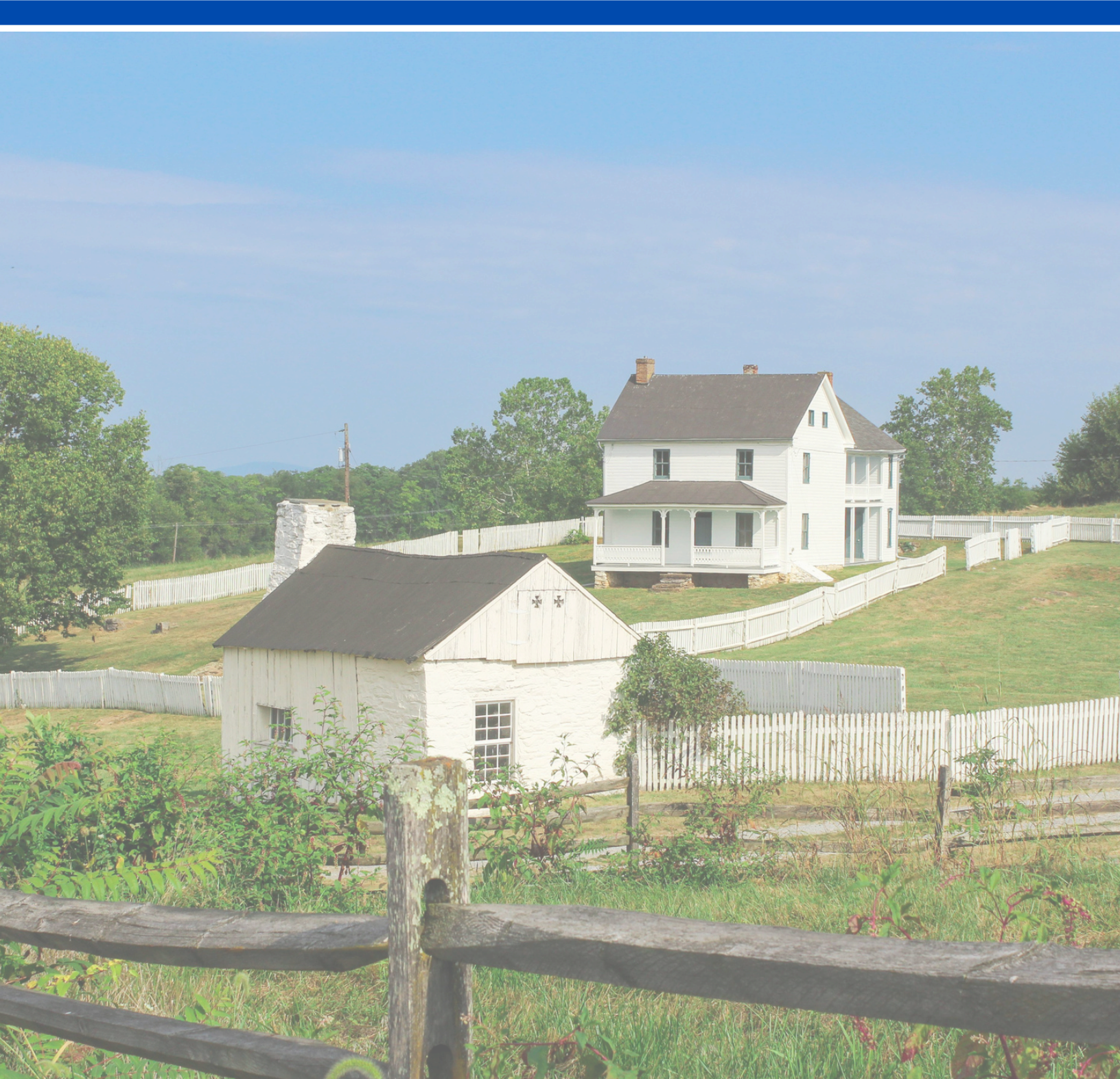


2025

Annual Report



Helping People Live Healthier



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OUR MISSION:

Helping People Live Healthier

OUR VISION:

To be the trusted health resource for all people.

