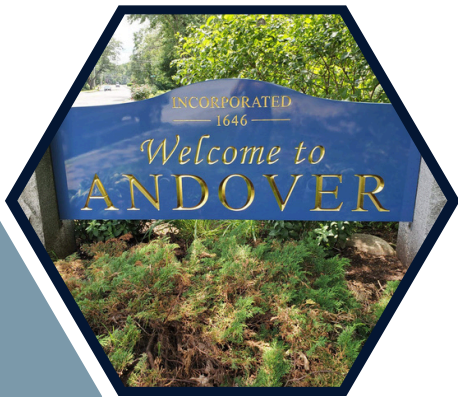


FY26

Annual Report



Middlesex-Essex
Public Health Collaborative



About Us

The Middlesex-Essex Public Health Collaborative was formed in January 2023 when the health departments of North Andover, Andover, Reading, North Reading, Haverhill and Lynnfield were awarded the State Action for Public Health Excellence Grant. Funded by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, the program aims to improve local health service delivery through cross-jurisdictional sharing. The Town of North Andover serves as the fiscal agent and houses all shared services staff.

Mission

To support member communities in achieving the highest quality of public health by collaborating to increase equity, share knowledge, and enhance the capacity of public health staff and service delivery.

Vision

We envision a future where every health department is equipped to build healthier, more equitable communities. Through collaboration, we set the standard for innovation and excellence in public health.

Core Values



Data Driven: Decisions are guided by accurate, timely, and evidence-based data to ensure effective policies, interventions, and resource allocation.



Equity: We are committed to ensuring that all individuals and communities have access to the resources, opportunities, and care they need to achieve optimal health.



Sustainability: We are committed to creating long-term, lasting impacts by utilizing resources responsibly, building workforce capacity, and developing resilience.



Collaboration: Focused on partnering to create collective solutions that maximize access to resources and knowledge for participating municipalities and improve population health outcomes.



Transparency: Openly sharing data, decision-making processes, and policies to build trust, foster accountability, and empower communities with accurate information.



Meet Our Team



LEA ANNE PERO, MPH, BSN, RN
SHARED SERVICES
PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE



LYDIA SWEETSER, MPH
SHARED SERVICES
COORDINATOR



SHANENE PIERCE
SHARED SERVICES
HEALTH INSPECTOR



WAFAA KALAI
SHARED SERVICES
HEALTH INSPECTOR

Advisory Board



AMY EWING
ASSISTANT HEALTH DIRECTOR
ANDOVER



BONNIE DUFRESNE
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
HAVERHILL



ANDREW SHAPIRO
ASSISTANT TOWN MANAGER
NORTH ANDOVER



BOB BRACEY
HEALTH DIRECTOR
NORTH READING



CORAL HOPE
HEALTH DIRECTOR
LYNNFIELD



ADE SOLARIN
HEALTH DIRECTOR
READING

The MEPHC Advisory Board meets monthly to guide strategic planning, allocate regional resources, and strengthen public health protections across our partner communities.



Nursing Services

FY26 Accomplishments

Strengthening Community Health through Local Action


The Shared Services Public Health Nurse improves community health outcomes through dedicated clinical services, education, and regional collaboration:

Program & Workforce Development

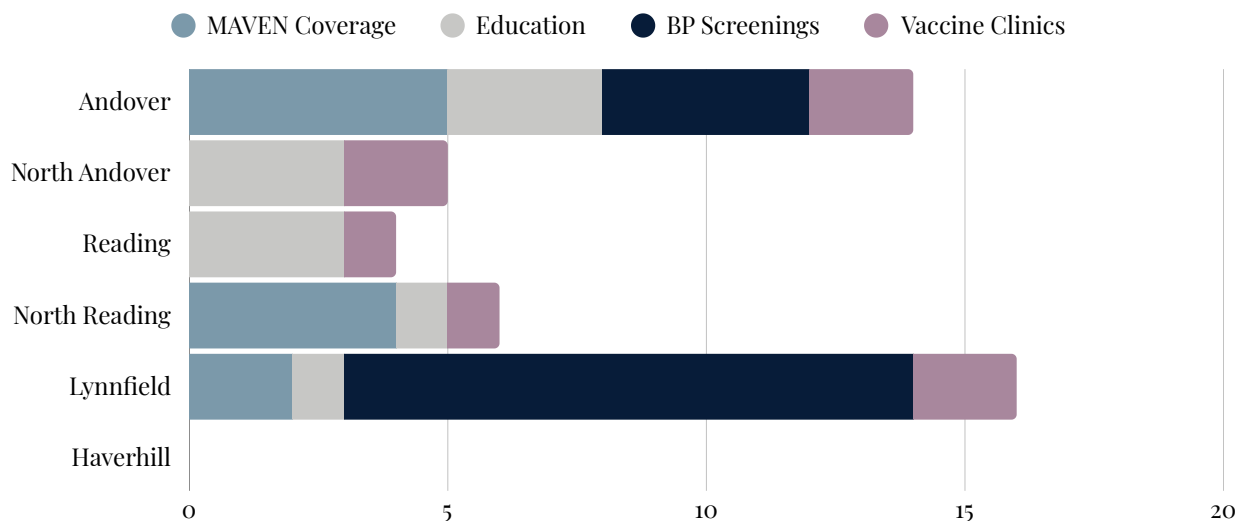
- Created a Public Health Nurse Onboarding Toolkit.
- Compiled a TB case response guide.
- Developed health education graphics and PSAs resources.
- Arranged an Youth Mental Health First Aid course, CPR, and Stop the Bleed certification for health department staff.
- Facilitated bi-monthly meetings with local public health nurses.

Community Engagement & Clinical Services

- Provided coverage for blood pressure and blood glucose screenings.
- Coordinated Opioid Workgroup meetings and invited relevant presenters.
- Assisted with vaccination clinics across the region.
- Supported MAVEN coverage and disease investigation.
- Facilitated health education events on topics like:
 - Stop the Bleed
 - Hands-only CPR/Choking relief
 - Nutrition and Food Access
 - Impaired Driving/Medication Management
 - Allergic Reactions & Epinephrine Administration
- Applied for and recieved regional CLIA waiver for cholesterol screening

