Summer 2026

PROVIDER UPDATE

News from your local Health Department

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Year to Date CD Report

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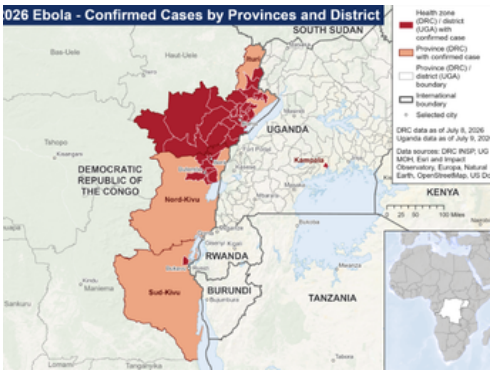
Ebola Update:
What Providers Should Know About the Current Outbreak

Recent Ebola activity in Central Africa has renewed attention to healthcare preparedness, particularly regarding the Bundibugyo species of Ebola virus. Unlike the Zaire species responsible for the 2014–2016 West Africa outbreak, there is currently no licensed vaccine or specific antiviral treatment available for Bundibugyo Ebola virus disease. While the risk of infection in the United States remains very low, global travel and the ongoing outbreak underscore the importance of maintaining clinical awareness and rapid identification protocols.



Ebola virus disease typically presents with the abrupt onset of fever, severe headache, muscle pain, weakness, vomiting, diarrhea, and abdominal pain. A thorough travel history remains essential when evaluating patients with compatible symptoms. Providers should consider Ebola in patients with recent travel to affected areas or known exposure to individuals with suspected or confirmed infection. Transmission occurs through direct contact with blood or other body fluids of an infected person and is not spread through casual contact or airborne transmission.

Michigan healthcare facilities should continue to follow established protocols for identifying, isolating, and informing public health authorities when Ebola is suspected. PromptEbol implementation of infection prevention and control measures, including appropriate personal protective equipment and coordination with local and state public health partners, remains critical. Although imported cases are unlikely, preparedness efforts developed following previous Ebola outbreaks continue to provide a strong framework for protecting patients, staff, and communities.

Resources:

Ebola Outbreak: Current Situation
Ebola Disease Basics
Clinical Guidance for Ebola Disease
Information for Travelers Returning from Ebola-Affected Areas

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

Evolving Uses of Kratom and Newer Synthetic Kratom Products

Kratom (Mitragyna speciosa) is a botanical product traditionally used in Southeast Asia for its stimulant and analgesic effects. Traditional kratom leaf contains primarily mitragynine, with only small amounts (approximately 1%) of the more potent alkaloid 7-hydroxymitragynine (7-OH). In recent years, highly concentrated synthetic 7-OH products have entered the U.S. market and are increasingly replacing traditional kratom products on retail shelves. These products are sold as powders, capsules, concentrated extracts, energy drinks, gummies, and candies. They remain largely unregulated in Michigan and may contain substantially higher concentrations of 7-OH than indicated on product labels. Patients may refer to these products simply as "kratom" or by strain names such as Maeng Da, Bali, Borneo, Indo, or Red, White, and Green kratom.

While traditional kratom may produce mild stimulant effects at lower doses, concentrated 7-OH products have potent opioid-like effects and carry risks of dependence, withdrawal, respiratory depression, overdose, and death. Withdrawal symptoms resemble opioid withdrawal and include anxiety, irritability, insomnia, gastrointestinal distress, muscle aches, and rhinorrhea. Severe toxicity is most commonly associated with polysubstance use involving opioids, alcohol, benzodiazepines, or other central nervous system depressants. Kratom may also interact with prescription medications through hepatic enzyme inhibition. Patients presenting with suspected overdose should be managed similarly to opioid toxicity, and naloxone should be administered when respiratory depression is present.

Michigan Poison & Drug Information Center received 347 reports involving kratom products from 2021–2025, including 116 cases in 2025 alone—more than double the number reported in any previous year. Most exposures occurred among adults aged 20–39 years, although 69 pediatric exposures were reported. Nationally, poison centers documented 3,434 kratom-related cases in 2025, a 1,200% increase compared with 2015, with 233 reported deaths between 2015 and 2025, most involving multiple substances. Kratom remains legal in Michigan, although legislation to prohibit the sale of kratom and synthetic derivatives, including concentrated 7-OH products, is under consideration.

