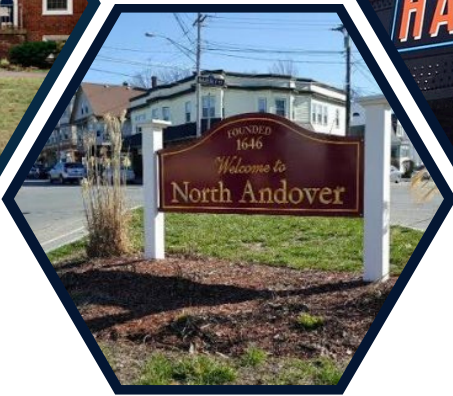


# FY24

## Annual Report

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**Middlesex-Essex**  
Public Health Collaborative

# About Us

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), Office of Local and Regional Health (OLRH), launched the Massachusetts Municipal Public Health Shared Services grant program in January 2020. It has since been renamed the State Action for Public Health Excellence (SAPHE) Grant Program after the passage of the SAPHE Act.

The SAPHE Grant Program aims to improve the service delivery capacities of local health departments through increased cross-jurisdictional sharing of public health services.

In January 2023 the North Andover, Andover, Reading, North Reading, Haverhill, and Lynnfield health departments were awarded the SAPHE Grant and formed the Middlesex-Essex Public Health Collaborative. The Town of North Andover currently serves as the Collaborative's fiscal agent and houses all shared services staff.



# Meet Our Team



**ANNETTE GARCIA, MPH**  
SHARED SERVICES COORDINATOR

Annette joined the Middlesex-Essex Public Health Collaborative as the shared services coordinator in June 2024. Annette has a strong background in local public health inspection services and program management. As the shared services coordinator, she manages the grant and shared staff in addition to providing direct support to participating health departments.



**LEA ANNE PERO, MPH, BSN, RN**  
SHARED PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE

Lea Anne joined the Middlesex-Essex Public Health Collaborative as the shared services public health nurse in January 2024. Lea Anne has over 8 years experience as a registered nurse. As the shared services public health nurse, Lea Anne supports the nursing needs of the communities.



**VACANT**  
SHARED HEALTH INSPECTOR

The Shared Health Inspector position is currently vacant. During FY24, the shared health inspector position was filled from October 2023 to the end of January 2024. The shared health inspector is responsible for assisting local municipalities with inspections as well as developing regional policies and procedures related to environmental health.

# Vision And Mission



## Vision

The Middlesex-Essex Public Health Collaborative envisions a future where all health departments have access to resources and funding to promote healthy communities. Through collaboration, the Middlesex-Essex region can set a benchmark for public health that prioritizes equity, embraces innovation, and serves as a model for other regions to follow in their quest to create healthier, more vibrant communities.

## Mission

Our mission is to comprehensively address the diverse health needs of our communities, with an unwavering focus on fostering health equity. By bridging the gap between resources and the communities that need them most, we aim to create a sustainable environment where health and wellness can flourish for all, regardless of socioeconomic status, background, or geographical location.