 **Strategic Plan goal highlight:** Standardize Onboarding & Protocols, Expand Training, Strengthen Disease Surveillance

Activities completed by the shared public health nurse during FY26



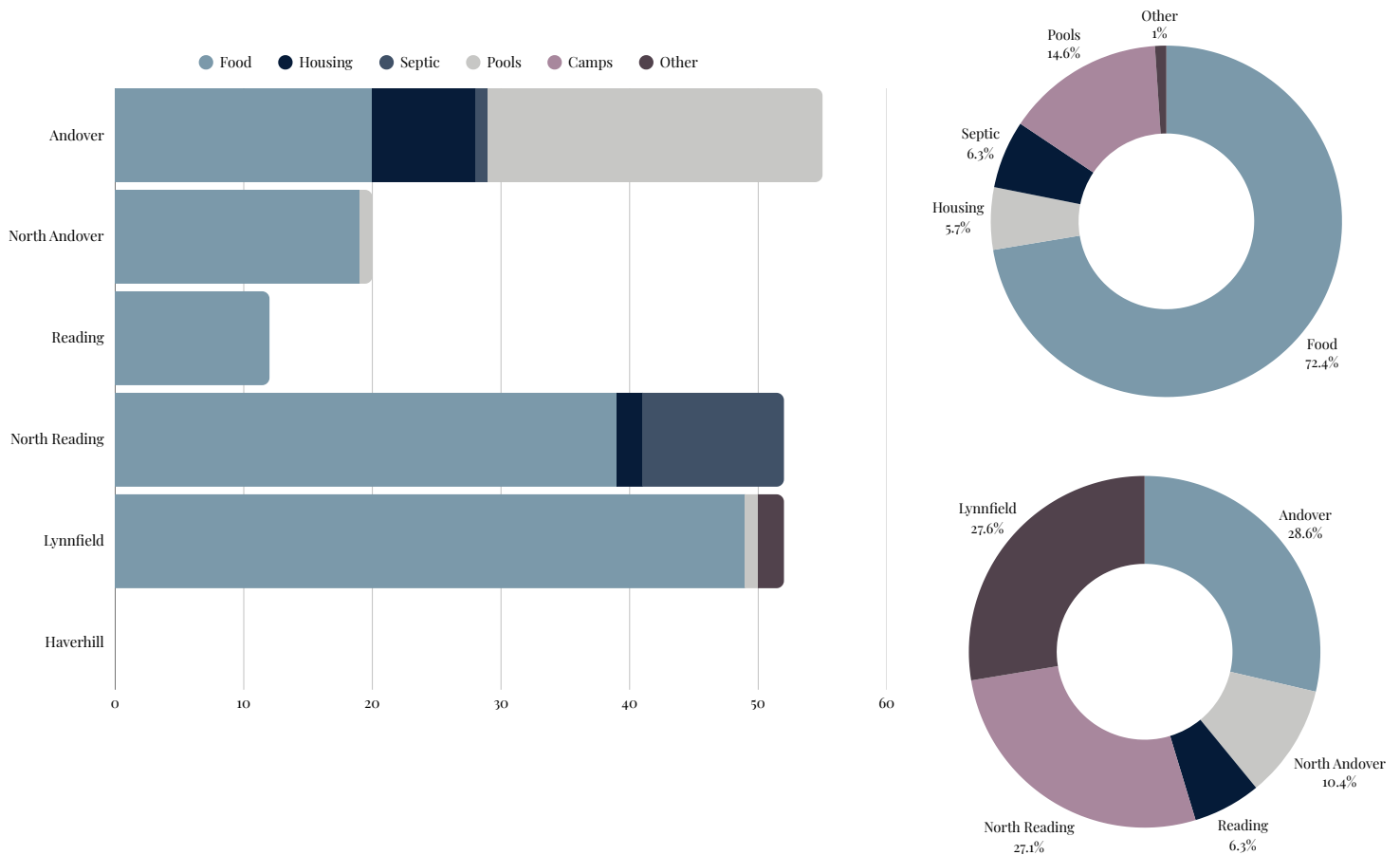


Environmental Health

This fiscal year, the MEPHC employed a full-time health inspector who was available to local health departments for assignment. We have recently hired a second inspector to increase our inspection capacity across the region. In addition to inspections, shared staff helped develop the following policies and procedures to aid local health departments in meeting the performance standards and workforce standards set forth by the state.

- Refined internal standard operating guides for shared services health inspectors
- Provided onsite assistance and resources to bring operators into compliance
- Conducted septic plan reviews
- Conducted food establishment plan reviews
- Refined and utilized a health inspector onboarding standard operating guide

Inspections completed by the shared inspector during FY26





Community Health Outreach

In FY26, MEPHC expanded its regional presence through direct, actionable municipal health and safety initiatives:

- **Clinical & Emergency Response:** Provided blood pressure/glucose screenings, tick education, and life-saving training in Hands-Only CPR, Stop the Bleed, choke safety, and epinephrine administration.
- **Wellness & Harm Reduction:** Advanced maternal, child, and senior health through nutrition, medication management, impaired driving awareness, Bump, Baby & Beyond, and Opioid Workgroup Narcan education.



✓ Strategic Plan goal highlight: Increase Presence

Health Communications

MEPHC expanded its regional reach by launching a Facebook channel, publishing health blogs, and utilizing LinkedIn and Constant Contact. Alongside our monthly newsletter, we deployed targeted PSAs and health education graphics to maximize community awareness and engagement.



✓ Strategic Plan goal highlight: Increase Visibility



Bump, Baby, & Beyond

In FY26, MEPHC hosted the "Bump, Baby, & Beyond" **regional resource fair** to advance maternal and child health outcomes. The event served as a vital bridge, **connecting over 50 local families with 47 essential vendors**, including Boston Children's Hospital, WIC, DCF, local libraries, and health specialists.

