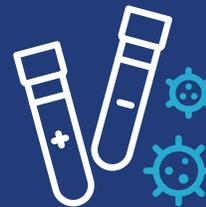
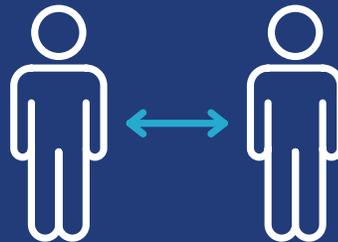


# Onondaga County Health Department

# Annual Report 2021

## Pandemic Response Continued



**ongovhealth**  
**Onondaga County**  
**Health Department**

[ongov.net/health](http://ongov.net/health) · [facebook.com/ongovhealth](https://facebook.com/ongovhealth)



# Message from the Commissioner of Health



Dear Community Members,

As we reflect on the past two years of the pandemic, what comes to mind first is the anxiety and uncertainty that dominated 2020. We then welcomed 2021 with a sense of hope, with our newly launched mass vaccination clinics and established testing infrastructure. Despite the emergence of COVID-19 variants, hope continued to grow with the availability of at-home tests and life-saving treatment options such as antivirals and monoclonal antibody therapy.

This annual report will provide a brief overview of our ever-evolving response to the challenges and scientific advancements related to the pandemic, as well as our continued commitment to providing core public health services for our community.

I want to thank the community, for it is through our continued partnership that we remain resilient and have become stronger and even more prepared for whatever lies ahead. I also want to recognize all my Health Department colleagues for the work they do each day to protect and improve the health of all Onondaga County residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Indu Gupta". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Indu Gupta, MD, MPH, MA, FACP  
Commissioner of Health

# Onondaga County Health Department

## Mission

*To protect and improve the health  
of all Onondaga County residents.*

## Vision

*A community of partners working together for the  
physical, social, and emotional well-being of all.*

## Values

*Respect • Excellence • Accountability • Collaboration • Health Equity*



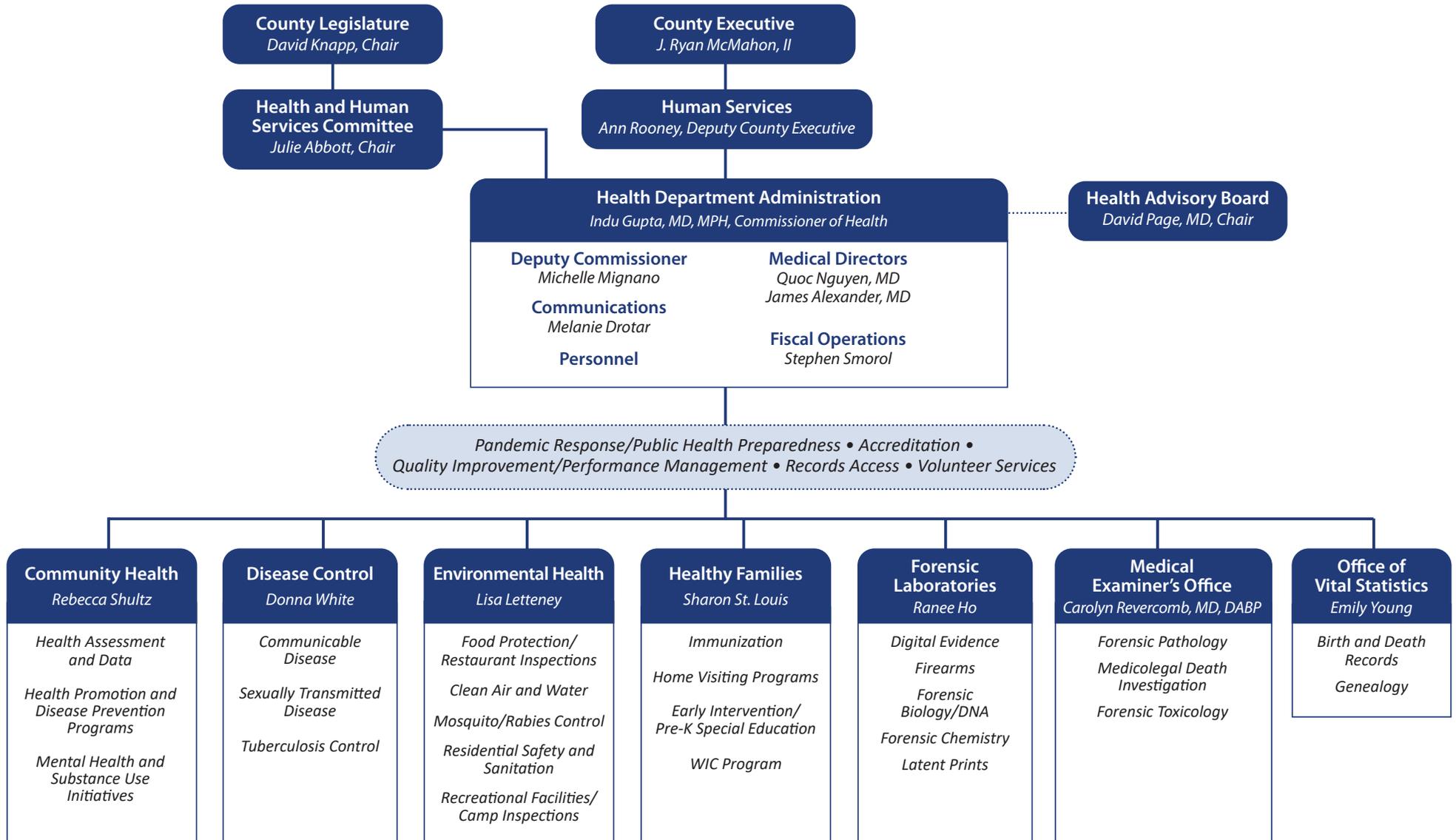
## Onondaga County Legislature 2021 Health Committee

