

ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024

**Health Education
& Outreach Unit**



GARRETT COUNTY
HEALTH DEPARTMENT

1025 Memorial Drive
Oakland, MD 21550

OUR MISSION

Promote wellness and the prevention of risky behaviors¹ so that Garrett County residents live longer, healthier lives.

BACKGROUND

Health Education and Outreach (HEO) staff participated in a series of departmental meetings from January 2019 to December 2019 to develop a strategic plan and a framework to guide decision-making and resource allocation for the unit. The strategic plan and framework are used to set priorities, focus energy and resources, and ensure that wellness and prevention efforts target risk factors that contribute to the greatest number of preventable deaths. The plan is a five-year plan and will be revised and updated for fiscal year 2025.

IMPLEMENTATION

The priority risk factors that were identified by staff through the planning process include:

- Prevent or reduce **obesity**
- Prevent or reduce **tobacco** use
- Prevent or reduce **alcohol** use
- Prevent or reduce **opioid and prescription drug** misuse
- Increase access to and use of **preventive screenings and support services**

Although the Health Education and Outreach Unit (HEO) addresses additional risk factors, through the strategic planning process, staff selected the top five factors listed above based on magnitude of the problem, availability of interventions, and economic and social impact. Risk factors that staff continue to monitor and address in a lesser capacity include teen pregnancy, unintentional injury (motor vehicle and bicycle safety, poison control, fire safety, fall prevention), adverse childhood experiences and marijuana use.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Members of the community benefit from the services of the HEO Unit through many strategies and programs. The staff plan, coordinate, facilitate, direct, or assist with after school programs, community education, parent education, worksite wellness, community planning groups, school health and wellness, diet consultations, policy change initiatives, Youth in Action Teams, harm reduction activities, and public information campaigns that relate back to the mission of promoting wellness and the prevention of risky behaviors¹ so that Garrett County residents live longer, healthier lives.

Activities that support the strategies and programs include tobacco treatment services, vendor compliance checks, overdose response programs, fitness testing, mini health fairs, distribution of fentanyl test strips and Narcan, prescription drug take backs, blood pressure checks, Play Hard Live Clean campaign, presentations, classes, trainings, and health promotion events.

To measure the impact of these services, the staff diligently and continually record all performance and assessment activities in departmental databases. The overall goals that indicate success for HEO are as follows:

- Provide education to change knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors to improve health and reduce risky behaviors.
- Facilitate changes in organizational practices or policies to improve health and reduce risky behaviors.
- Increase access to and use of services and screenings to improve health and reduce risky behaviors.

The results of staff's efforts in Fiscal Year 2024 (July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024) are summarized in the pages that follow.

EVALUATION

HEO staff will continue to develop and implement prevention and wellness initiatives that work on individual, environmental and system levels to improve health and reduce risky behaviors. To accomplish this, staff have set forth overarching goals and annual objectives.

Goal 1: Provide education to change knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors to improve health and reduce risky behaviors.

Objective 1.1 Annually by June 30 increase the % of youth and adults that improve their knowledge from pre to post-test by 10%.

Objective 1.2 Annually by June 30 increase the % of youth and adults that increase their daily physical activity from pre to post-test by 10%.

Objective 1.3 Annually by June 30 increase the % of youth and adults that increase fruit and vegetable intake from pre to post-test by 10%.

Objective 1.4 Annually by June 30 increase the % of adults that have either no alcohol in the home, locked up alcohol in the home, or closely monitored alcohol in the home from pre to post-test by 10%.

Objective 1.5 Annually by June 30 increase the % of adults that have locked up their prescriptions or, if expired or unused, have disposed of them from pre to post-test by 10%.

Objective 1.6 Annually by June 30 maintain tobacco compliance rate of 90%.

Objective 1.7 Annually by June 30 increase the % of adults that do not smoke around their children at any time from pre to post-test by 10%.

Goal 2: Facilitate changes in organizational practices or policies⁸ to improve health and reduce risky behaviors.

Objective 2.1 Annually by June 30 facilitate at least 15 healthy changes in organizational practices.

Objective 2.2 Annually by June 30 facilitate at least 5 policy changes as evidenced by written agreements or written policies.