## Core Values

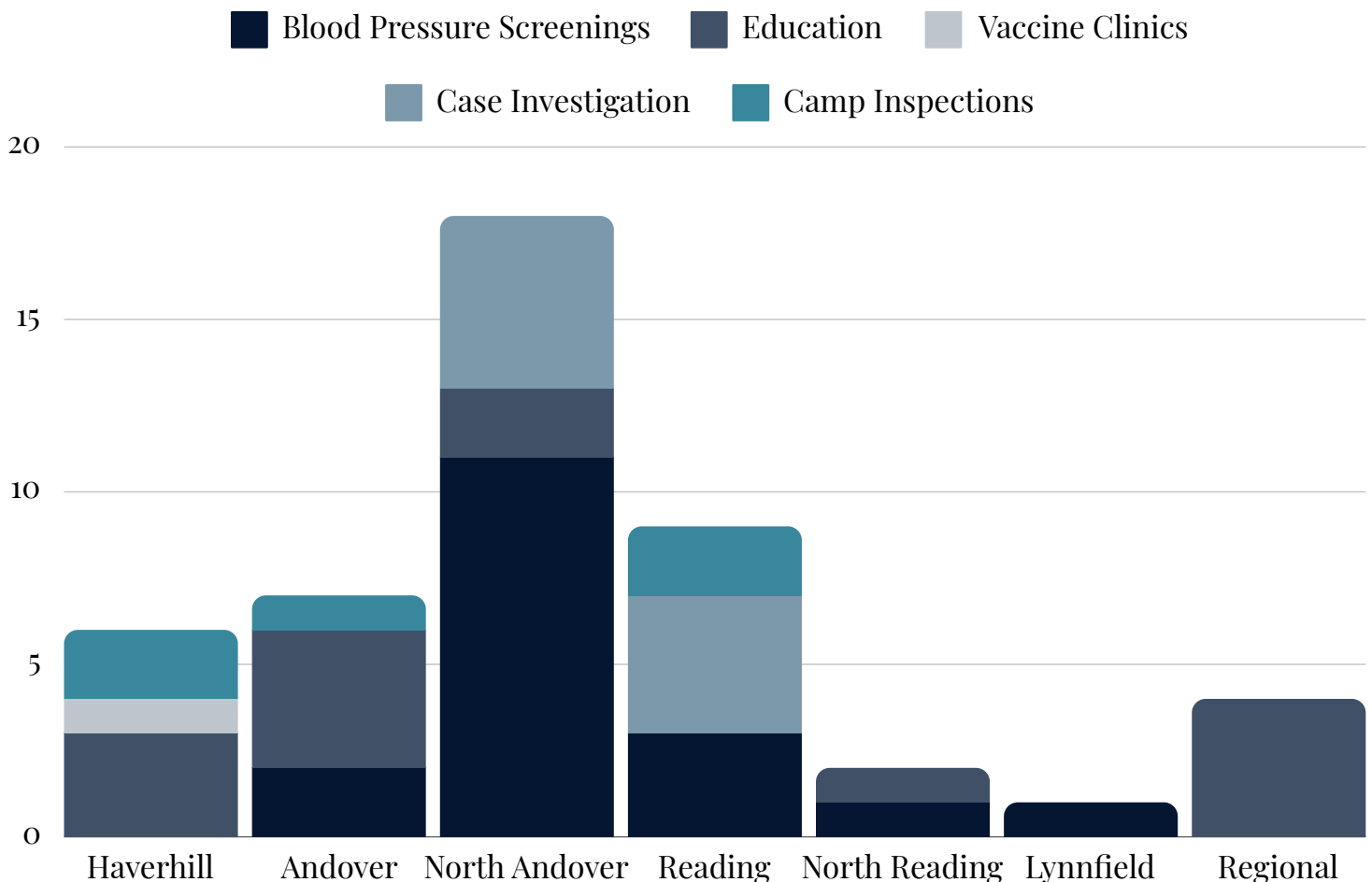


# Nursing Services



MEPHC hired a part-time public health nurse starting in the New Year. The public health nurse has been fully onboarded to MAVEN and provided coverage for MAVEN cases. She has assisted with 5 tuberculosis case investigations and 1 HepB case investigation. A diabetes education program was established after requests from local Senior Center staff. The diabetes program is scheduled in 4 of the communities. The PHN created health education fliers monthly for distribution on social media platforms in addition to a sharps disposal, nutrition, and diabetes education upon request. A list of the Environmental Justice Block Groups was created to ensure representation from member communities. The PHN participated in 18 blood pressure screenings.

## Activities completed by the shared public health nurse during FY24\*



\*During FY24, the shared public health nurse position was vacant until January 2024, resulting in lower than expected number of vaccine clinic participation

# Health Education



**March is NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH**

**START SMALL!**

Take a look at your current eating routine. Pick one or two things that you can switch to choose today that are rich in nutrition. Making small changes helps you with maintaining those new healthier habits.

**ADD VARIETY**

Try to add variety to your daily intake. Explore a new recipe! Try to get a rainbow of fruits and vegetables. Vary your protein routine with lean meats, fish or seafood, and even meatless meals!

MyPlate.gov is a great resource for nutrition info. Use the QR code to learn more!

Middlesex-Essex Public Health Collaborative

**April is Stress Awareness Month**

**Signs of High Stress**

- Difficulty sleeping
- Feeling anxious or worried
- Feeling irritable or moody
- Lack of energy
- Headaches
- Muscle tension or pain
- Stomach problems
- Racing thoughts

**Ways to Reduce Stress**

- Exercise
- Get fresh air
- Deep breathing exercises
- Eat a balanced diet
- Mindfulness and meditation
- Prioritize sleep
- Listen to music
- Talk with a friend or counselor

**Mental Health Resources**

If you are finding your stress is difficult to manage on your own, reach out for help. You are not alone!