To maximize accessibility and engagement, the fair offered free admission, health education goodie bags, wellness samples, and raffles. Families also enjoyed community-building activities, including free face painting, balloon artistry, and a children's music class—creating a trusted, joyful space for health education and early intervention.

BUMP, BABY & BEYOND



A resource fair for expecting parents and families with young children

SATURDAY, MAY 16th

— Save the date —

Free Community Event



✓ Strategic Plan goal highlight: Increase Visibility & Strengthen Relationships



MEPHC Events & Training

Adult, Child, Infant Choke Saving

MEPHC hosted When Seconds Count to train health department staff on choking rescue for adults, children, and infants. The course allowed participants to explore offering a health department sponsored choke safety class locally.



HACCP Training



Shanene help coordinate a training to learn:

- Principles and concepts behind a HACCP Plan
- Identify biological, chemical, and physical hazards in a food establishment
- Standard establishment cleanliness, food processes, and personnel hygiene
- Violation documentation and reporting

Stop the Bleed



MEPHC hosted Lawrence General Trauma Unit to teach a Stop the Bleed class. Participants are now certified to facilitate community classes. Two Stop the Bleed kits were also purchased as a regional asset.

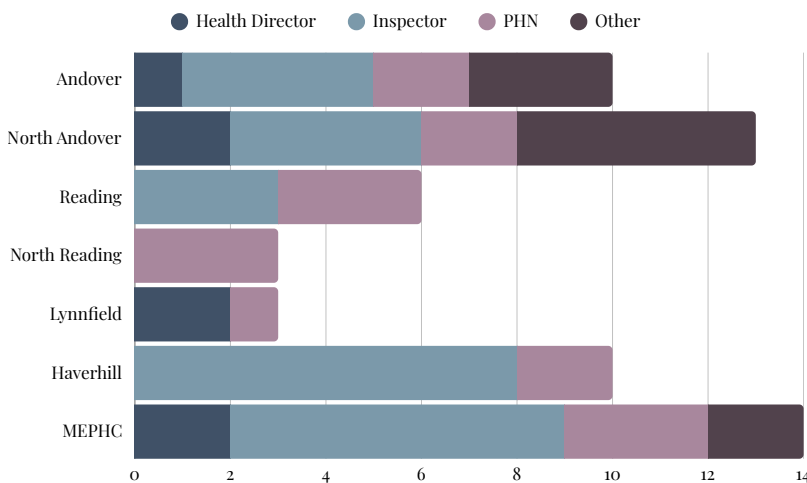


Mental Health
FIRST AID

Youth Mental Health First Aid

Lea Anne organized Youth Mental Health First Aid training for MEPHC health department staff to enhance their ability to address youth mental health needs. Community school staff were also invited to foster collaboration and strengthen partnerships between schools and public health.

FY26 Training Uptake



Training & Career Development

MEPHC regional and local staff participated in numerous conferences and training sessions in FY26, including, but not limited to:

- MHOA Conference & Seminars
- CP-FS Certifications
- Title 5 Certifications
- MAPHN Annual Conference
- Youth Mental Health First Aid
- Stop the Bleed Certification
- Choke Saver Certification
- Septic Plan Review
- Body Art Certifications

✓ **Strategic Plan goal highlight:** Strengthen Workforce Readiness

Workgroups



Public Health Nurses

Led by Lea Anne Pero, public health nurses meet bi-monthly in an in-person workgroup to discuss ongoing nursing challenges, opportunities for collaboration, and priority program areas. During FY26, key achievements of this group included:

- Public Health Nurse Onboarding Toolkit
- TB Referral Guide
- SOP: Coordinated Response to FBI Outbreak



✓ **Strategic Plan goal highlight:** Standardize Operating Procedures

Health Inspectors

Health inspectors from participating municipalities meet monthly to share knowledge. Key activities completed by this workgroup include:

- Writing policies and procedures that meet FDA Standard 3 criteria
- Discuss challenging inspectional cases such as freeze-drying in residential kitchen operations, standards for lobster tanks and more
- Working to meet the FDA Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards

Opioid Workgroup



MEPHC facilitates a quarterly Opioid Workgroup that brings together health departments, schools, EMS, community coordinators, and Drug-Free Communities directors to share resources and align interventions, particularly for opioid abatement funding.

