

TIOGA COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH



ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Note from the Public Health Director

Reflecting on 2024, it was a remarkable and productive year at Public Health. We set records by losing only one permanent full-time employee and welcoming five new team members. Notably, we added a Director of Environmental Health, which significantly enhanced the oversight of that division.

The creation and implementation of our agency's Strategic Plan provided a valuable roadmap for how we operate both internally and in terms of the quality of the programs and services we offer to the community. Building off our 2023 theme of "Reset. Renew. Reimagine." we achieved many notable milestones. For instance, we can now accept credit card payments online, and instituted electronic forms, making our services more accessible through technology and our new "Public Health on the Go" mobile trailer.

Our Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement Program led numerous initiatives, including additional program auditing, select project improvements, and the creation and update of internal work procedures. Other key highlights include updates to both the Tioga County Sanitary Code and the Environmental Fee schedule, the first updates in over 20 years.

Public Health assumed leadership of the Tioga County Advocacy, Support, And Prevention Coalition (ASAP), managing grant funds and workplans for substance use and misuse prevention efforts. Through our own Opioid Overdose Prevention Program and the work of these grants and Coalition, we have trained and distributed Narcan to hundreds, added additional locations for Public Access Narcan boxes, a NY Matters vending machine, created several commercials, and launched various forms of advertising in the community.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the support of the Board of Health, in issuing the order deeming the Foundry/Tioga Castings site uninhabitable due to soil safety concerns. This several-month-long process affected our department in numerous ways and required cooperation from several partners and the community. We express our sincere gratitude to everyone involved in this initiative, helping us carry out our mission to protect the health and safety of those affected.

As we look to the coming year, we will continue to focus on ensuring we have a strong, dedicated workforce committed to providing quality programs and services to meet the needs of our community.

-Heather Vroman, MPH, MEd.
Public Health Director



Tioga County Public Health Staff



Rachael Baker
Laura Bennett
Jordan Carne
Jason Davis
Louise Dorsey
Betti Dow

Megan Gilbert
Mark Griep
Janice Heyman
Kylie Holochak
Tamie Jacobs
Albert Knapp

Alexander Knapp
Todd Kopalek
Misty Malmstrom
Stephen Mastro
Denis McCann
Susan Medina

Melanie Miller
Abigail Reigelman
Kristin Russell
Dr. John Sarnicola
Daniel Scherrer
Lisa Schumacher

Katie Searles
Kim Thomas
Heather Vroman
Katie Wait
Nicole Whitmore

Welcome New Staff

Betti Dow - Office Specialist III
Megan Gilbert - Public Health Sanitarian
Alexander Knapp - Public Health Technician
Misty Malmstrom - Office Specialist III
Kristin Russell - Public Health Educator

Staff Farewells

Sarah Centerwall - EI Service Coordinator
Albert Knapp - Public Health Sanitarian
Kiran Sharma - Seasonal Clerk

Special Recognition

Todd Kopalek - 30 years of service
Katie Searles - 20 years of service
Daniel Scherrer - 10 years of service
Abigail Reigelman - 5 years of service
Laura Bennett - 5 years of service
Katie Wait - 5 years of service

Public Health Interns

Kristen Brodie
Abigail Chesshire

CONGRATULATIONS TO AL KNAPP ON HIS RETIREMENT ON JANUARY 6, 2025 AFTER 18 YEARS OF SERVICE!

2024 Team Members of the Quarter

Quarter 1: Katie Searles

Katie started working for Tioga County Public Health over 20 years ago as a Clerk Typist. In 2017, she was promoted to an Office Specialist III. Katie works in our Preschool Supportive Health Service Program handling the processing and billing of claims. This program involves rigorous procedures to ensure compliance. The Preschool Program also involves coordinating transportation of program children. Katie takes pride in her work, making sure that our providers receive their payments on time and the children we serve continue to receive the necessary services they need. Katie's work involves a high level of attention to detail, making sure that nothing is missed and that the billing for services is correct.

Quarter 2: Louise Dorsey

Louise started working for Tioga County Public Health in July of 2023 as a Public Health Nurse. Louise's primary role is working on communicable disease cases. Additionally, she has also taken on roles in several areas including rabies prevention, immunization, Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), quality assurance, and healthcare provider education and outreach. Louise is a team player and is always ready for a challenge. She is confident in her knowledge and skill set, but is humble enough to ask for advice or help when she doesn't know the answer, or just wants to double check. She strives to provide the best care and information to everyone she interacts with.