Julie Abbott-Kenan, Chair  
Peggy Chase, Vice Chair  
Ken Bush  
Deb Cody  
Bill Kinne

## 2021 Health Advisory Board

David Page, MD, Chair  
Robert Hack  
Maryellen Lewis, MD  
Derrick Murry  
Ann Rooney  
Simone Seward

# Onondaga County Health Department 2021 Organizational Chart



# Table of Contents

Administration .....	6
Community Health.....	8
Disease Control.....	9
Environmental Health.....	9
Healthy Families: Maternal and Child Health.....	10
Forensic Laboratories .....	11
Medical Examiner’s Office .....	11
Annual Data .....	12
Schedule of Expenditures and Revenues .....	16

# Administration

## *Special Reporting of COVID-19 Pandemic Response:*

- The Health Commissioner provided seamless information and public recommendations based on data and science every day to the County Executive and Deputy County Executive. The Health Administration Team—Deputy Commissioner, Medical Director, division directors, and Public Information Officer—worked under the guidance of the Health Commissioner to address the public health needs of the community due to rapidly changing information regarding cases, vaccination, new regulations, and forecasting.
- Mass Vaccination Clinics: As Incident Commander, the Health Commissioner oversaw the operation of mass vaccination clinics throughout the county. The Director of Healthy Families acted as the clinic manager for medical operations, the Public Health Preparedness team led the logistic and other clinic operational needs, including scheduling and medical oversight by the Medical Director. This massive undertaking was successful due to organized, structured team efforts, following an Incident Command System (ICS) and a strong foundation of continuous self-evaluation by measuring performance and making quality improvements to the process. As such, the Mass Vaccination team:
  - Organized and oversaw site floor plans and support services for mass clinics in the Oncenter complex and community pop-ups locations.
  - Recruited and scheduled personnel for clinics (vaccine and testing sites) using Onondaga County Health Department (OCHD) and County staff, as well as [Central New York Medical Reserve Corps \(CNYMRC\)](#) and County volunteers.
  - Coordinated with Emergency Management to ensure access to necessary supplies for clinics.
  - Ensured access to vaccine clinics for the underserved and special needs communities including those with mobility challenges, developmental disabilities, hearing/speech impairments, and language translation through active collaboration with community agencies and trusted individuals.