- Website: bhsj.org
- Facebook: [branch-hillsdale-stjoseph community health agency](https://www.facebook.com/branch-hillsdale-stjoseph-community-health-agency)
- Instagram: [bhsj_healthagency](https://www.instagram.com/bhsj_healthagency)
- YouTube: [@bhsjchamedia](https://www.youtube.com/@bhsjchamedia)
- Nextdoor: [branch-hillsdale-stjosephcommunityhealthagency](https://www.nextdoor.com/branch-hillsdale-stjosephcommunityhealthagency)

BOARD OF HEALTH



Tim Stoll
Commissioner
Branch County
Chair



Brent Leininger
Commissioner
Hillsdale County
Vice-Chair



Jared Hoffmaster
Commissioner
St. Joseph County



Jon Houtz
Commissioner
Branch County



Kevin Collins
Commissioner
Hillsdale County



Rick Shaffer
Commissioner
St. Joseph County

AGENCY DIRECTORS



Rebecca A. Burns, MPH, RS
Health Officer



Karen Luparello, DO, MPH
Medical Director



Theresa Fisher, BS
Director of
Administrative Services



Heidi Hazel, BSN, RN
Director of Personal
Health and Disease
Prevention



Laura Sutter, BS
Director of Area Agency
on Aging Region IIC



Joe Frazier, REHS
Director of
Environmental Health

"Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world."

- Desmond Tutu

Dear Community:

To the Residents of Branch, Hillsdale, and St. Joseph Counties,

On behalf of the Board of Health and the staff of the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency, I am pleased to share our Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Annual Report with you.

This report is organized by division and program to provide a clear overview of the services delivered throughout the year. The agency consists of four public health divisions—Administrative Services, Environmental Health, Health Education & Promotion, and Personal Health & Disease Prevention—along with the Division on Aging, which includes the Area Agency on Aging IIC serving Branch and St. Joseph Counties. Within each division, you will find service statistics highlighting the individuals served, communicable diseases investigated, inspections conducted, and permits issued.

Each fiscal year brings new opportunities to strengthen and expand our work. In FY 2025, we continued implementation of a grant from the Office of Highway Safety Planning (OHSP). In September 2025, our agency was honored to receive the Director’s Award to Local Public Health (Second Place) for leading Michigan’s first regional initiative focused on reducing traffic crashes involving horse-and-buggy users. This recognition reflects the collaborative and innovative work made possible through the OHSP grant.

Our Environmental Health Division began the year under the leadership of Director Joe Frazier and introduced a new online portal, providing residents the convenience of applying for Environmental Health services anytime and from anywhere.

The Personal Health & Disease Prevention team expanded services by launching mobile WIC clinics in two Hillsdale County communities—Waldron and Litchfield—using the agency’s mobile unit. The team also welcomed a dental hygienist and began conducting oral health assessments for kindergarten students, further strengthening preventive services for children and families.

Additionally, the Area Agency on Aging IIC successfully secured funding through the new MI Options grant initiative. This opportunity allows us to enhance coordination of services and improve access to supports for older adults and individuals with disabilities in our region.

We are proud of the progress made this year and remain committed to protecting and promoting the health of our communities. We look forward to continuing to serve you and your family in 2026 and beyond.

Yours in Good Health,



Rebecca A. Burns, MPH, RS
Health Officer



What does Public Health Look Like?



Working with communities and residents to ensure safe drinking water.



Connecting families to services they need in order to be healthy.



Sharing information and resources with healthcare providers to improve health.



Being prepared to respond to our community when they are in need.



Advocating for services and policies that impact community health and safety.



Ensuring a safe food supply no matter if you eat at a business, community event, or home.

LOCATIONS



Branch County

570 Marshall Road
Coldwater, MI
517-279-9561



Hillsdale County

20 Care Drive
Hillsdale, MI
517-437-7395



St. Joseph County

1110 Hill Street
Three Rivers, MI
269-273-2161



1555 E. Chicago Road
Suite C

Sturgis, MI
269-273-2161

PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

Protecting Families

Protecting Our Food Supply

When the gates open on the Branch County Fair, or any of the community events and festivals that involve food vendors, sanitarians from your local health department inspect each vendor to ensure compliance with standards of food safety and hygiene.

Restaurants and food trucks are a large portion of the inspections we complete annually, but our sanitarians also inspect the food service at schools, bars, civic clubs, and local churches.

The purpose of these inspections is to ensure the staff and managers have the resources, training, and education they need to protect the public from food borne illness. Citations are issued for violation of the rules, but all businesses are given the opportunity to correct the issues.