Quarter 3: Al Knapp

Al has worked for Tioga County Public Health for over 18 years! As a member of our Environmental Health team, Al wears many hats. He is a certified lead risk assessor and food inspector. He is especially busy in the summer months, inspecting summer camps and meal sites. Al also works in the rabies prevention program by completing animal bite investigations and volunteering at rabies vaccination clinics. Most recently, Al's primary focus has been on inspecting and designing septic systems. Al is very detail-oriented, and he brings years of experience and expertise to the table. You can tell Al takes a lot of pride in the work he does, as he is always eager to learn and share new information.

Quarter 4: Jason Davis

Jason has been selected as Team Member of the Quarter twice since joining Tioga County Public Health in 2019! Starting under the title of Confidential Assistant, Jason quickly became an important asset to the team and was promoted to Assistant Director of Administrative Services in 2023. Jason has many important roles. He assists our Director of Administrative Services in overseeing the department's budget and manages many fiscal related matters. Like a true team player, Jason is always willing to help out in other areas of the department. He is known for being approachable, always friendly, and professional with a twist of humor!

2024 Notable Numbers

Zoonotic Diseases

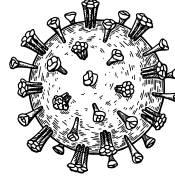
2022: 220
2023: 232
2024: 352



Tickborne illnesses (Anaplasmosis, Lyme, etc.)

Vaccine Preventable

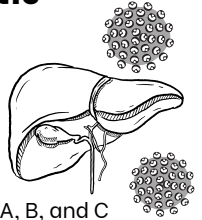
2022: 8,285
2023: 1,897
2024: 2,281



Vaccine preventable (COVID-19, flu, etc.)

Hepatitis

2022: 89
2023: 15
2024: 17



Cases of hepatitis A, B, and C

People Narcan Trained

2022: 1
2023: 145
2024: 96



Immunizations

2022: 35
2023: 62
2024: 87



Children and adults vaccinated at TCPH

Early Intervention

2022: 148
2023: 206
2024: 195



Children referred to the EI program

Animal Bites

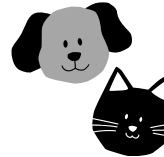
2022: 153
2023: 198
2024: 242



Investigations for wild and domestic animals

Animals Rabies Vaccinated

2022: 1,012
2023: 1,098
2024: 1,377



At TCPH sponsored rabies vaccination clinics

Food Inspections

2022: 208
2023: 313
2024: 228



Temporary and permanent food establishments

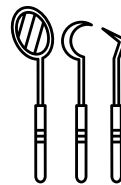
New Dental Clients

2022: 340
2023: 311
2024: 325



Dental Exams

2022: 1,120
2023: 1,141
2024: 1,227



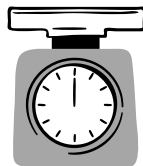
Sealants Placed

2022: 687
2023: 592
2024: 548



Weights & Measures

2022: 123
2023: 110
2024: 201



Inspection sites within Tioga County

Devices Inspected

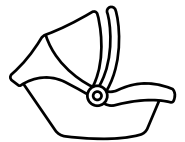
2022: 475
2023: 604
2024: 448



In the Weights and Measures program

Car Seats Checked

2022: 40
2023: 47
2024: 49



For correct use and installation

New Facebook Followers

2022: 257
2023: 436
2024: 389



Facebook Posts

2022: 240
2023: 303
2024: 305



Media Interviews

2022: 14
2023: 21
2024: 9



Television, radio, and newspaper interviews

2024 Public Health Highlights

TICK SMART TIOGA!

In 2024 Tioga County Public Health received funds through the New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO) Climate & Health Adaptation grant to aid in addressing and preventing the health impacts of climate change.

Topic: Tickborne Illness

Tickborne illnesses, such as Lyme disease and anaplasmosis, are affected by climate change, as increasing temperatures make for a more hospitable place for ticks. Given the increasing rates of tickborne illnesses in Tioga County and the rural nature of the community, we chose to focus our project on preventing tickborne illnesses.

Target Audience: Men & Adults 61+

According to data from the NYS Electronic Clinical Laboratory Reporting System (ECLRS), men and adults 61+ had the highest rates of tickborne illness in our county.