Scan the QR code for help finding mental health supports in Massachusetts.

Middlesex-Essex Public Health Collaborative

The MEPHC public health nurse created monthly health education fliers to be shared virtually via social media. Topics included nutrition, mental health, high blood pressure, and sun safety.

Upon request, our nurse created sharps and unused medication disposal information fliers to be shared in North Andover. A general proper sharps disposal education was created and distributed for all communities.

**Do's and Don'ts PROPER SHARPS DISPOSAL**

**DO'S**

- DO immediately place used needles and other sharps in a sharps container.
- DO use an FDA-cleared sharps disposal container.
- DO contact your local health department for sharps disposal programs in your area.
- DO keep sharps disposal containers out of reach of children and pets.
- DO seal sharps disposal containers when disposing of them and label them properly.
- DO carry a portable sharps disposal container for travel.

**DON'TS**

- DON'T throw loose needles and other sharps into the trash.
- DON'T flush needles and other sharps down the toilet.
- DON'T put needles and other sharps in your recycling bin.
- DON'T try to remove, bend, break, or recap needles used by another person.
- DON'T attempt to remove the needle, the needle could fall, fly off, or get lost and injure someone.

More information about proper sharps disposal available from your local Health Department.

Middlesex-Essex Public Health Collaborative

**SHARPS DISPOSAL**

Items may be dropped off at the following locations:

- NORTH ANDOVER FIRE HEADQUARTERS**  
• 785 CHICKERING ROAD
- NORTH ANDOVER HEALTH DEPARTMENT**  
• 120 MAIN STREET (DURING NORMAL BUSINESS HOURS)

**MORE INFO:** Carolyn Lam Public Health Nurse (978) 688-9540

**For proper disposal you will be required to have:**

- The sharps must be empty (containing no medication)
- Sharps must be in a covered puncture resistant container, they must be closable, leak proof on sides and bottom, and labeled or color-coded.
- If you do not have an approved sharps container the NA Fire Department sells them at a cost of \$2.

If you are dropping off a sharps container make sure that you see someone first to assist you with putting the container in the kiosk. You must have the proper container and it must be able to fit in the kiosk. If it does not fit, you must take it back with you. **NO EXCEPTIONS.**

**UNUSED MEDICATIONS DISPOSAL**

Items may be dropped off at the following location:

- NORTH ANDOVER POLICE DEPARTMENT**  
• 1475 OSGOOD STREET

Please see the **NAPD Officer in Charge** prior to depositing medications in kiosk.

**Accepted medications:**

- Prescription medications
- Prescription patches
- Over the counter medicines
- Vitamins
- Pet medications

**NOT accepted medications:**

- Liquid medications
- Needles
- Thermometers
- Medications for businesses or clinics
- Aerosol cans
- Inhalers
- Hydrogen peroxide
- Illegal drugs

**DO NOT JUST DROP OFF A CONTAINER, RANDOM SHARPS OR MEDICATIONS IN THE LOBBY**

**MORE INFO:**

- (978) 688-9540
- [clam@northandoverma.gov](mailto:clam@northandoverma.gov)

Middlesex-Essex Public Health Collaborative

**PLAT MWEN**

PLAT MWEN se yon rapèl vwayaj pou te chita li an sante nan chak wèl gwo pou manje yo. PLAT MWEN rekòmande:

- Pou pitit ou gran mwaye yo fè ak legim
- Konsepte sou fwi ankò yo (pa egzanp, fra, nan fwa, nan bwat, oswa sèk)
- Varye legim ou yo
- Mwaye grenn ou yo ta dwe grenn ankò.

Ale sou MyPlate.gov pou plis enfòmasyon.

**MANJE BYEN VIV AN SANTE**

Fason senp pou amelyore nitrisyon w ak viv an sante!

**KONTAKTE NOU**

Depatman Sante Haverhill (978) 374-2390 X 3915

Middlesex-Essex Public Health Collaborative

**MI PLATO**

Mi plato es un recordatorio visual para tomar decisiones saludables de cada una de las cinco grupos de alimentos. Mi plato recomienda:

- Hacer que la mitad de tu plato sean frutas y verduras.
- Elegir leche en frías enteras (por ejemplo, helados, yogur, queso, empanadas o salsas).
- Verificar sus etiquetas.
- La mitad de las calorías deben ser calorías integrales.