*Command staff at the first mass vaccination clinic site located at the Oncenter War Memorial.*



*Vaccination clinic serving residents of Brighton Towers senior living community.*



*Drive-thru vaccination clinic at the site of the former Shoppingtown Mall in DeWitt.*

- Scheduled clinics in communities with the lowest vaccination rates and/or the highest rates of vaccine hesitation. Sites were chosen with community input as those most likely to be visited by the target population. These sites included churches, community centers, businesses, and other locations.
  - Held clinics in school districts, allowing eligible school-aged children to be vaccinated during the school day.
- Actively participated in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC).
  - The Health Commissioner provided innovative evidence-based policy change to reduce physical distancing from 6 feet to 3 feet in the K-12 schools to increase in-person student participation. This novel policy was the first in New York State and helped more students to attend school.
  - COVID-19 testing was implemented throughout the community with rapid antigen tests under OCHD's article 28. The OCHD Deputy Commissioner worked closely with the OCHD Medical Director and Emergency Management team to successfully implement training for testing and reporting of all community testing in the New York State's Electronic Clinical Laboratory Reporting System (ECLRS).
  - COVID-19 testing was successfully implemented in the entire K-12 school systems with PCR saliva testing for surveillance system and is ongoing into 2022.
  - COVID-19 information was provided to all stakeholders, including the public, in a timely manner. Public Health Communications utilized a variety of strategies to inform the public during the pandemic, from [website](#) and web-based forms/registration, [social media](#) messaging and engagement to [press releases](#), public service announcements, and press conferences. Information was provided to the public on a daily basis, including vaccination/testing clinic marketing, countering of misinformation, and culturally competent key messaging about topics such as vaccine confidence. Detailed guidance regarding reopening, vaccination, and isolation/quarantine protocols were provided in real time to the community as soon as the information was released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH). The Commissioner communicated with the public via press conferences, social media events such as Facebook Live, and regular meetings with K-12 school administrators (public and private) in Onondaga County to keep them informed regarding policy changes.



*First of several pop-up vaccination sites at Tucker Missionary Baptist Church.*

### ***Performance Management (PM) / Quality Improvement (QI)***

Formal PM/QI activities had been paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic but were revitalized within the department in May 2021. All staff from program level to Bureau/Division Directors are instrumental in PM and QI activities. A refresher training was conducted for PM/QI Council staff which reviewed key points and definitions related to performance management, performance measurement, and quality improvement. Department staff were empowered to continue their roles in PM/QI activities and new staff were encouraged to become involved. Program Directors worked with staff to review performance measures for their Bureau/Division and modifications were made as needed. Once performance measures were finalized, they were entered into the Performance Management (PM) Dashboards so that each Bureau/Division could track their data at the appropriate intervals. Also in 2021, the monthly report out schedule for QI activities was enacted again so that each Bureau/Division had an opportunity

to share lessons learned and seek feedback from colleagues across the department during formal PM/QI Council meetings. Many aspects of PM and QI continue to be integrated across the department to further enhance the use of quality improvement processes and improve overall program performance.

### ***Public Health Accreditation***

In October 2021, OCHD submitted their third annual report to the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#) (PHAB) and it was accepted. PHAB highlighted the fact that amid the COVID-19 pandemic, OCHD continued to provide high quality services to the Onondaga County community while also maintaining a commitment to quality improvement. Over the next year, the department will continue to do core public health work to serve its mission, vision, and values and achieve reaccreditation in the future.

### ***Vital Statistics***

Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the [Office of Vital Statistics](#) maintained all of its essential services. Staff continued to process all new birth and death records requests in accordance with regulations set by New York State Bureau of Vital Records. Although the office was closed for walk-in services for a period of time, orders for certified birth and death records received from the public and funeral directors via online, mail, and fax were processed by staff in a timely manner. The Office of Vital Statistics issued 49,957 birth and death certificates during 2021.

## **Community Health**

Throughout 2021, [Division of Community Health](#) staff continued to fill a variety of critical roles related to COVID-19 response. Staff were involved in the following areas: [data](#) collection, analysis, and reporting; outreach and education; database management; and [media and communications](#). Staff also supported specific initiatives including survey development and analysis to inform testing in K-12 schools; and assisted in registration, data collection and analysis, material development, communications, and general operational support for mass vaccination clinics.

Division of Community Health also maintained and enhanced a number of programs and services to the community in 2021, which included providing active case management or surveillance for over 700 children impacted by elevated [blood lead levels](#). Staff expanded the [community-based naloxone program](#) with an online training format, and was awarded additional funding to expand initiatives to reduce [opioid overdoses](#). The team worked with landlords, municipalities, and worksites to establish over 300 additional [smoke-free](#) apartment units throughout Onondaga, Cayuga and Oswego counties, and facilitated [cancer screening](#) for un- and underinsured residents. Staff also initiated program activities to [improve nutrition and increase physical activity](#) at school and community sites.

