



Miscellaneous

Addressing Vaping & Vape Store Challenges

For the first time, DESPP led a public meeting during the evening of March 4th to educate the public about dangerous products sold at vape stores, the illegal sale of cannabis, and what’s being done to enforce state laws and local ordinances. The event was well received and featured on Channel 8 News. Panelists at the Naugatuck High School event included myself, Attorney General William Tong, DESPP Commissioner Ronnell Higgins, Deputy DCP Commissioner Shirley Skyers-Thomas, Naugatuck Police Chief Colin McAllister, Naugatuck Superintendent of Schools Melissa Cooley, as well as representatives from the state Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, CT State Police, and the Office of the State’s Attorney for the Judicial District of Waterbury. Austin also attended and had a table with information and resources.



Massage Parlors Ordinance: Naugatuck

I attended the Naugatuck Public Hearing on March 3rd and provided comment. I will also attend the second Public Hearing on April 7th.

CT Association of Directors of Health (CADH)

Positions held: Elected Board of Directors; Emergency Preparedness Committee Chair; Environmental Health Committee, Advocacy Committee

I hosted a CADH Emergency Preparedness Committee meeting on March 3rd and attended the Environmental Health Committee on March 12th. I also attended the CADH Advocacy Committee meeting on March 12th and 26th.

Statewide DPH & Local Health Meetings

I continue to attend the monthly meeting held for local health and DPH staff (co-hosted by CADH). NVHD staff also attend if their schedule permits. The March meeting was canceled.





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Workforce Development

Lisa continues to chair the NVHD Workforce Development Committee. As we close out the third quarter, staff continued to work on completing the required two online training courses per person. The March Public Health Training Academy of CT (PHTAC) meeting was canceled and will be reconvened in April.

Cornell University PHLE

I was accepted to the newest cohort of the CDC-funded Cornell University Public Health Leadership Essentials (PHLE) Certificate Program which began at the end of March. PHLE is a 15-week self-paced asynchronous online distance learning with hands-on applied learning, delivered by Cornell instructors, and supported by peer-to-peer course discussions and feedback from course facilitators. The 5 courses include public health leadership, building and leading collaborative teams, cultivating strategic leadership skills, systems thinking for community focused change, and affecting policy change.

Air Quality and Climate Change

I virtually attended The Medical Society Consortium on Climate and Health 2026 Our Planet, Our Health Convention on Sunday, March 1st – Tuesday, March 3rd.

Grant: EPA Air Quality Monitoring Grant

Status: Contract is fully executed!

We continue to meet biweekly with our DPH, Yale, and Uconn partners. We have begun recruitment for placing sensors at residential and commercial sites across Ansonia and Derby and are now expanding into Seymour and Shelton. Once the sensors are calibrated by Yale, we will work with their team to coordinate the final site selections. We have two grant-related public events coming up in April. The first is a tabling event at the Ansonia Nature Center Earth Day Event on Saturday, April 18th and the second is a Pop-Up Park Event in collaboration with UConn Department of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture faculty and students on Wednesday, April 22nd. Flyers will be published in our April Newsletter and posted to our website and social media pages.

Naugatuck Valley Overdose Prevention & Education (NOPE) Program

Grant: Overdose Data to Action: Limiting Overdose through Collaborative Actions in Localities (OD2A)

Status: Year 3 Sub-contract Executed with New Haven Health Department

Austin established recurring tabling at Plumb Memorial Library and Howard Whittemore Library, allowing outreach to effectively target both ends of the Valley. During these engagements, substance use disorder (SUD) and opioid use disorder (OUD) information has been distributed along with details on local shelters and Foodshare locations, including key contacts. Fentanyl and xylazine test strips have been made available, in addition to general hygiene supplies such as body wipes, toothbrush kits, and deodorant. There has also been consistent bi-weekly attendance at the Naugatuck and Derby FoodShare events, where information and supplies continue to be provided to individuals in need.