Visita a MyPlate.gov para obtener más información.

Para obtener más información sobre hábitos alimentarios saludables, hable con su proveedor de atención médica, visite [myplate.gov](http://myplate.gov) o comuníquese con su departamento de salud local para conocer los recursos locales disponibles para usted.

**COMER SANO VIVIR SANO**

¡Formas sencillas de mejorar tu nutrición y vivir más saludablemente!

**CONTÁCTENOS**

Departamento de Salud de Haverhill (978) 374-2390 X 3915

Middlesex-Essex Public Health Collaborative

\*Translation by Canva

Health education pamphlets were created with nutrition information for Haverhill. This pamphlet was created in English and translated into Spanish and Haitian Creole as these are the most prevalent languages in the community. The pamphlets were printed and distributed at local food pantries and other community organizations.

# Health Education

## BLOOD PRESSURE SCREENING

FREE

APRIL 3RD  
9:00 AM - 11:00 AM  
Public Library



Free blood pressure screenings offered at the North Andover Senior Center and Reading Library created an opportunity for 1:1 health education to community members.



HANDS-ONLY  
**CPR class**

HAVERHILL  
CITIZEN CENTER  
CONFERENCE ROOM  
WILLOW STREET

THURSDAY  
**APRIL 18**  
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM  
Middlesex  
Public Health

Stop the Bleed class was offered at the Memorial Hall Library in Andover. Hands-only CPR class was offered at Haverhill's Citizen Center and Andover's Senior Center



# Diabetes Education

**DIABETES & OLDER ADULTS**

Lea Anne Pero, MPH, BSN, RN

**Middlesex-Essex**  
Public Health Collaborative

A diabetes education program was offered to all communities. The presentation focused on diagnosis, risk factors, signs and symptoms, and special considerations for older adults. Nutrition, physical activity, and local resources available to community members were discussed. The program also provided an opportunity for participants watch best practices for glucometer use.

## TYPE II DIABETES PREVENTION

**SET A WEIGHT LOSS GOAL**

- If you are overweight and have prediabetes, shedding just 5% of your weight can help reverse prediabetes.
- Eating well, exercising, and losing weight may also lower your A1C.
- Setting a weight loss goal will help you track progress.

**MAKE A NUTRITION PLAN FOR HEALTHIER EATING**

- Eat more non-starchy vegetables, fruits, lean protein, and whole grains.
- Skip the sugary drinks, choose water, coffee, or tea instead.
- Learn about portion sizes.
- Eat a variety of foods.

**KEEP MOVING!**

- Set an attainable movement goal.
- Choose an activity that you enjoy.
- Make a plan, put it on the calendar, or ask a friend to join!

**GET SUPPORT AND LOOK AHEAD**

- Ask for support from friends and family.
- Go online- there are many free resources.
- Check in with your healthcare provider.

Middlesex-Essex Public Health Collaborative | Follow us! @MEPHC\_MA

## HIGH BLOOD SUGAR

Keeping your blood sugar under control is important. Too much sugar in your blood, for too long, can cause serious health problems.

**Common Causes:** Too much food, not taking enough insulin or diabetes pills, being less active than normal, stress or illness.

## SYMPTOMS INCLUDE:

- WEAKNESS
- HEADACHE
- BLURRED VISION
- THIRST & DRY MOUTH
- FREQUENT URINATION

## WHAT TO DO:

- Check your blood sugar.
- Continue to take your medicine.
- Follow your meal plan.
- Drink lots of water.
- Exercise - if you can.

If your blood sugar is higher than your goal and you don't know why, call your doctor or health clinic right away.

## LOW BLOOD SUGAR

A low blood sugar can happen quickly. If not treated right away, low blood sugar can cause a medical emergency. You can even pass out.

**Common causes:** Skip a meal or not eat enough food; too much insulin or diabetes pills; more active than usual.

## SYMPTOMS INCLUDE:

- SWEATING & PALLOR
- LACK OF COORDINATION
- SLEEPINESS
- HUNGER
- IRRITABILITY

## WHAT TO DO:

**68** Check your blood sugar right away. If it is below 70, treat for low blood sugar. If you can't check, treat anyway to be safe.

**108** Treat by eating 3 packets or 1 tablespoon of regular sugar, 4 ounces of regular fruit juice, or 6 ounces of regular (not diet) soda.