# Disease Control

The BDC continued with modified services in 2021 to meet the safety needs of patients receiving care in the [Sexually Transmitted Disease](#) and [Tuberculosis](#) clinics during the COVID-19 response. Staff utilized telehealth visits, including both phone and video calls, and offered home visits when needed. Services continued to focus primarily on established patients receiving care through the [PrEP \(Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis for HIV\) program](#), and patients receiving care for active tuberculosis. The OCHD worked closely with community partners to ensure patients seeking walk-in testing and treatment were referred to other local resources that could meet those needs. In July 2021, the STD clinic resumed full services by appointment and then additionally began offering walk-in appointments at the end of the summer.

During 2021, Communicable Disease Investigators continued to provide partner services for patients who recently tested positive for HIV, chlamydia, gonorrhea, and/or syphilis, and Communicable Disease Nurses continued to respond to various disease exposures, including Hepatitis A and B and rabies prophylaxis.

From the beginning of the pandemic and throughout this year, the Bureau of Disease Control (BDC) staff continued to respond by conducting case investigations and contact tracing. The team continued to work closely with local schools, workplaces, houses of worship, long term care facilities, and more to ensure cases of COVID-19 were identified, isolated, and all close contacts were quarantined.

# Environmental Health

Many of the [Division of Environmental Health's](#) programs were impacted by changing [COVID-19](#) guidelines during the first half of 2021. Staff was able to assist permitted facilities by working closely with operators to ensure they understood all mandatory guidelines along with responding to public concerns.

The [Onondaga County Sanitary Code](#), originally adopted in 1968, was updated during 2021. Many items that are currently addressed by New York State Law were repealed from the code and other items that were either not specifically addressed or are more stringent were kept. The Sanitary Code is used as guidance and gives enforcement powers for many of the programs run by the Division of Environmental Health. The updated Sanitary Code was reviewed and accepted by the Health Advisory Board and the [Onondaga County Legislature](#).

The Division was awarded a competitive [Healthy Neighborhoods](#) Grant over the next 5 years to continue their work on improving health and safety issues related to asthma, childhood lead poisoning, carbon monoxide and fire safety for homes in the City of Syracuse. Public Health Engineering secured the second round of funding from NYS for the [Septic System Replacement Program](#). Funding will be provided for projects within the Skaneateles Lake watershed and properties along a portion of the Seneca River.

The [Mosquito Control Program's](#) surveillance activities identified positive findings of Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) virus in mosquito traps, resulting in aerial spraying of the Cicero Swamp with

adulticide in October. Truck spraying occurred in Lysander in September in response to a horse death due to West Nile Virus (WNV).

The Division provided guidance and assisted public water supplies in meeting the requirements of the new NYSDOH's regulations for Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA)/Perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS)/1,4-Dioxane. The majority of public water systems in Onondaga County began their sampling in 2021 per the regulations. These man-made chemicals were used to make heat/water resistant polymer coatings but were phased out in 2000 due to adverse health effects, including developmental issues in children, cancer, and liver complications.

## Healthy Families

The [Division of Healthy Families](#) (Maternal and Child Health) continued to provide support to Onondaga County community members as the [COVID-19 pandemic](#) migrated through Central New York. The needs of the community included: vaccine education and administration, COVID-19 prevention practices, assessment of clients' physical and mental health issues related to lockdowns, and assistance with the limited access to essential services. To respond to the community and continue to provide Healthy Families services ([Early Intervention](#), [Preschool Special Education](#), Community Health Workers, Public Health Social Workers, and Public Health Nursing), remote technology was utilized by all home visiting programs throughout the division until face-to-face visits were permitted. [Women, Infants and Children \(WIC\)](#) participants were also allowed to receive services through remote visits.