This year our agency received many calls and messages over the summer from residents who found individuals or food vendors on social media offering food items from their homes or other locations. You can find information about licensed food establishments and food trucks at <https://eh.bhsh.org/#/home>.

We also saw several "cottage food" businesses established in the jurisdiction. A "cottage food" business is allowed to sell up to \$25,000 of products that do not need to be maintained at a "safe" temperature. A few simple examples include items such as baked goods, jams/jellies, or dried items. They must be properly labeled and sold in a hand to hand exchange, no mailing. If you have questions, please call your local health department office.

We encourage residents who wish to sell food, such as BBQ meats, to the public to contact our office. We will gladly educate and assist you with the information and licenses you need to create a small business.

By the Numbers:



Well Permits
Issued & Wells
Inspected
1,028



On-Site Sewage
Evaluated, Permits
Issued, & Inspected
928



Food Establishment
Inspections
1,217



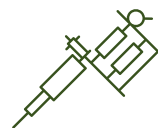
Campground
Inspections
69



Public Swimming
Pool Inspections
57



Daycare & Foster
Care Inspections
72



Body Art Inspections
23



Septage Hauler Inspections
37

Ensuring Safe Water for Play

Our sanitarians perform inspections and water sample testing on all public pools in the jurisdiction. We look to see if there are appropriate safety devices available, and educate the operators on the appropriate chemical levels needed to prevent swimmers from experiencing any water borne illness.

We also monitor concerns with the lakes and streams in the jurisdiction. In this fiscal year we assisted with providing information to residents regarding Harmful Algal Blooms and contaminants discharged into surface waters.

Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) occur annually in a few of the lakes in the jurisdiction. When they happen, our staff notifies the public and places educational signage at public beaches and boat launches.

HABs may cause illness in people and pets who play in contaminated water. These illnesses can range from a simple rash to a serious stomach issue. When you see a sign at the public beach or boat launch, use caution, avoid swallowing the water, and shower soon after leaving the water.

SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY

Supporting Families

Helping the Most Vulnerable

In 2025, the agency continued to focus efforts on the Community Health Worker program. Community Health Workers are trained and certified to address the social determinants of health which include economic stability, education access, healthcare access, and community supports.

Community Health Workers have assisted individuals to enroll in health insurance, find resources for food, locate safe housing, complete their education, access rehabilitative services, access medical care, secure transportation, and address urgent financial needs.

The agency partners with additional community agencies and services to ensure needs of residents in our communities are met. Together, we strive to ensure residents with the greatest needs are connected to the resources that can assist them to become healthier by stabilizing their social situation.

Our Community Health Worker and Health Education and Promotion staff participate in monthly outreach activities in all three counties. Outreach events allow us to share information on the services the agency provides to support families and the community.

In 2025, our agency was awarded a grant from the Michigan Office of Highway Safety & Planning to work within the community to reduce the number of crashes involving a horse and buggy. The project included education of the community about road safety, increased visibility, and patience when driving near a horse and buggy.

Our Emergency Preparedness program works with county Emergency Managers and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services to ensure a coordinated response to emergency situations that could impact public health. We also provide community education to help residents be prepared to respond to and recover from an emergency.

By the Numbers:



Community Events
Attended

77



Coalitions We
Participate With

19



Community Health
Worker Clients

216



News Stories

126



Social Media
Followers

5,320

As a part of preparedness, we executed Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with community partners to support emergency response. We also participated in state, regional, and local exercises and drills.

In 2025, we provided personal protective equipment to area farms in response to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, air quality concerns at St. Joseph County Jail, a water quality concern in Union City, Harmful Algal Bloom public access notifications, and conducted communicable disease investigations to prevent outbreaks.

Communications is Key

The Health Education and Promotions team is responsible for communicating information with the public. This includes management of our social media platforms, maintaining relationships with local media and community partners, press releases, updating website information, developing newsletters, and preparing for crisis communications.

Our digital platforms are the primary vehicle for ensuring the community has information that is timely, relevant, and credible. We encourage residents to follow us on Facebook, Instagram, Nextdoor, and YouTube.

INVESTING IN FAMILIES

Investing in You

All Ages and Stages

Our clinical services are designed to support individuals of all ages. From the cradle to the rocking chair, and everywhere in between, Your Local Health Department is here to serve your needs.