Outreach efforts have been impacted by unpredictable weather conditions throughout the beginning of the month and challenges identifying available shelter options for unhoused individuals, particularly as the state's no-freeze policy is lifted at the start of April. This transition has created additional urgency in securing stable overnight housing for those currently relying on emergency shelter services. That said, Austin did have several successful experiences this month. He reconnected with an unhoused couple who recently returned to the area. Another significant success involved directly connecting a woman experiencing homelessness with a housing program through a warm handoff to program staff. This connection enabled her to receive immediate clarification on required documentation and begin the application process after reportedly living in her car for two years.





Austin and Lisa attended The Connecticut, Community & Law Enforcement for Addiction Recovery (CLEAR) Deflection Summit at CT State Northwestern on March 12th. The summit highlighted the impact of CLEAR’s innovative approach—diverting individuals with substance use disorder (SUD) away from the criminal justice system and toward community-based care through law enforcement referrals and rapid outreach. Lisa will be coordinating a local Valley presentation this spring with Statewide CLEAR Project Manager, Lauren Pristo, of McCall Behavioral Health (photos included in the Community Health section of the report).

Austin and Lisa completed a Mental Health First Aid training for the largest shelter in the Valley area, Spooner House. Participants included a wide range of staff, from leadership and case managers to floor staff, marking an important step in strengthening the shelter’s capacity to respond to mental health needs.

His participation in the Region Five Breathe Easy Work Group has supported the development of programs and educational materials aimed at reducing youth smoking and vaping.

Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP)

Emilija has continued to work on updating and editing the Public Health Emergency Response Plan (PHERP) to familiarize herself with our response plan(s). She has also continued to do an inventory of NVHD’s PHEP and MRC supplies to familiarize herself with our current materials and stock, and see what we may need to change, discard, or add ahead of our exercises this June.

NVHD was selected to host the CT Region 5 Biological Incident 100 Tabletop Exercise (TTX) on April 9th and the CT Region 5 Bio 200 Functional Point of Dispensing (POD) Exercise on June 26th. Both will be held at Naugatuck High School. Emilija has been assisting me with the planning and preparation for the two exercises, which has also been a good learning experience for her. We continued to attend the statewide planning meeting hosted by DPH planning meetings with our CRI Region 5 Lead, Torrington Area Health District in March. On March 19th, I evaluated the CT Region 1 Bio 100 TTX and Emilija attended (photos below). Emilija will also attend the Region 2 Bio 100 and Region 1 Bio 200 exercises in April for more experience.



On March 3rd, Emilija attended the virtual Connecticut Basic WebEOC training. The 2-hour training on the secure web-based emergency operations center platform covered topics such as access and credentials, shared situational awareness carousel, navigation and data analysis tips and tricks, self-learn training, EOC tools and ESF resources, and mobile app setup.



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On March 4th and 5th, she completed *AWR-901-2: Hospital Emergency Response Training (HERT) for Mass Casualty Incidents – Basic*, a training taught by the Centers of Domestic Preparedness - FEMA training sponsored by Hartford Healthcare at Charlotte Hungerford Hospital. The training was a 2-day (16 hours) course designed to guide hospital staff and others who may be required to support the hospital response to a mass casualty incident (MCI) involving contamination due to a natural, accidental, or intentional incident. Some goals and objectives achieved in this training were recognition and treatment of chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive events, decontamination of ambulatory and non-ambulatory patients, technical decontamination, and introduction to Dahlgren hybrid decontamination.