Tickborne illness	Cases Reported 2022	Cases Reported 2023
Anaplasmosis	22	50
Babesiosis	4	11
Ehrlichiosis	2	8
Lyme Disease	123	279
Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever	2	11



Senior Social Hours

Partnering with Tioga Opportunities Department of Aging, we attended senior social hours in Owego, Spencer, Waverly, and Berkshire. We played Tick BINGO and had educational postcards and tick kits available for everyone in attendance.



Community Education



What's in a Tick Kit?

An educational postcard & tweezers for tick removal!



Every year, we deliver tick kits to local town and village halls!

“Tick Talks” with NYSDOT & Tioga County Public Works Dept

“Tick Talk” sessions were held with the NYS Department of Transportation, County Highway Department, and the County Buildings & Grounds crew. The talks included general tickborne illness prevention, and they specifically included information on the use of permethrin. Using grant funding, we purchased a small supply of permethrin to give each site so their employees could treat their gear.



Outreach to Local Diners

Where better to reach men and adults 61+ than your local diner! Educational placemats were delivered to 10 local diners in Tioga County. Each diner was also given tick kits to distribute to customers.



2024 Public Health Highlights

SUBSTANCE USE PREVENTION

Tioga County Advocacy, Support, and Prevention (ASAP) Coalition

In April 2024, Tioga County Public Health took the lead on the Tioga County ASAP Coalition, which brings together agencies, schools, community members, and more to address substance use related issues in the County.

- **DFC Grant (Drug Free Communities)**

Grant Focus: Cannabis, alcohol, nicotine, and prescription drugs.

Grant Activities: Providing information to parents, supporting healthy family activities, reviewing/supporting policies, and providing trainings and technical assistance on prevention efforts in community agencies and schools.

- **CARA Grant (Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act)**

Grant Focus: Opioids, prescription drugs, and methamphetamine.

Grant Activities: Distributing lock boxes, support Drug Take Back Days and providing Public Access Narcan (PAN) boxes to community entities.

- **STOP Act Grant (Sober Truth on Preventing Underage Drinking)**

Grant Focus: Underage drinking and LGBTQ+ youth.

Grant Activities: Compliance checks, supporting after prom events, and providing education to bars and restaurants.

Drug Take Back Day

In 2024, Tioga County Public Health, Tioga County Sheriff's Office, and the Tioga ASAP Coalition hosted two Prescription Drug Take Back & Sharps Disposal Days at the Health & Human Services Building in Owego and at the Waverly Police Station.

These events give community members the opportunity to dispose of any over the counter or prescription drugs in a safe manner.



LEAD POISONING PREVENTION PROGRAM

2024 Lead Avenger Awards

Congratulations to our 2024 Lead Avengers, UHS Primary Care in Candor and Newark Valley!

Highest 1-Year-Old Lead Testing Rate:
UHS Primary Care in Candor!

Highest 2-Year-Old Lead Testing Rate:
UHS Primary Care in Newark Valley!

Thank you for your dedication to protecting Tioga County's youth from the dangers of lead!



Tioga County Public Health staff with staff from UHS Newark Valley and Candor offices!

Lead Renovator Training

In June, we hosted a free Lead Renovator Training, that gave eight local contractors, property owners, code enforcers, etc. an opportunity to become certified in the Environmental Protection Agency's Lead Renovation, Repair, and Painting Program. This certification is required for any work that may disturb lead-based paint in homes, childcare centers, and preschools built before 1978.

The course was sponsored by Cornell University and taught by Art Wheaton, Director of Labor Studies at Cornell University ILR School Buffalo Co-Lab.



Billboard displayed during Lead Poisoning Prevention Week in October.

New & Noteworthy

PUBLIC HEALTH STRATEGIC PLAN

Over the course of the year, public health staff have been working in teams to make department-wide improvements divided into four main objectives!

Taxpayer Value

Goal: Communicate taxpayer value through Public Health messaging.

Outcome: Developing plans to educate decision-makers and the general public on the importance of prevention initiatives and the savings associated with them. An infographic describing how Public Health services benefit taxpayers was created, which will complement future presentations and learning sessions.



Community Partnership

Goal: Identify public health partners and establish collaborations to promote healthy living.

Outcome: A Tioga County Public Health postcard and brochure were developed, so that when meeting with partner agencies we could share our department's services in a clear and concise manner.