In this fiscal year, we began holding mobile Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) clinics in Waldron and Litchfield. These communities were selected due to limited transportation options in Hillsdale County. Once a month staff take the mobile unit and park at Waldron District Library and across from Litchfield City Hall from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. These mobile clinics are able to provide all services needed for new enrollment or recertification.

Children's Special Healthcare Services (CSHCS) continued their relationship with University of Michigan Medical Center to host mobile hearing and vision clinics in Algansee township on a quarterly basis. This partnership brings the specialized services needed for children with these conditions closer to home.

Our public health nurses investigated outbreaks and potential exposures to communicable diseases throughout the jurisdiction. This year we conducted investigations related to tuberculosis, chicken pox, pertussis, COVID-19, and sexually transmitted infections. The team provided education to patients and close contacts to reduce disease spread and to protect others.

In preparation for the 2025-26 school year we held Kindergarten One Stop events in each office. These events allowed parents to ensure their child was ready for school with their immunizations, hearing, vision, and oral health assessments all completed in the same visit. Families appreciated having all of these services available in one appointment.

The immunizations program was out in the community to provide adult immunizations at Project Connect events and the Burnside Center. These events allowed us to meet with older adults and others who may be at risk in the community, where they find the supports and services they need.

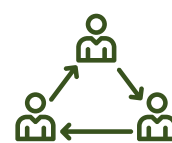
By the Numbers:



WIC Participants
8,319



Children Enrolled
in CSHCS
958



Community
Referrals Offered
17,210



Kindergarten Oral
Health Assessments
2,230



Vision Screenings
13,519



Hearing
Screenings
6,511



Communicable
Disease Cases
1,805



Immunizations
Administered
5,167

Partnering for Oral Health



Your oral health is more important than you may realize. Good oral health contributes to your overall health since the mouth can be a gateway for germs.

Your Local Health Department and My Community Dental Centers continue to partner together to ensure residents have access to low cost and Medicaid dental services. These clinics offer preventative and restorative services. My Community Dental Centers served **10,622 clients** in 2025.

My Community Dental Center has offices in Coldwater, Hillsdale, Sturgis, and Three Rivers. To schedule an appointment call (877) 313-6232. For more information on the services offered, locations, and local office phone numbers, visit mydental.org.

MONITORING DISEASE

Protecting Community Health

Communicable Disease Data

Disease: Confirmed Cases	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Total
HIV/AIDS	3	3	0	3	0	9
Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome	2	2	0	0	0	4
Novel Coronavirus COVID-19	16274	11801	2764	1538	1120	33497
Campylobacter	31	30	44	17	36	158
Cryptosporidiosis	5	7	9	3	9	33
Giardiasis	7	7	7	6	8	35
Norovirus	6	8	3	0	2	19
Salmonellosis	19	12	16	15	26	88
Shiga toxin-producing Escherichia coli --(STEC)	2	4	2	4	7	19
Shigellosis	1	1	1	0	2	5
Yersinia enterocolitica	1	3	3	5	2	14
Meningitis - Aseptic	0	5	4	6	1	16
Meningitis - Bacterial Other	1	2	1	2	2	8
Meningococcal Disease	0	0	0	0	0	0
Streptococcus pneumoniae, Inv	13	15	20	21	17	86
Coccidioidomycosis	1	0	0	2	0	3
Histoplasmosis	3	0	2	6	11	22
Legionellosis	5	1	4	3	2	15
Streptococcal Dis, Inv, Grp A	6	3	18	14	14	55
Streptococcal Toxic Shock	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rabies Animal	3	1	1	0	0	5
Rabies: Potential Exposure & PEP	91	32	28	17	36	204
Chlamydia (Genital)	432	390	429	350	285	1886
Gonorrhea	242	98	102	84	76	602
Latent Tuberculosis Infection	1	5	8	11	19	44
Nontuberculous Mycobacterium	8	9	10	11	9	47
Tuberculosis	1	0	3	2	2	8
Chickenpox (Varicella)	1	1	1	0	7	10
H. influenzae Disease - Inv.	2	6	2	4	3	17
Measles	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mumps	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pertussis	5	10	4	26	29	74
Polio	0	0	0	0	0	0
Shingles	0	1	6	5	2	14
Lyme Disease	12	6	19	41	51	129
Hepatitis A	0	0	1	0	0	1
Hepatitis B, Acute	0	0	1	3	0	4
Hepatitis B, Chronic	1	2	3	3	3	12
Hepatitis B, Perinatal	0	0	0	1	0	1
Hepatitis C, Acute	1	2	3	1	1	8
Hepatitis C, Chronic	25	34	39	17	23	138
Hepatitis C, Perinatal	0	0	0	1	0	1