The TEEX Training, PER-211 Medical Management of Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosive (CBRNE) Events, that was scheduled for March 11th - 12th was regrettably, based upon a federally directed mandate cancelled. Effective at the beginning of March, FEMA suspended all National Training and Education Division (NTEED) training and education activities not directly supporting the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

Additional PHEP trainings attended by Emilija this month:

- March 19: The Modern Cyber Threat Landscape and How It’s Targeting Public Health Right Now webinar hosted by NACCHO and presented by Kevin Kelly, chairman and CEO of Cycurion (a NACCHO partner)
- March 25: Biosafety Cabinets 101: Foundations for Safe Handling of Special Pathogens webinar hosted by the National Emerging Special Pathogens Training and Education Center (NETEC)
- March 31: Prenatal Wildfire Smoke Exposure and Child Development webinar hosted by ASPR and MotherToBaby

ESF 8: Public Health & Medical Services

Positions held: Chair of Region 5; Member of Region 2

I facilitated the Region 5 ESF 8 meeting on March 6th and Emilija attended. Emilija represented NVHD and attended the Region 2 ESF 8 meeting on March 18th. I attended the Region 5 Special Joint Regional Emergency Planning Team (REPT) and Steering Committee meeting on March 2nd and the Regular Region 2 REPT-SC meeting on March 20th.

CT Health Care Coalition

Positions held: Executive Board Member; Voting Member

We both attended the CT HCC Medical Response and Surge Exercise After-Action Meeting on March 6th. On March 11th, Emilija attended the All-Clear Management, *Maximizing Your Role in a MRSE*, webinar. I attended a Special Meeting of the CT HCC Executive Committee on March 30th.





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Medical Reserve Corps

Emilija attended the New England MRC Regional (Federal Region 1) meetings on March 3rd, 10th, and 17th. Additionally, she attended the National Office of MRC Hours meetings on March 3rd, 10th, 17th, and 24th. The meeting on March 3rd featured Dr. Brian Mazanec, Deputy Assistant Secretary and Director at the Center for Preparedness, as a guest speaker. Key updates included the renewal of the federal Opioid Public Health Emergency and the importance of activity reporting to support national initiatives. Discussions also addressed ongoing challenges in volunteer recruitment, retention, and engagement, as well as new information-sharing tools and training opportunities through ASPR TRACIE.

On March 30th, Emilija attended a 4-hour First Aid training on behalf of the NVMRC, sponsored by the Capitol Region MRC with funding from the CT HCC. The course followed the American Heart Association (AHA) First Aid curriculum and provided practical skills for responding to medical emergencies. This training strengthened her first aid knowledge and skills, enhancing her readiness to assist community members effectively until EMS arrives.



NACCHO Preparedness Policy Advisory Group (PPAG)

Position held: Connecticut Representative

Emilija and I attended the PPAG meeting on March 18th. Topics discussed in this meeting were NACCHO/ Government affairs, CDC and DSLR program announcements, strategic plan overview from the Office of Strategy, Policy, and Requirements (ASPR), FIFA World Cup working group, responses to uncertainty or changing priorities, 2026 PREP Summit, and Federal Regions 8 updates. Government affairs updates included the final FY26 Labor-HHS law, reflecting continued public health funding, although uncertainty remains regarding several federal grants.

FIFA World Cup

In addition to updates provided during the PPAG meeting, I was asked to participate in several working groups focused on planning for the upcoming tournament.

NACCHO 2026 FIFA World Cup Community of Practice (CoP)

I attended the meeting on March 20th. The CoP group will support Local Health Departments (LHDs), states (SACCHOs), host cities, neighboring regions, Team Base Camp (TBC) locations, and key partners in planning for and strengthening public health preparedness and response activities related to the 2026 FIFA World Cup. This group will provide the following:

- Identify local needs, challenges, and gaps to inform national partners
- A forum for peer-to-peer learning for actionable, relevant, and timely World Cup preparedness information
- Exchange epidemiological, surveillance, and public health emergency preparedness insights
- Foster unified messaging and ensuring critical information moves efficiently from national partners to the local level
- A place to share resources and/or best practices

CT FIFA 2026 ESF-8 Workgroup

I was asked to participate in this workgroup convened at the request of the Connecticut Department of Public Health, Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response, in partnership with the CT HCC, to discuss planning considerations for the state's healthcare system in advance of the FIFA World Cup matches taking place this summer in New Jersey and Massachusetts. Our first meeting was on March 30th.





