health educator from their local health department about their concerns and questions regarding immunizations, prior to the nonmedical waiver being signed. The educational requirement is now available as an online educational module, which is a new feature this year. Any parent/guardian who wants to claim a nonmedical waiver will need to receive education regarding the benefits of vaccination and the risks of disease from their local county health department before obtaining the certified nonmedical waiver. After a parent/guardian has completed the online educational module, they will need to print out a form and bring it into their local health department for certification.



In 2025, public schools had higher overall immunization completion rates (90%) than private schools (80.9%). Public schools also had a lower exemption rate (6.6%) than private schools (13.1%). However, exemption rates have increased in both private and public schools from 2024-2025. Waiver rates have significantly increased since, especially in the last three years, and overall state waiver rates are now around 7.1% overall for school entry. High wavier rates and low vaccination coverage leave children vulnerable to vaccine-preventable diseases. The increase in exemptions has occurred amidst a decline in childhood immunization rates that began during the COVID-19 pandemic and has continued through recent years. As a result, cases and outbreaks of vaccine preventable diseases such as measles and pertussis have increased across the state.

The MDHHS Immunization Division maintains Immunization Data and Statistics including County Immunization Report Cards (updated quarterly and include immunization rates for many different vaccines including for adults), School Immunization Data down to school building level, and other helpful information for providers and families.

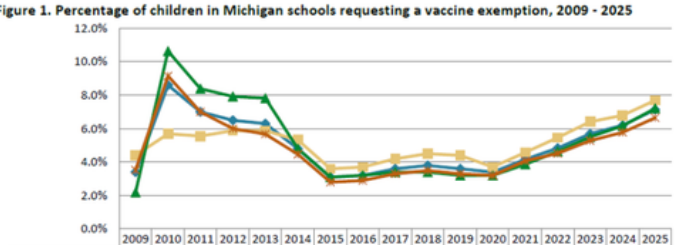
All health care providers should continue to give strong recommendations to families to stay protected against vaccine preventable diseases.

Percent waived for school aged children listed by county

- Antrim: 11.6%
- Benzie: 10.4%
- Leelanau: 9.7%
- Montmorency: 9.5%
- Otsego: 9.2%
- Presque Isle: 7.4%
- Cheboygan: 6.9%
- Emmet: 6.9%
- Charlevoix: 6.7%
- Alpena: 3.6%

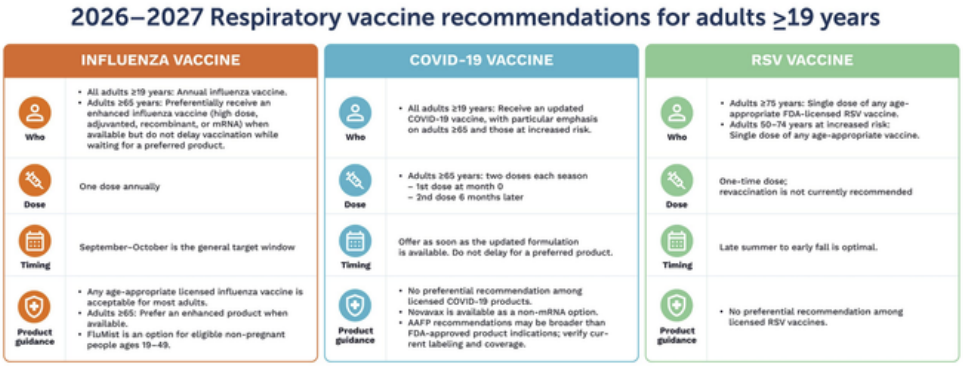
Immunization status of school children in Michigan, 2025

Figure 1. Percentage of children in Michigan schools requesting a vaccine exemption, 2009 - 2025



	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Total ^	3.4%	8.6%	7.0%	6.5%	6.3%	4.8%	3.1%	3.2%	3.6%	3.8%	3.6%	3.4%	4.2%	4.8%	5.7%	6.2%	7.1%
Kindergarten	4.4%	5.7%	5.6%	5.9%	5.9%	5.3%	3.6%	3.7%	4.2%	4.5%	4.4%	3.7%	4.6%	5.5%	6.4%	6.8%	7.7%
6th/7th**	2.2%	10.6%	8.4%	7.9%	7.8%	4.8%	3.1%	3.2%	3.4%	3.4%	3.2%	3.2%	3.9%	4.6%	5.5%	6.2%	7.2%
New Entrants	3.5%	9.1%	7.0%	6.0%	5.7%	4.5%	2.8%	2.9%	3.3%	3.5%	3.3%	3.2%	4.1%	4.5%	5.3%	5.8%	6.6%

^Total is the combination of kindergarten, 6/7th grade and new entrants to the school district.
**In 2012, a Senate Bill was passed to move the sixth-grade assessment to seventh grade.
§ In 2010, additional immunizations were added to the list of requirements.
ǂ In 2014, education was required for students requesting an exemption.



Fall Vaccine Recommendations

The 2026–2027 respiratory vaccine guidance emphasizes timely vaccination for influenza, COVID-19, and RSV among adults ages 19 and older, with particular focus on older adults and individuals at increased risk. All adults should receive an annual influenza vaccine, ideally between September and October, with enhanced formulations preferred for adults ages 65 and older when available. Updated COVID-19 vaccination is recommended for all adults each season, with adults ages 65 and older advised to receive two doses—one at the start of the season and a second dose six months later. Vaccination should occur as soon as updated products are available, without delaying for a preferred brand or formulation.