Lyme Disease on the Rise

Lyme disease is spread to humans through a bite from an infected tick. This past fiscal year saw an increase in cases across the jurisdiction. Lyme disease cases have increased substantially over the latest five-year period. Reported cases declined from 12 in 2021 to 6 in 2022, then rose sharply to 19 cases in 2023. This upward trend continued, with cases more than doubling to 41 in 2024 and increasing further to 51 in 2025.

Overall, Lyme disease cases increased more than fourfold from 2021 to 2025, indicating a growing public health concern. The sustained rise since 2023 suggests expanding risk in the area and highlights the need for continued surveillance, provider education, and public prevention efforts.

WORKING WITH NEIGHBORS

Working with You



Area Agency on Aging

Over the past year, the Area Agency on Aging IIC team worked to address community needs, provide information & assistance, and develop community partnerships. Our data reflects strong programs & providers who work hard to meet unique needs across our two-county planning & service area.

Elder Abuse Victim Specialists served 110 clients this year compared to 44 clients during the last fiscal year. This increase is attributed to awareness of the services offered and referrals made by past clients. Prevention & awareness is the focus of this program.

A Success Story from 2025:

Our Elder Abuse Victim Specialist supported a resident in filing for Crime Victim Compensation and collected over \$4,000 for the individual! Crime Victim Compensation is available to all victims of a crime that inflicts bodily harm, or the victim reasonably perceived or actually experienced a threat of injury or death. It covers expenses such as medical, dental, optical, and counseling services not covered by insurance, as well as loss of earnings, repair or replacement of damaged medical devices, funeral expenses, and loss of support for dependents. The program is intended to restore and support recovery.

Community Living Program's Care Consultants work with individuals who have complex medical and/or social needs to develop a person-centered support plan. Over 80 individuals were served in the past year. Support for family caregivers also continued with information, assistance and resources.

MI Options empowers and provides enhanced information to help individuals make informed decisions about their long-term care needs. The program includes free, unbiased Medicare counseling and Person-Centered Options Counseling for adults needing assistance to support their needs for long-term services and supports.

Direct Care Worker Premium Pay assists providers and vendors to increase pay for their direct care workers through a reimbursement program. Over 20,638 hours of care were provided during the fiscal year.

By the Numbers:



Meals Provided
180,284



Hours of In-Home Services
24,240



Community Services
334



Access to Services
11,549



Legal Services
337



Individuals Served
6,696

We gratefully acknowledge our provider network who serve individuals with compassionate, high-quality care:

ADT Health, Alert Medical Alarms, Branch Area Transit Authority, Branch County Commission on Aging, Connect America, Crossroads Homecare, Guardian Trac LLC, Guardian Medical Monitoring, Helping Angels Home Care, HomeJoy, Home Roots Companion & Home Care Services, Legal Services of South Central Michigan, Region 3A Area Agency on Aging/LTC Ombudsman Program, Medical Care Alert, MOM's Meals, St. Joseph County Commission on Aging, St. Joseph County Transportation Authority, Thurston Cares Adult Day Program, and VRI Lifeline.

If you would like more information or have questions about our programs, or community-based services and supports, please contact our office at 517-278-2538, toll free 888-615-8009, or visit our website www.bhsj.org/aaa.