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Surveillance & Outbreak Response

This month Paulina focused on closing out the ELC 2 grant. This included completing programmatic reports and wrapping up any outstanding tasks, including the COVID/flu test kit distribution effort, social media messaging regarding emerging cases of human metapneumovirus (HMPV) in anticipation of spring break travel, and updating the Long COVID section of the CHIP Resource Guide.

Table 1. COVID-19 Adults Case Statistics (18+)

	February	March
Total Cases & Contacts Managed*	109	65
Consultations with Residents	-	-

Table 2. COVID-19 Youth and Teen (0-17) Case Statistics

	February	March
Total Cases & Contacts Managed*	39	15
Consultations with Residents	-	-

**Please note that "Total Cases & Contacts Managed" also includes reports of self-tests originating from various sources such as self-reports, schools, childcare centers, congregate living facilities, etc. and as such do not always come with contact information and/or do not always warrant further follow-up by NVHD staff.*

As our last source of COVID-era funding concludes, it is bittersweet to reflect on all the work accomplished and personnel this grant sustained during the last six years or so. With gratitude, we bid farewell and best wishes to Paulina!





COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES
Carissa Caserta, MPH
March 2026

Miscellaneous

Radon Awareness Month

Vanessa distributed the final few radon test kits. As part of an incentive to get people to submit their radon kits before the warm months, a raffle was set up. Our gift card winner was an Ansonia resident, and they were happy to win their \$25 gift card! She also completed the radon report from the test kits that were distributed and analyzed. See the report attached.

Valley Council for Health & Human Services (VCHHS)

Lisa and Austin attended the monthly VCHHS meeting on March 3rd. The meeting agenda included updates on the Community Care Hub and a case study presentation by the Rape Crisis Center of Milford, another update on the pilot project on food resources communications that the Council and CHIP Committee will participate in with the state Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity, and Opportunity, updated DataHaven reports and website, agency updates, and a general CHIP update by Myra (Griffin).

Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)

Me, Jess, and Lisa are members of the CHIP Steering Committee along with Myra O. (Griffin Health Services) and Beth C. (Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center). The priority areas of the 2025-2028 Naugatuck Valley Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) have been refined to: Access to Care and other Social Needs (Co-Chaired by Myra and Aneta Guliuzza of Griffin); Enhance Mental and Behavioral Health (Co-Chaired by NVHD’s Lisa and Austin); and Improve Awareness, Access to, and Uptake of Healthy Food & Nutrition Programming/Services (Co-Chaired by Jess, Beth and myself).



Mental and Behavioral Health

The Mental and Behavioral Health Committee met on March 19th. In addition to regular business and work plan updates, Cassandra Dessureau-O’Hara, LPC, Founder and Krystal Nazario, LMSW, Director of Marketing from M.J.A Behavioral Health and Wellness attended and provided a presentation about their practice and services.

Lisa and Austin attended The Connecticut, Community & Law Enforcement for Addiction Recovery (CLEAR) Deflection Summit at CT State Northwestern on March 12th. The summit highlighted the impact of CLEAR’s innovative approach—diverting individuals with substance use disorder (SUD) away from the criminal justice system and toward community-based care through law enforcement referrals and rapid outreach. Lisa will be coordinating a local Valley presentation this spring with Statewide CLEAR Project Manager, Lauren Pristo, of McCall Behavioral Health.





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Access to Care and other Social Needs

The Access to Care committee will reconvene on April 1st.

Food and Nutrition

Jess and Beth are co-supervising a Yale Medical Resident Intern to assist with the Food and Nutrition Committee. They meet with George weekly and are planning to use his report of recommendations to formalize the Valley Food Coalition / Policy Council. George will present his research findings at the April meeting.

The Food and Nutrition Committee met on March 27th. Agenda topics included an update by Intern George, a review of the revised activities work plan, a digital activity submission tool, and discussion about the upcoming Initial Food Coalition Planning Workshop that will be held at the Center for Healthy Living in the Quarry Walk in April.