Outcome: Our Public Health Director, and additional representatives from our team, met with a total of 24 partner agencies to promote collaboration and establish partnerships. These meetings provided a great opportunity for us to reconnect with other local agencies that do important public health work in our community.

Workforce

Goal: Develop an employee training needs assessment to serve as a baseline for training needs.

Outcome: An employee training needs assessment was developed and completed by all members of the department. Feedback from the assessment was used to establish a plan to ensure all staff members receive the training they need to thrive in their positions.

Goal: Develop an employee engagement satisfaction survey.

Outcome: An employee engagement survey was developed and completed by all members of the department. Feedback from the survey was shared with the management team and a plan was established to promote employee satisfaction and retention.

Accessibility

Goal: Develop an assessment to determine Public Health services needed in the community and what should be accessible online.

Outcome: A needs assessment survey was developed and shared with partner agencies. The purpose of the survey was to gather feedback on services that are missing or lacking in Tioga County; for example, access to prenatal care. Results from the survey will be used to guide new initiatives and programs put forth by Public Health.

Goal: Increase accessibility by leveraging technology to provide greater access to public health services/programs online.

Outcome: To increase accessibility, all forms utilized by Public Health are now available online. Our department has also begun using MuniPay, an online payment program, to make electronic payments accessible to those paying fees in our programs.



PUBLIC HEALTH ON THE GO!

Public Health is hitting the road! The purchase of a new trailer has made preparing for community events, like rabies vaccine clinics, an easier process!



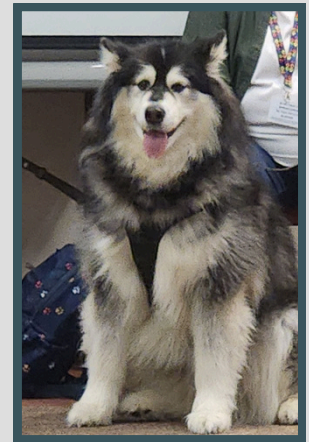
New & Noteworthy

EMPLOYEE WELLNESS FAIR

In October, we hosted a Wellness Fair for all Tioga County employees.

Activities included guided meditation, therapy dogs, Narcan training, flavored water sampling, DIY trail mix bar, dad jokes, a “What do you do for wellness?” wall, and more!

Thank you to Therapy Dogs 607, NexGen EAP, Mental Hygiene, and Catholic Charities who volunteered their time and helped make the day a success!



COVID AFTER ACTION REPORT

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, our department felt it was critical to take a look at the mitigation efforts of not only the Public Health department, but Tioga County and key partner agencies as well.

We gathered feedback from our department, Tioga County department heads and leaders, and key partner agencies. The feedback was used to determine what was handled efficiently and effectively during the COVID-19 pandemic, so we can duplicate those efforts in the future. More importantly, we used the feedback to identify opportunities for improvement so that we can improve our performance should a similar event happen again.

After-action reports provide an analysis of an exercise or event, including the findings, strengths, deficiencies, and opportunities for improvement.



NYS PUBLIC HEALTH EDUCATORS MEETING

In February, the Health Education team hosted the New York State Health Educators Meeting. We presented on our Monthly Theme Game Plan that we developed to coordinate our outreach and education efforts within the community.

Over 80 health educators from across the state came together to share ideas and suggestions on ways to improve and expand messaging and outreach efforts.

NEW YORK STATE PUBLIC HEALTH
EDUCATOR'S MEETING



Patient Services

DENTAL PROGRAM EVALUATION

The Dental team hosted grant evaluators from Eastern Tennessee University. They visited our dental program to learn how the funds we received from the Appalachian Regional Commission benefited the community.

The visit included interviewing program participants, school administration, county department staff, as well as members of the Public Health team.

The evaluators were very happy with what they heard and shared positive feedback regarding the program's ability to address dental needs in Tioga County.

CPR INSTRUCTOR

Our Public Health Nurse is now a certified cardiopulmonary resuscitation, or CPR, instructor.

We can now train staff and Medical Reserve Corps volunteers on how to perform lifesaving CPR!

She taught her first CPR class in December!



SCHOOL NURSE MEETING

A meeting was held with school nurses to inform them of any changes in immunization requirements for school. We shared updated resources – the required immunizations for school list, the immunization handbook, and guidelines according to NYS immunization regulations.