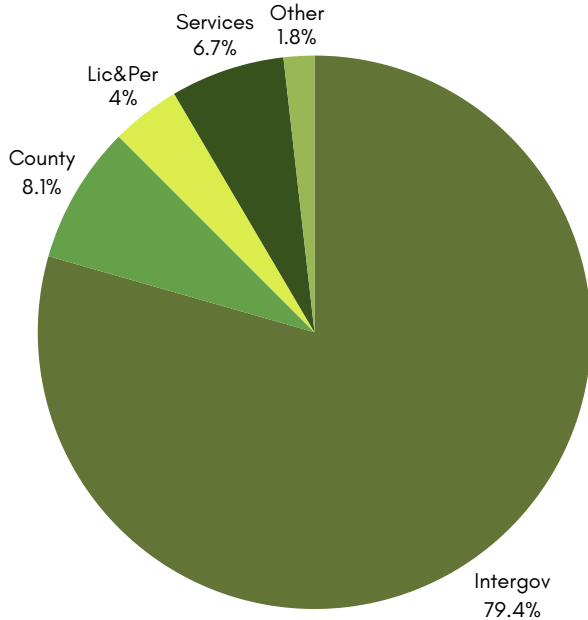
Services/Project	Funding
Operations	\$83,386
Nutrition	\$441,634
In-Home	\$308,821
Community	\$32,816
Access	\$274,789
Legal	\$14,000
Services to Victims of Elder Abuse	\$185,919
American Rescue Plan Act	\$4,786
State In-Home Services – Direct Care Workers	\$68,582
MI Options	\$71,141

MAGNIFYING EFFICIENCIES

Stewarding Your Tax Dollars

2025 Revenue

\$9,067,943

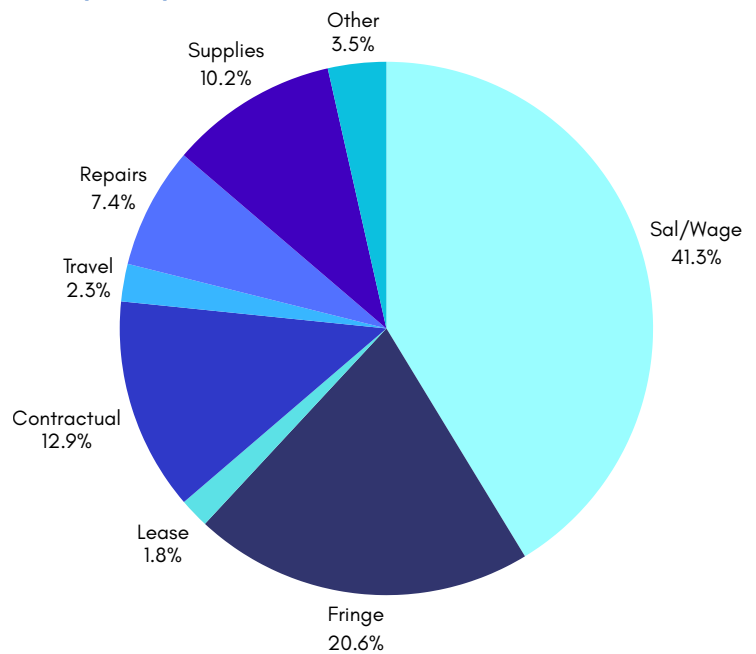


Category	FY24	FY25
Licenses & Permits	\$353,057	\$366,103
Intergovernmental	\$6,264,198	\$7,202,881
County Appropriations & Other Local	\$1,001,853	\$731,276
Charges for Services	\$602,840	\$604,967
Other	\$173,433	\$162,716
Total	\$8,395,381	\$9,067,943

Category	FY24	FY25
Salaries/Wages	\$3,514,343	\$3,593,383
Fringe Benefits	\$1,974,397	\$1,792,915
Supplies & Materials	\$988,075	\$888,097
Contractual	\$1,144,167	\$1,122,351
Travel & Training	\$206,646	\$197,992
Repairs & Maintenance	\$465,930	\$640,500
Bldg & Equip Lease	\$159,571	\$157,386
Other	\$224,002	\$307,317