New Women, Infant, Children (WIC) Guidelines

Michigan Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
Income Eligibility Guidelines
2026-2027
Updated June 1, 2026

Family Size*	Hourly	Weekly	Bi-weekly	Monthly	Annual
1	$14.19	$568	$1,136	$2,461	$29,526
2	$19.24	$770	$1,540	$3,337	$40,034
3	$24.29	$972	$1,944	$4,212	$50,542
4	$29.35	$1,175	$2,349	$5,088	$61,050
5	$34.40	$1,377	$2,753	$5,964	$71,558
6	$39.45	$1,579	$3,157	$6,839	$82,066
7	$44.50	$1,781	$3,561	$7,715	$92,574
8	$49.55	$1,983	$3,965	$8,591	$103,082
For each additional family member add:		$203	$405	$876	$10,508

*If you are pregnant, include the number of infants you are expecting.

The WIC Income guidelines were updated on June 1st, 2026 based on the updated federal poverty level values and approved by USDA.

In addition to the updated income guidelines, the food package updates were finalized in March 2026. These changes allowed for more food choices, better support for healthy eating habits, and new options for different diets.

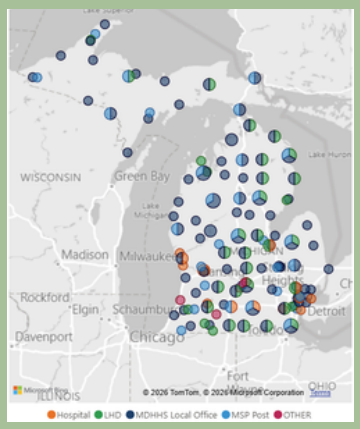
See highlights for the new food package, here.

Helping Families Stay Safe: Michigan Firearm Storage Resources

Gun violence, and its associated firearm-related injuries, is a significant public health issue. Experiencing violence impacts a person's lifelong health, opportunities and overall well-being. Individuals exposed to violence are often at greater risk for developing physical and mental health conditions. They are also more likely to experience other forms of violence, and educational or employment challenges. Even those not directly injured by firearms may still suffer consequences when witnessing violence in neighborhoods or schools or experiencing the trauma of losing a loved one.

Michigan's Secure Storage Law, Public Act 17 of 2023, requires individuals to keep unattended weapons unloaded and locked with a locking device or stored in a locked box or container if it is reasonably known that a minor is likely to be present on the premises.

To help support this law, there are several gun lock distribution sites throughout the state and our northern Michigan region. Many of these sites are located at local health department offices, local MDHHS offices and Michigan State Police posts.



Talk about gun safety with your clients and check out the distribution map to refer them to a gun lock distribution site.

Overdose Deaths Down 47% Following Expanded Narcan Access

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) announced that Michigan's overdose death rate has declined by 47% since 2021, with preliminary 2025 data projecting 16.4 overdose deaths per 100,000 residents, down from 30.8 per 100,000 in 2021. Annual overdose deaths are projected to decrease from 3,096 deaths in 2021 to fewer than 1,800 in 2025, marking the fourth consecutive year of decline.

This progress reflects Michigan's comprehensive strategy centered on prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery. Since 2019, the state has expanded harm reduction services from five agencies to 115 community-based sites and distributed more than 1.8 million naloxone kits, with nearly 34,000 reported overdose reversals. Additional efforts include expanded access to medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD), telehealth services, recovery housing, coordinated Medicaid services, and treatment programs in county jails.

Despite these encouraging trends, significant disparities remain. Black Michiganders continue to experience overdose death rates more than twice those of other populations, and urban communities remain disproportionately affected. MDHHS also continues to monitor emerging drug threats, including fentanyl contamination with xylazine, medetomidine, and carfentanil, as well as newer substances such as 7-hydroxymitragynine (7-OH), the active substance found in synthetic kratom, and nitrous oxide.

What this means for providers in Northwest Michigan:

- Continue screening for substance use and utilizing evidence-based treatment practices, including MOUD when appropriate.
- Educate patients and families on overdose prevention and prescribe or distribute naloxone to individuals at increased risk.
- Remain vigilant for evolving drug trends and counsel patients about the risks associated with emerging substances.
- Strengthen connections to local treatment, recovery, and prevention resources to support long-term patient outcomes.

Michigan's progress demonstrates the impact of coordinated public health efforts, but continued collaboration among health care providers, community organizations, and prevention partners remains essential to sustaining these gains and reducing overdose deaths across the state.

New Evidence Highlights Additional Benefits of COVID-19 Vaccination

A recent study published in JAMA Internal Medicine examined more than 1 million U.S. veterans during the 2024–2025 respiratory virus season and found that receipt of an updated COVID-19 vaccine was associated with a significantly lower risk of COVID-19-related cardiovascular complications. Researchers observed a 38% reduction in COVID-19-associated major adverse cardiovascular events (MACE), including heart attack, stroke, cardiovascular death, and hospitalization for heart failure among vaccinated individuals compared with those who did not receive a COVID-19 vaccine.