Check your blood sugar in 15 minutes. If it is still low (below 70), treat again. If you keep having problems and you don't know why, call your doctor or health clinic.

The above health education fliers were created by the nurse and were provided to participants which covered prediabetes risk self-test, type II diabetes prevention, and high blood sugar and low blood sugar symptoms and action steps.

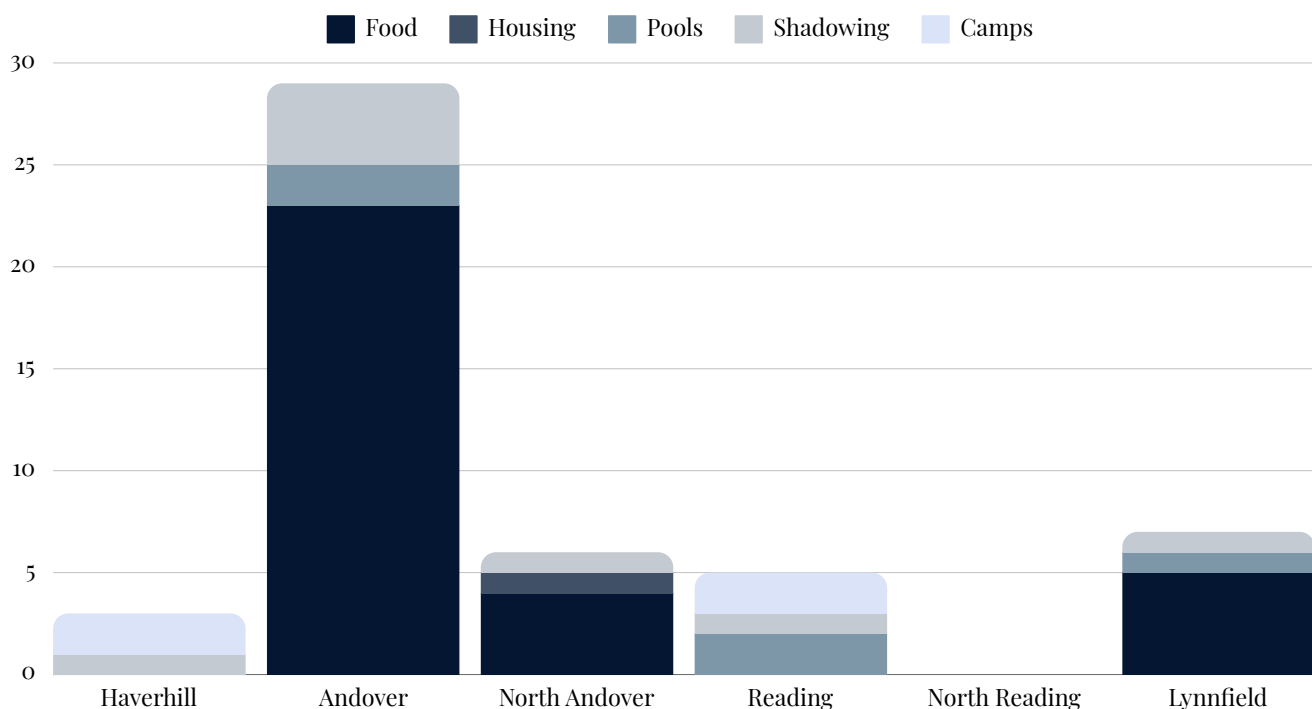


# Environmental Health

In Massachusetts, local health departments are responsible for enforcing sanitary codes. The SAPHE grant program aims to support local health departments in their goal to fulfill all required inspections through funding for additional inspectional staff. This fiscal year, the MEPHC employed a full-time health inspector who was available to local health departments for assignment. In addition to inspections, shared staff helped develop the following policies and procedures to aid local health departments in meeting the performance standards and workforce standards set forth by the state.

- Health Inspector Onboarding Standard Operating Guide
  - This outlines the steps necessary for a new Health Inspector to meet the Workforce Standards
- Noise Complaint Investigation Standards Operating Guide
  - This outlines the required steps for investigating noise complaints. Additionally, it provides consistent and compliant inspection forms and orders to correct.

## Inspections completed by the shared inspector during FY24\*



\*During FY24, the shared health inspector position was staffed for a total of four months resulting in lower than expected inspection numbers.