RSV vaccination is recommended as a single dose for adults ages 75 and older, as well as adults ages 50–74 who are at increased risk. The optimal timing is late summer to early fall, and current guidance does not recommend revaccination. No preferential product recommendation exists among licensed RSV vaccines. Providers are encouraged to incorporate these updated recommendations into routine preventive care conversations to reduce severe respiratory illness among high-risk patient populations.

Summer Food Recall Highlights

Michigan has seen some outbreaks in recent months tying to recent food recalls. A salmonella outbreak has been tied to jalapenos and a Cyclosporiasis outbreak potentially tied to lettuce or other produce items.



The nationwide outbreak of cyclosporiasis this summer was widespread and caused significant illness, especially in Michigan. Caused by the Cyclospora parasite, illness usually develops 2-14 days after exposure and leads to prolonged diarrhea along with nausea, abdominal cramps, fatigue, and weight loss. Without treatment symptoms can last for several weeks but will be shortened by prompt treatment with an antibiotic.

The investigation by FDA linked the outbreak to processed iceberg lettuce from Taylor Farms de Mexico that was contaminated. The company recalled all iceberg lettuce sourced from central Mexico on July 17th. The product was sold in many retail outlets including Walmart as well as used in restaurants. Most exposures occurred in late June to mid-July.

As of September 6th, there have been 14,718 reported cases of cyclosporiasis with 373 cases indicating that they led to hospitalization. There were also two reported deaths, including one in Presque Isle County. This outbreak was largely centered in southeast Michigan, but Northern lower Michigan also saw a higher trend of cases.

Local Cases
BLDHD – 5 cases, DHD4 – 187 cases (Alpena 165), HDNW – 18 cases

2026 Communicable Disease Report, January 1st- September 30th, 2026

Enteric Disease	BLDHD	DHD 4	HDNW
Campylobacter	10	9	44
Cryptosporidiosis	2	1	3
Giardiasis	1	1	10
Norovirus	0	2	2
Salmonellosis	10	11	20
Shiga toxin-producing Escherichia coli --(STEC)	5	2	2
Shigellosis	3	2	3
Yersinia enteritis	0	1	5
Respiratory Disease	**BLDHD**	**DHD 4**	**HDNW**
Influenza	53	339	253
Novel Coronavirus COVID-19	56	267	244
Respiratory Syncytial Virus	24	66	98
Meningitis & Invasive Diseases	**BLDHD**	**DHD 4**	**HDNW**
Meningitis - Aseptic	0	0	3
Meningitis - Bacterial Other	0	0	2
Streptococcus pneumoniae, Inv	1	9	5
Other	**BLDHD**	**DHD 4**	**HDNW**
CPO	5	2	6
Candida auris	2	2	1
Coccidioidomycosis	0	1	1
Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease	1	0	0
Cyclosporiasis	5	186	18
Guillain-Barre Syndrome	0	0	2

Communicable Disease Report, January 1st- September 30th, 2026

Other	BLDHD	DHD 4	HDNW
Histoplasmosis	0	2	1
Legionellosis	0	2	1
Q Fever*	0	0	1
Streptococcal Dis, Inv, Grp A	1	3	3
Unusual Outbreak or Occurrence	8	1	1
Vibriosis - Non Cholera	0	0	1
Animal Bite	**BLDHD**	**DHD 4**	**HDNW**
Rabies Animal	0	1	1
Rabies: Potential Exposure & PEP	4	65	73
STI	**BLDHD**	**DHD 4**	**HDNW**
Chlamydia (Genital)	20	58	95
Gonorrhea	3	6	9
Syphilis - Early Latent	1	0	0
Syphilis - Secondary	0	0	1
Syphilis - Unknown Duration or Late	1	1	4
Mycobacterium Disease	**BLDHD**	**DHD 4**	**HDNW**
Latent Tuberculosis Infection	6	2	5
Nontuberculous Mycobacterium	0	1	9
Vaccine Preventable Disease	**BLDHD**	**DHD 4**	**HDNW**
Chickenpox (Varicella)	1	0	1
H. influenzae Disease - Inv.	3	2	1
Pertussis	2	1	6
Shingles	2	1	1
VZ Infection, Unspecified	5	0	1

Communicable Disease Report, January 1st- September 30th, 2026

Vector Born Disease	BLDHD	DHD 4	HDNW
Anaplasmosis	16	0	7
Lyme Disease	44	6	21
Malaria	0	1	0
West Nile Virus	0	0	1
Hepatitis	**BLDHD**	**DHD 4**	**HDNW**
Hepatitis A	0	0	1
Hepatitis B, Chronic	1	0	0
Hepatitis C, Chronic	2	4	15
Aggregate Reports of Illness (School Reported)	**BLDHD**	**DHD 4**	**HDNW**
Flu Like Disease	314	16	3377
Gastrointestinal Illness	232	0	62
Head Lice	2	0	68
Strep Throat	8	0	192
Total	**854**	**1,074**	**4,681**



Dr. Joshua Meyerson serves as the Medical Director for three local health departments in northern Michigan: Health Department of Northwest Michigan, Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department, and District Health Department No. 4.