As the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Emergency Use Authorization of the COVID-19 vaccines were approved for various ages and medical conditions, OCHD immediately responded to meet the specified criteria with COVID-19 vaccine point of distribution (POD) sites. Seeking to ensure health equity within the Health Department's COVID-19 vaccine program, an analysis of the demographic data was reviewed which revealed disparity in the underserved population. To support vaccine confidence and uptake, outreach and supportive partnerships were formed with community leadership, faith-based organizations, and school superintendents to seek their input on how to best meet the needs of the community. The feedback obtained led to numerous community pop-up vaccine clinics being held at various targeted locations throughout the County, giving all residents the opportunity to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

# Forensic Laboratories

In 2021, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the Center for Forensic Sciences—[Forensic Laboratories](#) continued to conduct forensic analysis for evidence submitted to the laboratory from submitting agencies in Onondaga County without major interruptions once numerous precautionary measures were implemented to mitigate the spread of possible infection amongst laboratory staff members.

The Forensic Laboratories continued to experience an increase in the number of requests for providing case materials to prosecutors and defense attorneys in response to the 2020 Discovery Law. It successfully underwent an off-site document assessment that was conducted remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic by ANSI National Accreditation Board (ANAB) in September 2021.

The Latent Print Unit had its first Statewide Automated Biometric Identification System palm print hit which led to an arrest. The Unit also made over 1,058 latent print identifications to assist law enforcement agencies; 113 of which were a result of database searches. The Firearms Unit had over 300 National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) hits to connect crime guns to incidents, incidents to guns, and to each other.

Some notable work of the Latent Print and Forensic Biology Units resulted in the identification of an individual whose body was found in a river in 2021 and the exoneration of an individual who spent 16 years in prison for sexual assault that he did not commit. A Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) hit gave a name to the perpetrator of a rape, and with this information the perpetrator, who was out on parole from a previous incident, was located and apprehended by the Syracuse Police Department that same evening.

# Medical Examiner's Office

The [Medical Examiner's Office \(MEO\)](#) continues to perform postmortem COVID-19 testing and influenza testing on decedents suspected and/or known to have coronavirus infection as mandated under NYS law.

For protection of staff, the MEO continues COVID cleaning protocols and extended N95 mask use throughout the morgue and at medicolegal death scene investigations. Detailed COVID-19 autopsy protocols were developed in 2020 as recommended by the CDC, National Association of Medical Examiners, and the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators and have been modified throughout the pandemic as needed. The [OCMEO Forensic Investigation division](#) continues to triage decedents as to likelihood of COVID-19 into four tiers, with testing and autopsy precautions flowing from that.

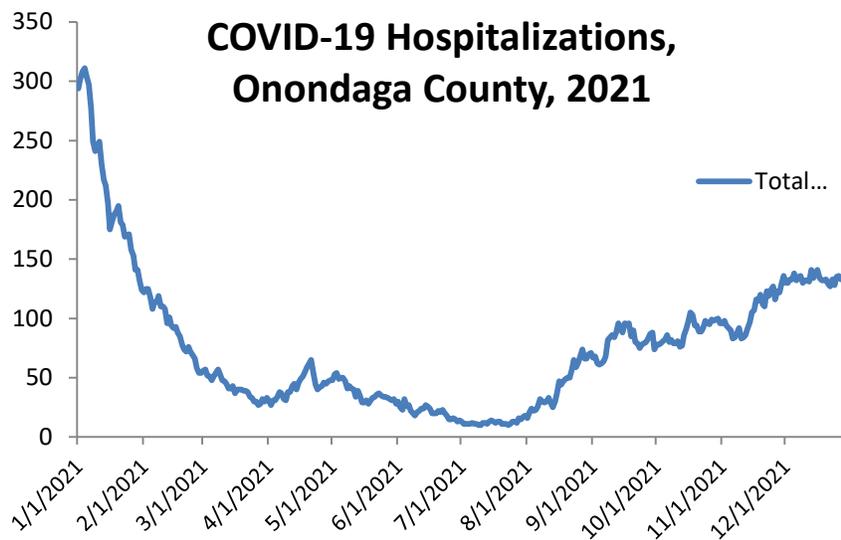
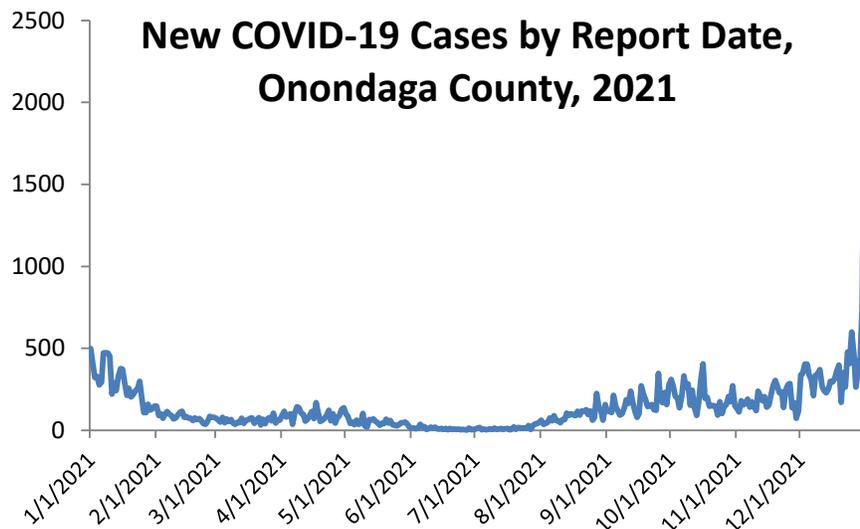
The [OCMEO Toxicology laboratory](#) attained re-Accreditation following an inspection (April 2021) by the American Board of Forensic Toxicology.