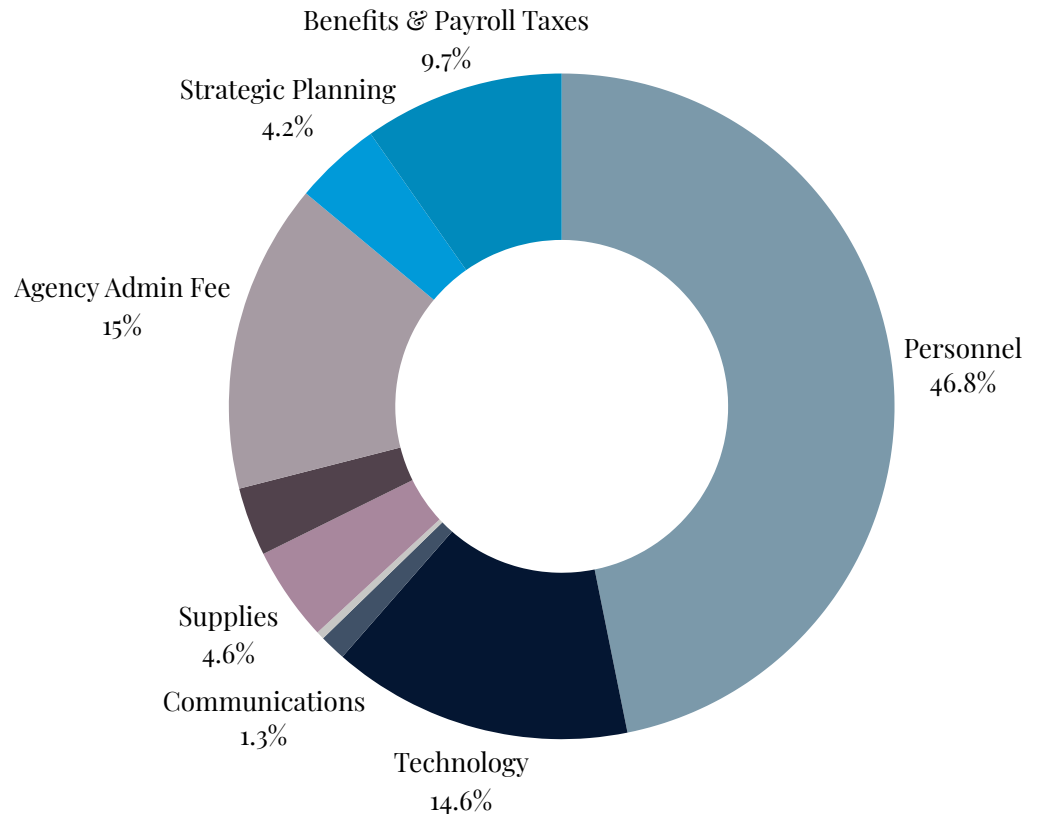
Each year, an industry expert is invited for advanced guidance; the July meeting included Cheryl Sbarra and Liz Whynott, who discussed public health law and strategic use of settlement dollars.

✓ **Strategic Plan goal highlight:** Strengthen Relationships



Spending Overview

FY26 Award
\$532,564



In FY26, the Middlesex-Essex Public Health Collaborative was awarded \$532,564.71. By the end of FY26 MEPHC spent a total of \$477,797.71 of the grant award*. The primary reason for not spending the total award amount was due to staff multiple vacancies at various points throughout the fiscal year.

As noted earlier in this report, regional funding enabled staff from all six municipalities to participate in professional development opportunities, including training in food safety, Title V, and nursing. To enhance operational efficiency, we continue to utilize Relavent software to manage food, housing, and pool inspections.

Furthermore, we launched a comprehensive strategic planning initiative, partnering with BME Consulting Services to reevaluate our plans for the coming fiscal years. This vital investment will serve as the roadmap for the future success and sustainability of the MEPHC collaborative.

*Based on receipts submitted and paid for as of June 20th, 2026