The meeting served as an opportunity for school nurses to ask questions and gain clarification on any anticipated questions that might come up during the school year.

This year, we covered topics that we hadn't in years past like communicable disease updates, new internal staff/ leadership changes, and updates regarding the dental van.



NEW YORK STATE EI-HUB

The Early Intervention (EI) team has been busy with the transition to the new New York State EI-Hub application. Members of our administrative and EI teams have spent time learning and preparing for the new application.

Unfortunately, the application has come with many challenges that have impacted health departments across New York State. We are hopeful NYS will address the reported issues and the application will be running smoothly in 2025.

The EI-Hub application is used to report child information throughout the EI process, from referral to transition, including managing provider data, provider management, claims creation, billing, and payments.

Communicable Disease

RABIES POST-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS OUTREACH

Our Public Health Nurse provided education on the proper use and administration of rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) to local emergency department staff at Guthrie Lourdes, UHS Wilson, UHS Binghamton General, Cayuga Medical, and Guthrie Robert Packer Hospital. She shared guidance from New York State, as well as a “cheat sheet” of do’s and don’ts for Rabies PEP. The goal of these meetings was to increase knowledge on the proper use and administration of Rabies PEP.

Rabies PEP is a highly effective preventative treatment for individuals who were bitten or scratched by an animal confirmed to have rabies or where a rabies exposure cannot be ruled out.

CLIA LICENSE

Our Public Health Clinic once again has a Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments license, or CLIA license!

Having this license gives our clinical staff greater opportunities to protect the community against public health threats! For instance, with this license we would be able to collect specimens in the event of an outbreak.

CLIA certification is required for any facility that performs laboratory testing on human specimens for: diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of disease.

MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS

Our Public Health Nurse and Emergency Preparedness Coordinator have been working hard to make updates to our Medical Reserve Corps, (MRC) attending multiple trainings and conferences, and tabling at local community events to recruit new members.

Updates have also been made to our MRC playbook that encompasses everything that is needed to run Tioga County’s MRC!

The Medical Reserve Corps is a network of volunteers who help communities prepare for and respond to public health emergencies and disasters.

**Anyone can sign-up to be a part of Tioga County’s MRC!
If you are interested, please call
607-687-8600**



Environmental Health

LOCAL CODE ENFORCEMENT MEETING

In November, we held a workshop titled “**Working Together - Public Health & Code Enforcement**” for local code enforcers, town/village mayors, and town clerks.

This meeting gave us the opportunity to discuss a variety of environmental health topics including:

- Lead hazards
- Septic systems
- Animal bite reports
- Permitted facilities
- Public health complaints/sanitary code
- And more!

The meeting was well attended, and generated lots of great discussions on how Public Health and Code Enforcement can work as a team for the good of the community.



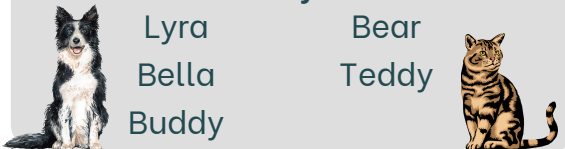
RABIES PREVENTION

Through partnership with Stray Haven we held 10 rabies clinics and vaccinated **1,377 cats and dogs** in 2024!

The 2025 Rabies Vaccination Clinic Schedule can be found on our Facebook page, by visiting ph.tiogacountyny.gov, or by scanning the QR code.



The most popular pet names at our clinics this year were:



Lyra Bear
Bella Teddy
Buddy

2024 RABIES PROGRAM DATA

- 242** Animal Bite Investigations
- 60** *Wild Animals*
- 182** *Domestic Animals*
- 42** Animal Submitted for Testing
- 6** *Tested Positive for Rabies*

UPDATED SANITARY CODE

Updates were made to the Tioga County Sanitary Code to ensure emerging chronic issues could be handled in a timely manner. Garbage accumulation, rodents, and burning garbage were some of the areas that were revised.

You can find the updated Sanitary Code by visiting ph.tiogacountyny.gov.

A sanitary code is a set of rules and regulations established by the local health department to ensure public health and safety by dictating standards for cleanliness and hygiene practices in various settings.

Community Health

2024 SOLAR ECLIPSE

Get Ready for the Total Solar Eclipse

Monday, April 8, 2024



Although the day of the Solar Eclipse was disappointingly cloudy, in the weeks prior to the eclipse our department focused on educating the community on ways to safely experience this once in a lifetime event.