# Highlights

## **EQUIPMENT PURCHASES**

Using PHE funds, the MEPHC purchased equipment for local and regional use. Purchasing equipment ensures that all staff have reliable access to the equipment necessary to perform their duties. Some examples of equipment purchases are:

- Food protection equipment like thermometers and max-temp dish machine readers for all inspectors
- A regional Larson Davis 821 noise meter
- A regional set of CPR dummies including four (4) adults, four (4) children, and four (4) AED

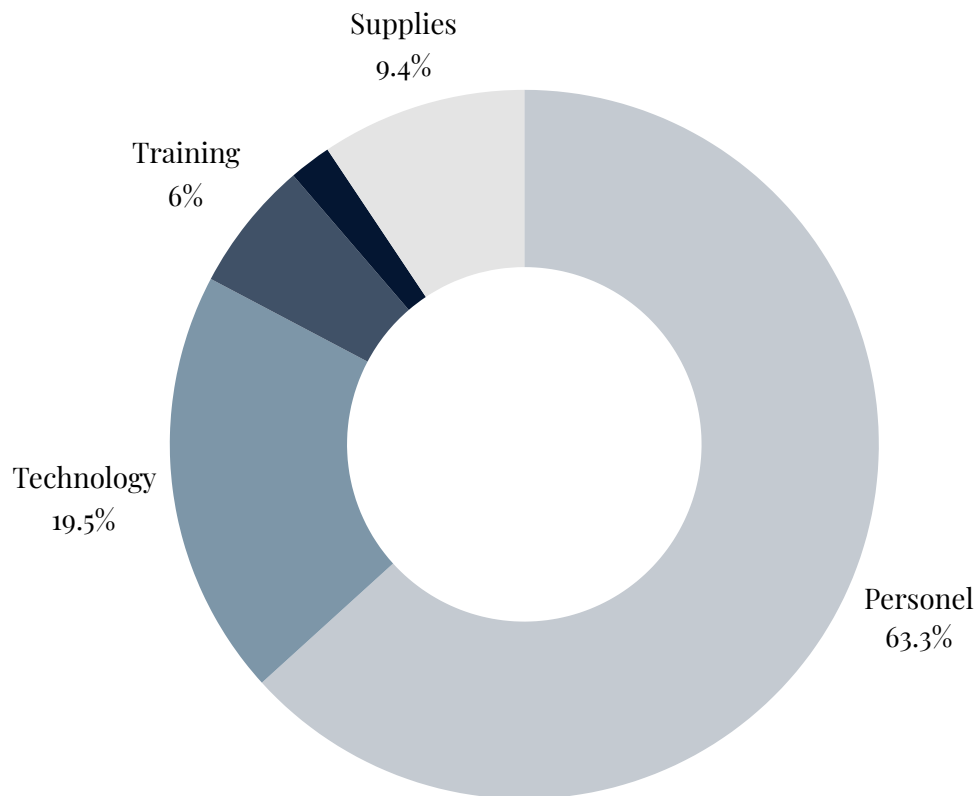
## **TRAINING**

Funds from the Public Health Excellence (PHE) grant offered increased opportunities for local health department staff to attend training. Here are some highlights of the training opportunities:

- Six (6) staff attended the FDA Self-Assessment and Verification Audit workshop in April 2024
- Three (3) nurses attended the MAPHN annual conference
- Nine (9) staff attended various MHOA seminars and trainings
- Two (2) staff received their Certified Pool Operator certificate
- One staff attended a Title 5 certification course
- Eight (8) staff are registered to attend the 2024 MHOA annual conference

# Spending Overview

**FY24 Award**  
**\$532,564**



In FY24, the Middlesex-Essex Public Health Collaborative was awarded \$532,564.71. In FY24, approximately 40% of funding was spent. In addition to the delay in funding disbursement, difficult recruiting resulted in a significant under-spending on personnel. We budgeted for three full-time positions - a shared services coordinator, a shared inspector, and a public health nurse. The shared health inspector was vacant for eight (8) of the twelve (12) months of the year due to difficulty recruiting and staff turnover. The public health nurse was hired part-time in January 2025.

As highlighted earlier in the report, funds were used to send staff across all six municipalities to training opportunities in food safety, Title V, nursing, and more. Additionally, we purchased the Relavent software for food inspections, housing inspections, and pool inspections. With all six communities using the same software, the regional inspector can easily complete inspections and provide the local municipality with seamless digital copies of the inspections. Overtime, this software will help us establish uniform inspections across the region.