

Director's Update to the Board of Health

January 2026

Protecting Health – Preventing the Spread of Infectious Disease

Flu Vaccines

MPHD Preventive Health Clinics continue to offer flu shots at all three locations, as this flu season continues to be a difficult one. The Tennessee Department of Health designated Davidson County and the surrounding area as an area with a very high percentage of outpatient visits for influenza-like illness. Nationally, Tennessee remains one of the worst states for influenza-like illnesses. MPHD encourages everyone to consider getting a flu shot if they have not done so already, as it is not too late to protect against the late period of this year's flu season. MPHD also recommends everyone wash their hands frequently, cover coughs or sneezes and to stay home if sick. Those who do get sick are encouraged to contact their primary care provider right away, as antiviral medications are most effective when they are started early.

Immunizations

MPHD continues to work to increase access and uptake of immunizations, making the community safer and healthier. Changes to the immunization schedule were announced this week by HHS. These updates have raised concerns among public health and healthcare professionals regarding potential parental confusion about vaccine access and safety, which could lead to decreased uptake and an increase in preventable illness. MPHD continues to recommend families discuss concerns with their primary care provider and follow the American Academy of Pediatrics schedule of recommended immunizations.

Improve and Sustain Family and Child Well-Being

WIC

Our WIC team excitedly resumes community outreach in 2026 after being instructed to cease activity in May 2025 due to funding concerns. WIC will be attending the Firefly's Community Resource Fair for New and Expecting Mothers on Saturday, Jan 31st. WIC finished a big year, ending with 20,832 monthly participants, the most we've ever ended a year with. For comparison, 2024 had an average monthly participant count of 18,863.

Promote and Support Healthier Living

Cervical Cancer Awareness Month

MPHD clinics will observe Cervical Cancer Awareness month throughout the month of January. Due to the hard work of the Clinical Services staff, patients needing cervical cancer screening that do not qualify for family planning services can be navigated through our Tennessee Breast and Cervical Screening program at any of our preventive health clinics. Below is some more information on Cervical Cancer Awareness Month and the importance of screening.

Community Safety

The work of the Community Violence Task Force is set to begin on Thursday, January 15th here at the Lentz Public Health Center. Mayor Freddie O'Connell chose the 29 members of the task force, drawing from a pool of diverse candidates representing many different backgrounds. The task force will develop a Community Violence Reduction Plan with robust input from the public. The work of the task force is expected to last through the next six months, with meetings held at a roughly biweekly frequency. Mayor O'Connell will be announcing the start of the task force's work at Lentz on Friday during his weekly Media Roundtable event.

Overdose Prevention

MPHD marked the end of an encouraging year on the overdose front. 2025 is shaping up to be the first year with fewer than 500 suspected overdose deaths since 2019. Fewer overdose-related emergency room visits were reported in 2025 as compared to the year before, along with calls for EMS response due to a suspected overdose. Final numbers are still being pulled together, and data is being cleaned up. Many factors can be attributed to the decrease in overdose activity, including the increased availability of Narcan, better case management, better outreach and the reduced stigma of substance use. We look ahead to another year of encouraging results.

Create Healthier Community Environments

School Health Celebration

The MPHD School Health team held a small celebration for Sarah Briley, the School Health Nurse from Shayne Elementary who was named the Tennessee Association of School Nurses (TASN) Nurse of the Year in November. Messages of congratulations were collected and shown to Nurse Briley, including those from her principal, her program manager and the Director of Health. Nurse Briley is the second MPHD School Health Nurse to receive the

award in the past few years, with Nurse Karen Reid receiving the Nurse of the Year award from TASN in fall of 2023.

Organizational Updates

Electronic Health Record Expansion

The MPHD Electronic Health Record system is continuing to expand and progress. MPHD's Patagonia system will soon be adding a patient portal, allowing patients to do tasks like schedule appointments, access labs and more from their own electronic device. Patagonia was introduced almost a year ago with the goal of allowing more of our systems to work together and to provide a better experience for our patients. The new patient portal will be introduced in the coming weeks to those we serve.

MACC Resource Fair

Metro Animal Care and Control hosted its first Winter Resource Fair in December to connect more of the community to resources they might need as the temperature dips. MACC also provided rabies vaccines and microchips to those who needed them. In addition to the 41 rabies vaccines administered and 24 microchips implanted, MACC staff connected community members with six dog igloos, eight bags of straw, 12 crates, 15 cat shelters, 26 collars and leashes, 39 name tags and ensured 46 families received pet food.

Updated HR and Timekeeping system

MPHD's Human Resources and Finance & Administration teams have been working closely with Metro as the new timekeeping and HR system is put into place. A lot remains out of MPHD's hands, and the teams here have worked hard to ensure the switch to the new system is handled as smoothly as possible on our end. Recorded live training sessions were a part of the rollout, allowing those impacted by the change to ask questions and see the functionality in real time.