# 2020-2021 Annual Data

## COVID-19 Response

Total cases	50,346
Hospital admissions	3,145
Deaths	390
Fully vaccinated residents*	302,766

\*Vaccination started in December 2020, the data above show the total number of fully vaccinated Onondaga County residents as of December 31, 2021.



Comprehensive COVID-19 data are available on the [Onondaga County COVID-19 website](#).

## Essential Services\*

Community Health	2020	2021
<b>Cancer Services</b>		
Number of patients screened	177	200
Clinical breast exams	87	84
Mammograms	157	153
Pap tests	30	35
Colorectal Fecal Immunochemical Test Kits	43	59
Follow-up diagnostic procedures	126	135
Cancers diagnosed	2	3
<b>Lead Program</b>		
New initial lead inspections conducted	94	236
Properties with lead hazards identified	76	205
<i>Data and maps related to blood lead testing activities for 2013-2020 can be found <a href="#">here</a>.</i>		
<b>Mental Health and Substance Use Initiatives</b>		
Individuals trained in naloxone administration	77	435

Disease Control	2020	2021
<b>Reportable Diseases</b>		
All reportable diseases (including flu)	3,787	1,285
<b>Tuberculosis Control</b>		
Tuberculin skin tests	49	49
Individuals started on TLTBI	28	7
T-SPOT tests	19	18
Active TB cases	10	6
<b>Rabies</b>		
Cases of possible rabies exposure investigated by staff	374	458
<b>Sexually Transmitted Disease</b>		
Total patient visits to the STD Center	683	636
Cases of Chlamydia	2,871	2,292
Cases of Gonorrhea	1,402	1,348
Cases of Syphilis	28	130
Cases of HIV	26	31

\*Core public health services were impacted by the OCHD workforce response to high COVID-19 case counts and the focus on mass vaccination efforts in 2021.

<b>Environmental Health</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
<b>Food Protection</b>		
Restaurants inspected	1,121	2,333
Food-related complaints investigated	197	242
<b>Temporary Residence &amp; Recreational Facilities</b>		
Facilities inspected	256	439
<b>Animal Disease</b>		
Animal bites investigated	813	815
Rabies specimens submitted for testing	348	362
Rabies-positive animals	15	17
Animals vaccinated for rabies	264	494
<b>Mosquito Control Program</b>		
Mosquitoes collected	78,251	157,141
WNV positive mosquito pools	0	5
EEEV positive mosquito pools	6	3
<b>Adolescent Tobacco Use Prevention (ATUPA) Program</b>		
Tobacco compliance checks performed	400	586
<b>Public Health Engineering</b>		
Septic system plans approved	144	158
Individual sewage installations inspected	66	60
Realty subdivision lots approved for water and sewer	149	190
In-depth sanitary survey inspections	118	118
<b>Weights and Measures</b>		
Facilities inspected	778	770

<b>Healthy Families</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
<b>Home Visitation Services</b>		
Total referrals received (unduplicated)	1,378	1,041
Total clients served (unduplicated)	1,790	1,338
<b>Immunization</b>		
General Immunization Clinic, total served (adults & children)	341	563
COVID-19 Vaccination Clinic, total served	1,046	110,259