The strongest protective effect was seen for cardiovascular death, with vaccine effectiveness estimated at nearly 58%. The study also found reductions in COVID-19-associated myocardial infarction and heart failure hospitalization.

Researchers noted that benefits were most pronounced among older adults and those with underlying health conditions, populations already known to be at higher risk for severe COVID-19 outcomes.

These findings add to the growing body of evidence that COVID-19 vaccination provides benefits beyond preventing acute respiratory illness. As providers counsel patients about vaccination, this study offers additional data supporting the role of updated COVID-19 vaccines in reducing serious cardiovascular complications associated with COVID-19 infection, particularly among older adults and individuals with chronic medical conditions.

Promote Safe Fish Consumption Using the MDHHS Eat Safe Fish Guide

The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) conducts year-round fish contaminant monitoring, collecting samples from sites with known or suspected contamination and popular fishing locations. Each year, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services requests specific species from selected lakes and rivers. EGLE then measures, weighs, and prepares the fish for testing.

The guidelines not only identify the safest fish to eat but also offer serving size recommendations and outline the 'Three Cs' of fishing to help reduce chemical exposure.

What are the Three Cs?
·*Choose*: the safest fish to eat, especially if you eat fish often,
·*Clean*: remove the fat, skin and organs, as chemicals often are stored in these areas,
·*Cook*: grill or broil your fish to help reduce chemical-carrying fat—these methods are also healthier.

Safe fish consumption education remains another important environmental health topic, particularly in northern Michigan where fishing is a popular recreational activity. While fish provide valuable nutrients and health benefits, some water bodies have consumption advisories due to environmental contaminants.

Providers can encourage patients who fish or consume locally caught fish to review current state fish consumption guidelines and advisories. Sharing this information can help residents enjoy the benefits of fishing while minimizing potential health risks associated with contaminant exposure.

January 1st- June 30th, 2026

2026 Communicable Disease Report

for

Health Departments of Benzie-Leelanau, District No. 4, and Northwest Michigan

Counties Include:

Benzie
Leelanau
Alpena
Cheboygan
Montmorency
Presque Isle
Antrim
Charlevoix
Emmet
Otsego

Disease Group	Disease	BLDHD	DHD no 4	HDNW
COVID19/MIS	Novel Coronavirus COVID-19	46	258	274
Foodborne	Campylobacter	3	7	21
Foodborne	Giardiasis	1	1	1
Foodborne	Norovirus	0	1	2
Foodborne	Salmonellosis	5	8	12
Foodborne	Shiga toxin-producing Escherichia coli --(STEC)	4	1	0
Foodborne	Shigellosis	1	1	2
Foodborne	Yersinia enteritis	0	0	2
Influenza	Flu Like Disease*	269	16	3148
Influenza	Influenza	47	336	245
Influenza	Respiratory Syncytial Virus	23	68	97
Meningitis	Meningitis - Bacterial Other	0	0	1
Meningitis	Streptococcus pneumoniae, Inv	1	6	4
Other	CPO	0	1	4
Other	Candida auris	1	1	0
Other	Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease	1	0	0
Other	Coccidioidomycosis	0	1	0
Other	Gastrointestinal Illness	229	0	1
Other	Head Lice	2	0	63
Other	Histoplasmosis	0	0	1
Other	Q Fever*	0	0	1
Other	Legionellosis	0	2	0
Other	Strep Throat	6	0	171
Other	Streptococcal Dis, Inv, Grp A	1	1	3
Other	Unusual Outbreak or Occurrence	0	1	0
Rabies	Rabies: Potential Exposure & PEP	0	30	33
STD	Chlamydia (Genital)	10	34	63
STD	Gonorrhea	1	4	6
STD	Syphilis - Unknown Duration or Late	1	2	1
Tuberculosis	Latent Tuberculosis Infection	1	0	3
Tuberculosis	Nontuberculous Mycobacterium	0	0	5
VPD	H. influenzae Disease - Inv.	1	2	1
VPD	Pertussis	0	1	5
VPD	Shingles	2	0	1
VPD	VZ Infection, Unspecified	0	0	1
Vectorborne	Anaplasmosis	6	0	3
Vectorborne	Lyme Disease	5	3	3
Viral Hepatitis	Hepatitis A	0	1	1
Viral Hepatitis	Hepatitis B, Acute	0	3	0
Viral Hepatitis	Hepatitis B, Chronic	1	2	5
Viral Hepatitis	Hepatitis C, Acute	0	3	0
Viral Hepatitis	Hepatitis C, Chronic	0	3	6
	Total	**668**	**791**	**4185**

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.