Jess submitted a mini-grant application in collaboration with Caty Poole to the Valley Community Foundation. NVHD will serve as the fiduciary for an educational series to take place over summer/fall at all the various Valley Community Garden locations.

Griffin CHL Steering Committee

Jess and I are serving on Griffin’s Center for Healthy Living Steering Committee which last met on March 30th. The CHL is the umbrella for Griffin Hospital’s lifestyle, wellness, prevention, and chronic disease management programs. The Center’s mission is to support individuals and communities and their healthcare providers with knowledge, skills, and competencies in the medical specialty of Lifestyle Medicine.

Community Health Programs

LiveWell Self-Management Programs

LiveWell with Chronic Pain completed at the Ansonia Senior Center with 9 completers.

Kristie and Lisa are facilitating a virtual LiveWell with Diabetes Self-Management Program (DSMP) on Tuesday evenings that started on February 24th and will end on April 8th.

Kristie and Lisa held a four-day Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (CDSMP) Master Training. They trained 12 new leaders representing nine partner organizations: NVHD, Bridgeport Department of Health & Social Services, West Haven Health Department, East Shore District Health Department, Housatonic Valley Health District, NuVance Health, Griffin Hospital, Torrington Area Health District, and the Town of Durham. These organizations can now add or expand their ability to offer CDSMP to their communities, allowing the program to become more widely available in Connecticut. This was the first time we held this training, and we plan to offer it again soon!





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A Matter of Balance (MOB)

A Matter of Balance was completed at the Shelton Senior Center also with 9 completers. During the last session, Kristie was our guest presenter to discuss getting up from a fall. She also did the same presentation for Quinnipiac Valley Health District at the North Haven Senior Center.

Mental and Behavioral Health Programs

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)

On Saturday, March 28th, Lisa and Austin hosted a Mental Health First Aid training at Spooner House in Shelton for 10 staff members.

Suicide Prevention and Postvention

Suicide postvention plays a critical role in supporting individuals and communities after a loss, reducing the risk of additional trauma, and strengthening coordinated community response efforts. As part of our CHIP work, NVHD has partnered with BHcare's Alliance for Prevention & Wellness and the Western CT Coalition, our regional behavioral health action organizations (RBHAOs), to offer CONNECT Suicide Postvention Training designed specifically for local community leaders across the Naugatuck Valley region on May 18th and 19th in Ansonia. The CONNECT model is a nationally recognized, evidence-informed program that emphasizes building relationships, enhancing communication, and fostering resilience across systems of care. Registration is currently open and interested individuals should use this link to reserve a seat: <https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/ev/reg/5a7dvca>.

NACCHO Suicide Prevention Community of Practice

Lisa attended nationwide workgroup meeting on March 23rd.

RSAB (2 & 5)

Lisa and Austin attended the Region 5 quarterly Suicide Advisory Board meeting on March 25th.

CT CSP

The Comprehensive Suicide Prevention (CSP) in CT meeting for local health departments/districts with suicide prevention programs funded by either the CT DPH Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant (PHHSBG) or the Public Health Approach to Comprehensive Suicide Prevention in Connecticut grant meeting was held on March 26th.

Immunization Grants & Clinical Services

Clinical Services

Kristie provided vaccinations to 17 children, for a total of 28 vaccines administered for the month of March. Kristie also held 2 community blood pressure screenings events at Seymour Community Center and Derby Senior Center.

Immunization Action Plan (IAP) Grant Program

Elizabeth conducted 4 in-person full site visits for pediatric offices in Trumbull, Shelton, and Ansonia. She also completed 1 12-month IQIP follow-up visit in Stratford. She also attended a HPV vaccine workgroup meeting and a Naugatuck Early Childhood Center (ECC) Meeting. Kristie, Elizabeth, and I attended the monthly CT Immunization Meeting which reviews any local and state government updates. Lastly, Elizabeth delivered digital data loggers (thermometers) to a pediatric office in Ansonia.