**WIC**

Enrolled participants	9,049	8,710
Participants issued checks	8,125	7,734

**Early Intervention**

Children referred from all sources	1,345	1,695
Cases closed	1,359	1,363

**Preschool Special Education**

School districts served	22	24
Children served during school year (9-1-19 to 6-30-20)	1,458	1,377
Children served during summer (7-1-20 to 8-31-20)	1,400	1,341

**Forensic Laboratories****2020 2021**

Case assignments completed/closed	3,677	3,343
-----------------------------------	-------	-------

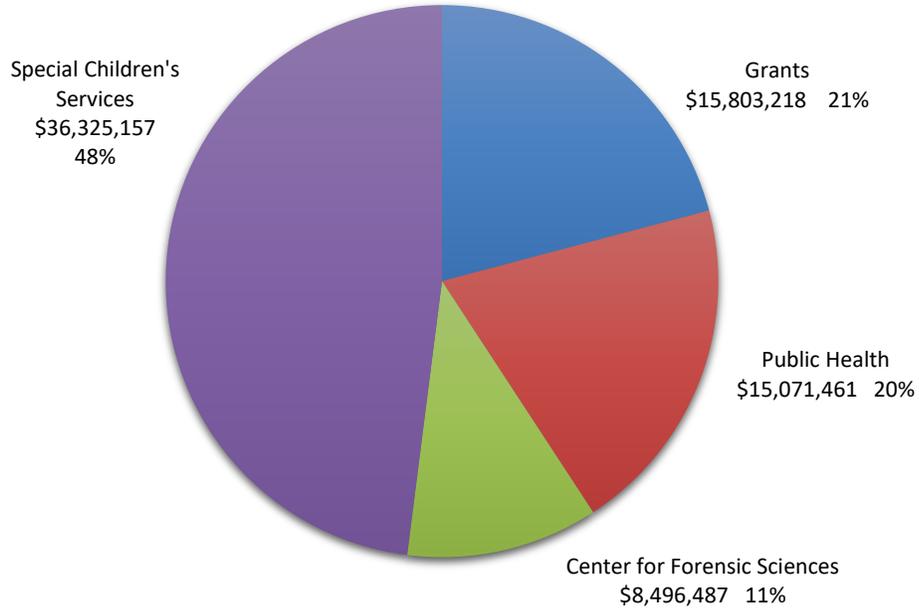
**Medical Examiner's Office\*****2020 2021**

Total cases	3,089	3,285
Investigated and released from MEO jurisdiction	1,780	1,817
Expert consultation cases	3	0
Medical Examiner cases	1,306	1,468
Autopsy examinations	957	987
External examinations	205	275
Death certificate only – no examination	144	205
Manner of death		
• Accident	637	695
• Homicide	57	55
• Natural	453	525
• Suicide	107	128
• Undetermined	40	42
• Other/not applicable	12	23
Scene Response	580	594
Forensic Toxicology	1,098	1,139

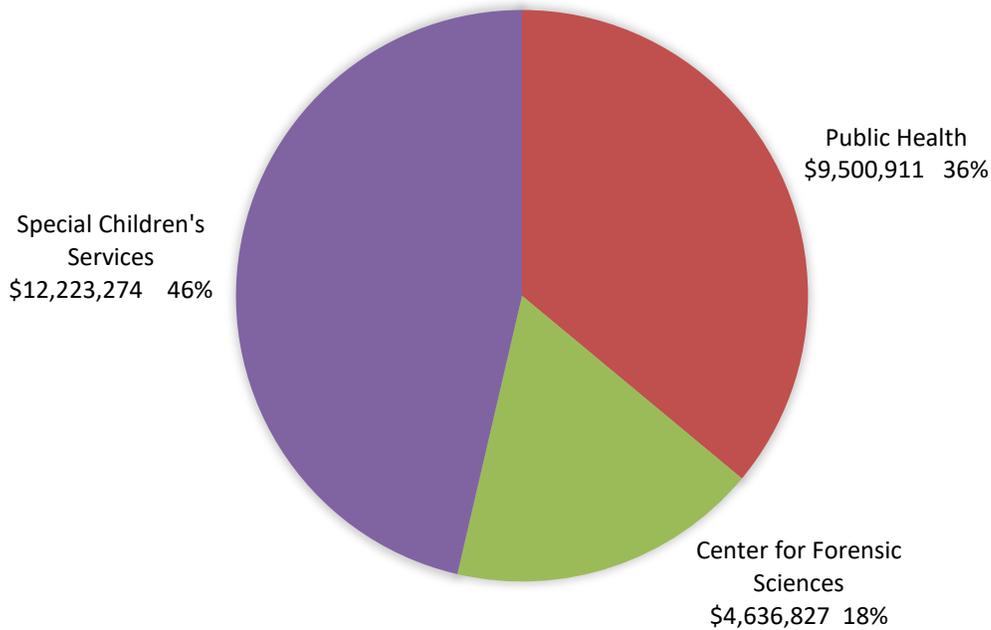
\*Annual regional data includes deaths in Cayuga, Madison, Oneida, Onondaga and Oswego counties.