Community education focused on the importance of wearing proper eclipse glasses, not looking directly at the sun, and taking precautions when traveling.

Our department held a food drive where county employees could bring in non-perishable food items in exchange for a pair of eclipse glasses! The donations went to Catholic Charities.

CHILD HEALTH OUTREACH

Toothbrush Fun

In January and February, we visited Family Resource Center playgroups in Berkshire, Candor, Spencer, and Waverly for Toothbrush Fun! The children loved practicing their toothbrushing skills on Danny the Dental Dragon! The activity also included story-time and a short lesson on how food can hurt or help our teeth.

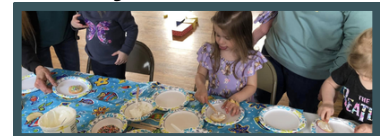


Healthy Eating

During National Nutrition Month in March, we visited Family Resource Center's playgroup in Spencer. The children made a healthy snack by decorating "Easter Eggs" made out of sliced fruit, yogurt, and sprinkles.



They also made a paper rainbow using different colored cut outs of fruits and vegetables.



Car Seats

We held a Child Safety Seat Check event at Family Resource Center's playgroup in Spencer. This was an opportunity for parents and caregivers to have their child(ren)'s seat(s) checked for proper installation and fit by one of our Certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians!



Handwashing

We visited Head Start classrooms and a Family Resource Center playgroup for a handwashing activity. Children practiced washing their hands using sensory bags filled with hair gel and beads or "germs." Using bottle brushes, they learned how hard they need to scrub their hands with soap and water to get the germs off! This activity tied into our Lead Poisoning Prevention grant, as handwashing is a method of risk reduction.



Public Health in Action



STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Congratulations to Our 2024 Graduates!

Institute for Advancement

Mark Griep
Melanie Miller
Nicole Whitmore

Leadership Tioga

Daniel Scherrer
Kylie Holochak
Susan Medina

The Tioga County Institute for Advancement program is designed to build leadership skills and prepare individuals for future opportunities within Tioga County Government.

Leadership Tioga is sponsored by the Tioga County Chamber of Commerce. The program develops individuals for future leadership roles in the county.

Special Congratulations to Heather Vroman and Kristin Russell for completing their Masters in Public Health!



Leadership Tioga Graduates - Sue, Dan, and Kylie

Public Health Services

Animal Bite Investigations
Child Find Program
Child Passenger Safety Program
Disease Surveillance
Drinking Water Monitoring
Early Intervention
Food Safety
Food Service Inspections
Health Education & Outreach
Illness Complaint Investigations
Lead Poisoning Prevention
Mobile Dental Services
Opioid Overdose Prevention Program

Potable Water Supply Monitoring
Public Health Preparedness
Rabies Vaccination Clinics
Residential Water Testing
Special Education Pre-School Program
Septic Permits & Design
School-Based Dental Clinic
Tickborne Illness Education
Vaccines for Children & Adults
Weights & Measures Testing
Welcome Baby Outreach
Well Head Replacement Program
AND MORE!

Board of Health

Terry Hills, DVM, President
Jim Simmons, Vice President
William H Standinger III, Legislator
Rani Kapur-Pado, DO
Teresea Leary, FNP
Thomas F Nytch, DVM
James Raftis, Jr., DO

Medical Consultants

In 2024 we welcomed two new medical consultants and a pharmaceutical consultant.

James Skiff, MD
UHS Primary Care

John Zevan, DO
UHS Emergency & Trauma Services

Zoé Moffett, PharmD, BCPS
Ambulatory Care Clinical Pharmacist at UHS

We are excited to have them as part of the Public Health team!



Tioga County BOH members (left to right) - Dr. James Raftis, Jr., Teresa Leary, Dr. Rani Kapur-Pado, Dr. Thomas Nytch, Jim Simmons, Legislator William Standinger III. Not Pictured - Dr. Terry Hills.

2024 Health & Human Services Committee

William Standinger III, Chair
Jake Brown
Tracy Monell
Dennis Mullen



**Don't forget
to keep in
touch!**

Tioga County Public Health

607-687-8600

ph.tiogacountyny.gov

Facebook: Tioga County Public Health



Scan here to
visit our
website!

Scan here to
visit our
Facebook!