2025 Expenses

\$8,699,941



HOW WE ARE STRUCTURED

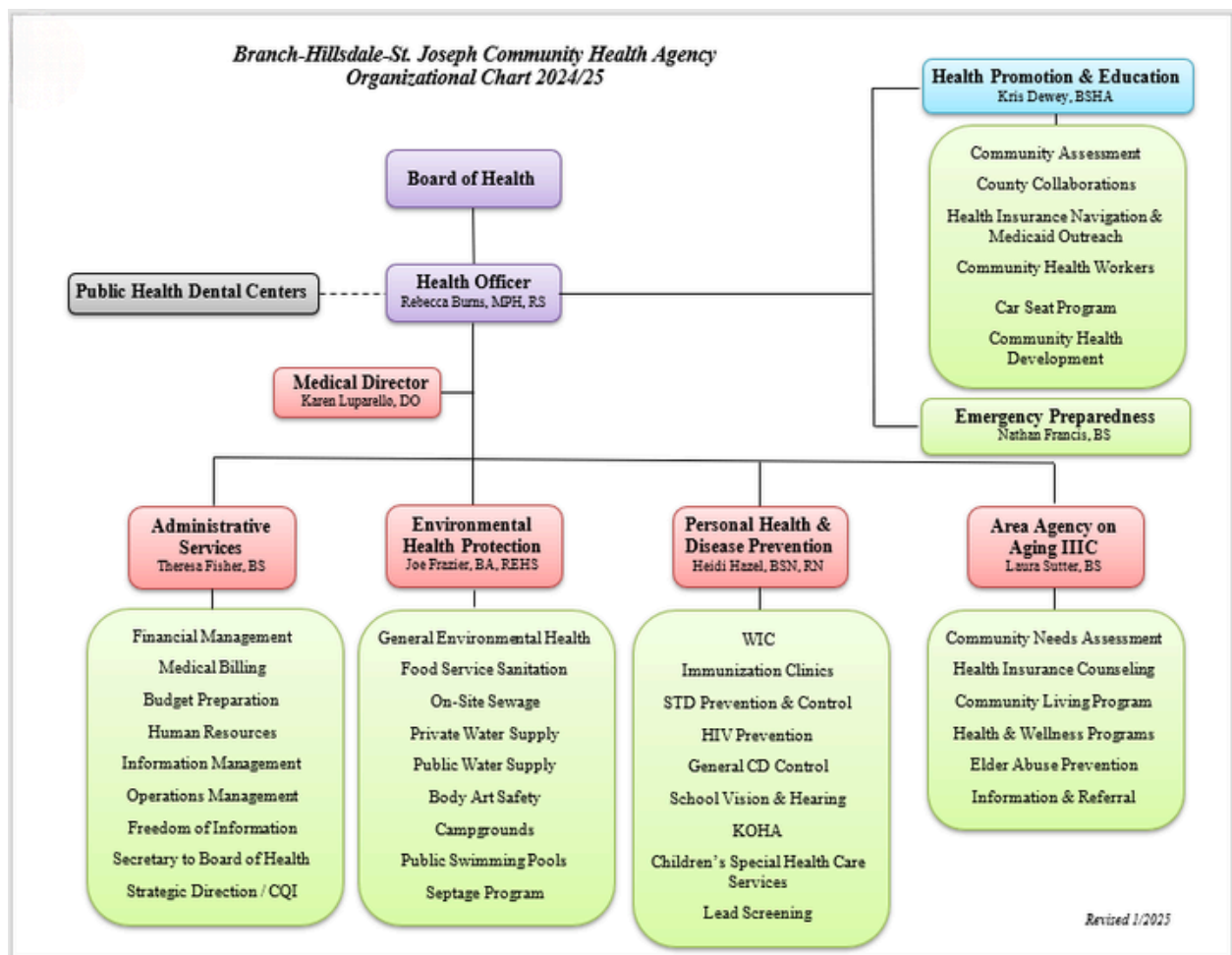
Maximizing Human Resources

Committed to Excellence

Our agency serves three counties, 1,604 square miles, 31 communities, and 151,670 residents with approximately 76 full and part-time staff in 2024-25. The agency is lead by the Board of Health, comprised of two county commissioners from each county. The Health Officer is responsible for the operation of the agency. The Health Officer is supported by the Medical Director, a local physician, who advises the agency regarding issues of public health and disease prevention.

Four Division Directors are responsible for program planning, policy development, and staff training. Five supervisors ensure that staff are supported in carrying out the requirements of the programs and services we provide. Sixty-seven talented team members ensure that each individual receives the high quality services that are expected.

Our staff is committed to our mission and vision, desiring to make our communities safe and providing services to support optimal community health.



We hope that you have found the 2024-25 Annual Report informative. We appreciate the community's support and take seriously the trust and financial resources invested in our agency's programs and employees. Your Local Health Department is here to serve you, contact us with any concerns or needs you may have. Thank you!



570 Marshall Road
Coldwater, Michigan, 49036

Phone: 517-279-9561

