

Director's Update to the Board of Health

May 2026

Protecting Health – Preventing the Spread of Infectious Disease

Hantavirus

MPHD has been involved in discussions and preparation for many potential outcomes of the current Hantavirus scare. Leaders at MPHD have been part of calls with CDC, other department heads and leaders across Metro, other public health entities and more to discuss many aspects of the virus. Currently the virus poses no additional threat to those in Nashville. Since 1993, Tennessee has seen two confirmed cases of Hantavirus. In the U.S., Hantavirus frequently is contracted through interaction with rodent droppings and urine. The strain of Hantavirus tied to the cruise ship currently under investigation has the potential to spread person-to-person in specific conditions. That strain, known as the Andes strain, is not found in the U.S.

In-School Vaccine Clinics

The MPHD Mobile Services team is wrapping their in-school vaccine project, visiting MNPS middle schools to offer vaccines to current sixth graders. With the middle school project nearly finished for the year, more than 450 vaccines have been administered to more than 200 students. This is the first year our team is offering all required and recommended vaccines, ensuring those who are out of compliance with vaccine requirements can become compliant ahead of the 2026-2027 school year. For the past few years, the team had been offering the Tdap booster, required for entry into seventh grade, as well as recommended vaccines HPV and MCV. This year, all required vaccines have been added to the offering. In-school clinics will continue into May, after which the mobile services team will begin holding their annual summer vaccine and physical clinics.

Improve and Sustain Family and Child Well-Being

Kindergarten Readiness Fair

MPHD worked with Metro Schools to host another successful edition of the Kindergarten Readiness Fair last month. MPHD programs including Preventive Health, School Health, Health Access, Oral Health, Records Management, Nashville Strong Babies, WIC, Public Health Emergency Preparedness, Immunizations and others participated, ensuring those entering Kindergarten have everything they might need to start the school year in the fall. MNPS offers kindergarten registration at the fair in addition to other services. In all, more than 250 attendees came to the fair from 87 different families. Popular sites at the fair

included animals from the Nashville Zoo, a school bus tour from MNPS and a visit to the Bookmobile through the Nashville Public Library.

WIC Vendor Management

The WIC Vendor Management team for MPHD has collaborated with the state's Central Office to prioritize Dollar General locations in areas with limited access to grocery stores, helping to improve availability of healthy food options. As part of the authorization process, WIC requires vendors to meet specific stocking standards. Dollar General has adjusted to ensure many of its stores meet these requirements, enhancing the nutritional quality of available foods for WIC participants as well as the broader community. There are 39 Dollar General locations in Davidson County that meet these criteria. This all occurs while WIC has seen record high numbers of enrollees over the past year.

Promote and Support Healthier Living

Expanded hours at Sexual Health Center

Starting last month, the Sexual Health Center has added weekend hours one day a week, offering better access to those who need to schedule screenings and appointments at the clinic. The clinic will now be open on the second Saturday of each month from 7:30am to 4:00pm. Appointments are required. The additional availability coincides with a yearslong increase in syphilis in Nashville and across the country, with the rate of diagnosed infections per 100,000 population nearly tripling in between 2017 and 2023. By ensuring all people can get tested and treated for STIs like syphilis, MPHD is working to reverse that trend.

Mental Health Awareness Month

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, and the Behavioral Health and Wellness team is helping ensure employees are able to know more about and care for their mental health. Employees were encouraged to wear green on May 1st to highlight Mental Health Awareness Day and were invited to fill out prompt cards focused on their mental health. Each week of Mental Health Awareness Month has a specific focus, from resilient communities and PACEs to Community Safety to Outreach and Education to Opioid Response. A mental health fair is planned for Friday, May 15th at Lentz. MPHD also participated in the NAMIWalks event as part of Mental Health Awareness month, an event designed to highlight suicide prevention.

Create Healthier Community Environments

Mobile Services Unit

We have received a new mobile services unit, complete with space for clinical services to be offered in various community settings. The unit, delivered to MPHD earlier this month,

will allow increased access to services like immunizations, family planning services, sexual health screenings, Narcan distribution and more. Equipped with an indoor and outdoor waiting room, exam room, lab capabilities, immunization freezer and refrigerator, and Wi-Fi for telehealth, the mobile unit will have the same option as in-person services currently offered in our clinical spaces. This state-of-the-art mobile clinic can help increase access to care, preventing transportation barriers and less time away from other obligations.



Overdose Response

MPHD published its quarterly drug overdose report recently, showing a continued decrease in the number of suspected fatal overdoses. 80 suspected fatal overdoses were recorded in the first quarter of 2026, the lowest of any quarter since 2020. Some of the reduction in suspected fatal overdoses could be due to the increased availability of Narcan. MPHD has placed a new Narcan vending machine in the Madison community. This is in addition to the three Narcan vending machines already in place at three locations around Nashville. Since the first vending machine was placed in April of 2025, nearly 10,000 doses have been distributed through MPHD Narcan vending machines. Another 23,000 doses have been distributed through the Behavioral Health and Wellness division's outreach to individuals and organizations.

Organizational Updates

Emu at MACC

The team at Metro Animal Care and Control responded to a unique call in April when someone called in to report an Emu was running at large. The bird, a pet of a Davidson County resident, had been spotted by several people who reported the animal. Animal Control Officers do not generally have training to respond to exotic pets like this, but one of MACC's Animal Control Officers had previous experience working with emus. The team responded to the call near the Davidson County line, retrofitting an Animal Control van with blankets and pillows to allow the emu to be safely transported back to the shelter. The emu was brought to MACC, where she was housed in the barnyard area behind the shelter. The

emu's owner contacted MACC and reclaimed the emu two days later. The emu, who was named Picasso, had initially escaped when her gate was not properly latched.

Daisy Award

MPHD announced the winners of the latest Daisy Awards over the past month. Awards were given to Natalie Carlise and Rhonda Landers, both from the School Health program. The Daisy Award is presented to nurses who show a willingness to go above and beyond the job description. Recipients are chosen by the Daisy committee and can be nominated by anyone who interacts with MPHD nurses. MPHD started presenting the Daisy Award in 2025 and has honored six separate nurses since its inception. The Daisy Award is a national honor designed to show appreciation for nurses and the work they do every day.

Budget Process

MPHD held its annual budget hearing with the Metro Council Finance Committee this past Monday, a chance to show the value of public health funding while the Metro Council debates how the 2026-2027 metro budget should look. This came after Mayor Freddie O'Connell released his initial budget proposal, increasing funding for the Nashville Strong Babies program along with funding for the Partners in Care (PIC) and Responders Engaged and Committed to Health (REACH) co-response programs. MPHD is now looking at how to fulfill a 1.5% reduction in funding proposed by Mayor O'Connell, something all departments across Metro were instructed to do. MPHD remains committed to maintaining workforce stability and ensuring uninterrupted delivery of high-quality programs and services. The department recognizes that budget reductions require careful planning and collaboration across all divisions.