Tuberculosis

Kristie is providing Directly Observed Therapy (DOT) for one TB patient.





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CT DPH Cardiovascular Learning Collaborative

NVHD is one of 8 accepted local health departments/districts into the 3rd Cohort of the CT DPH Cardiovascular Learning Collaborative. Kristie and I went to a presentation in Berlin where the 2nd Cohort of this project presented their projects and findings. We gathered some ideas from these presentations and met with the consultants to discuss our project. As of right now, we are working on adding a social determinant of health screenings for our clinic to refer to Valley community services when needed. The screening tool will be shared when it is finalized.

Community Outreach Events

NVHD was pleased to table at the Ansonia Registration Fair for the fourth year in a row and families were happy to see NVHD! Austin, Vanessa, and Emilija attended the event targeted towards Ansonia residents who have children eligible to attend kindergarten for the upcoming school year. It is an excellent opportunity to strengthen the transition to kindergarten and familiarize families with community agencies such as NVHD and other programs through stations and activities. This year, about 62 children were registered for kindergarten.

Vanessa also attended the Griffin Car Seat Safety Check this month and was asked to continue attending this event. Parents are happy to learn about our services, like immunizations and lead prevention for their families.





ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
Melanie Dokla, BS, RS
March 2026

Food Service Establishments

Seasonal permit applications are being reviewed and scheduled for an inspection.

Staff continue to conduct plan views and site visit inspections for food service establishments that are new or changing ownership.

Glenda Buenaventura, per diem food inspector, continues to assist in conducting food service inspection after hours and on the weekend up to 20 hours a week.

John Mucha, Head Sanitarian, Michael Delossantos, Sanitarian, and I met with TEAM, Inc. representatives to review expectations for their April fundraising event, "Community that Cooks."

Public Pools

Applications to renew the existing public pool permits were mailed out (44). The permits expire on April 30th; renewals for seasonal pools are due prior to operation.

Body Care

Staff continue to conduct plan views and inspections for body care establishments that are new or changing ownership.

Tattoo Establishments

The renewal process and routine inspections for existing tattoo and body piercing establishments have been completed.

Subsurface Sewage Disposal Systems (SSDS)

Staff continue to conduct SSDS inspections, B-100 visit, soil testing, B-100 plan reviews, new SSDS plans reviews, and have issued permits to discharge.

Phase II environmental staff meet internally on a weekly basis to review procedures and discuss more complex cases.

Housing/Nuisance Complaints

Environmental staff continue to investigate housing code violations and complaints.

Lead Education & Action Program (LEAP)

Staff continue to complete comprehensive lead inspection for elevated blood lead (EBLL) cases. If the residence is a multi-family dwelling the other units are required to be tested if there is a child under the age of six. Risk assessment inspections are also being conducted if an EBLL case relocates within our district.





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Lead abatement plans submitted by lead abatement contractors are reviewed and property owners are issued written orders from this office. Once the project has received approval and work is completed, a final inspection is conducted to ensure work was done as specified in the plan.

Community Health and Environmental Health staff meet monthly to provide updates on open cases and to discuss any ongoing issues.

Grant funding for lead projects through Connecticut Children’s Medical Center is still pending/unknown.

I was subpoenaed to appear in Waterbury Juvenile Court on March 26th regarding lead-based paint violations located property in Seymour.

Lead Stats - March

Open environmental lead cases (properties)	24
New environmental	4
Active case management (children)	46

Miscellaneous

Amy Durand, Registered Sanitarian, attended a virtual training sponsored by National Environmental Health Association (NEHA). The training was entitled “Doorsteps: The Public Health Impact of Flies and Roaches.”

Emergency Responses After-Hours

	Date/Time	Location	Description of Event
1.	March 8, 2026	Wendy’s, Seymour	Fire