# 2021 Schedule of Expenditures and Revenues

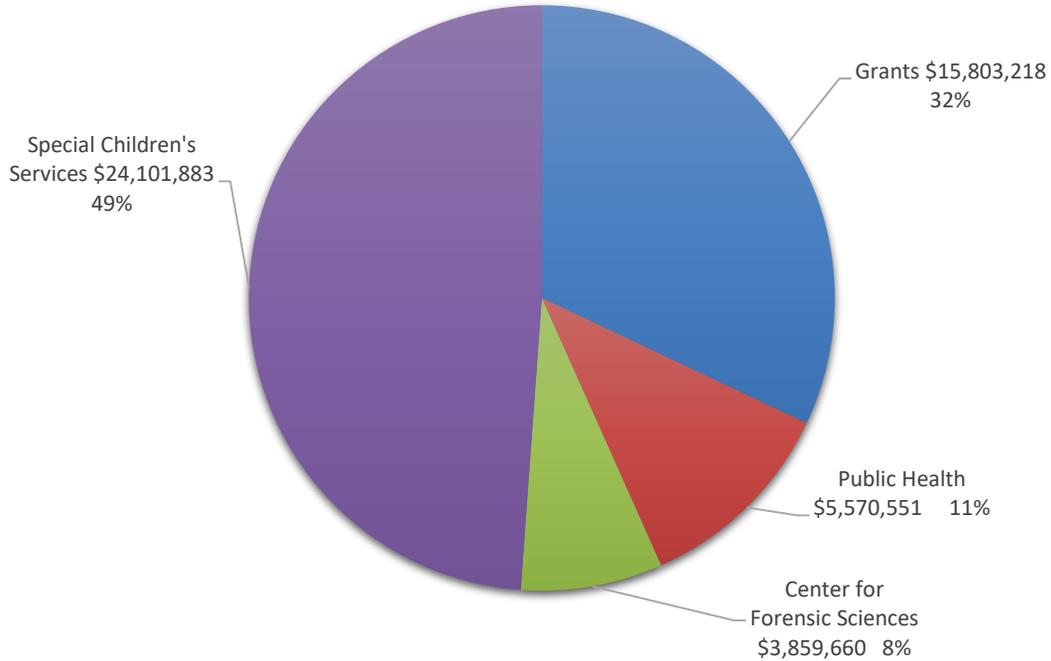
## 2021 Expenses: \$75,696,324



## 2021 Local: \$26,361,012



**2021 Revenue: \$49,335,312**



**GRANT PROJECTS, 2021**

Administration	\$7,796,766
Community Health	\$1,479,490
Disease Control	\$465,659
Environmental Health	\$4,343,972
Maternal and Child Health	\$679,007
Center for Forensic Sciences	\$1,038,324
<b>TOTAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT:</b>	<b>\$15,803,218</b>

# Contact Us

John H. Mulroy Civic Center  
421 Montgomery Street, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor, Syracuse, NY 13202  
Phone 315.435.3155 · Fax 315.435.5720  
Email [ongovhealth@ongov.net](mailto:ongovhealth@ongov.net)

Administration .....	315.435.3155
Community Health .....	315.435.3280
Disease Control .....	315.435.3236
Environmental Health .....	315.435.6623
Healthy Families: Maternal and Child Health .....	315.435.2000
Forensic Laboratories.....	315.435.3800
Medical Examiner’s Office .....	315.435.3163



**ongovhealth**  
**Onondaga County**  
**Health Department**  
[ongov.net/health](http://ongov.net/health) · [facebook.com/ongovhealth](https://facebook.com/ongovhealth)