Goal 3: Increase access to and use of services and screenings to improve health and reduce risky behaviors.

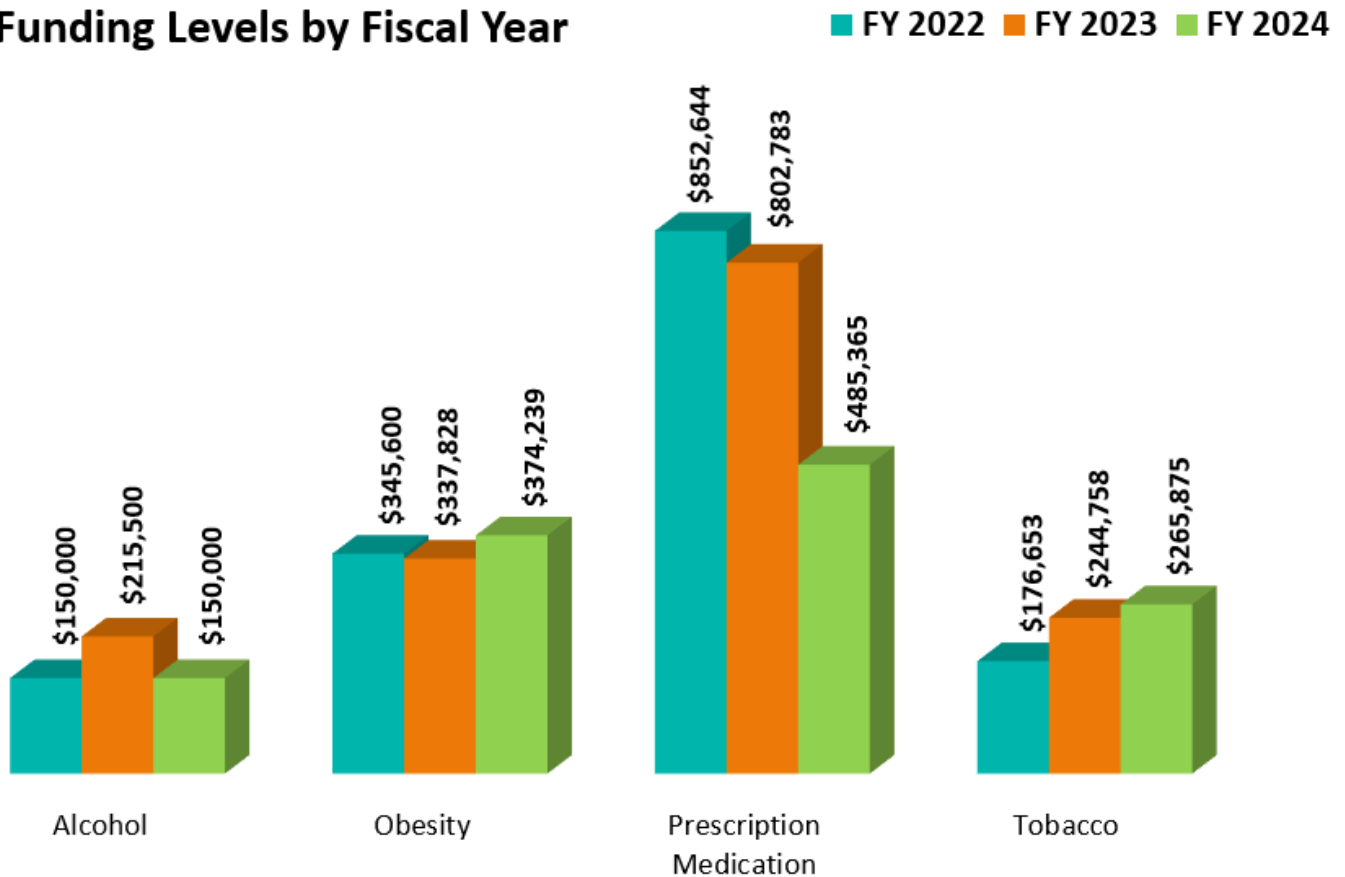
Objective 3.1 Annually by June 30 complete at least 500 referrals to preventive screenings or health services.

Objective 3.2 Annually by June 30 ensure that at least 20% of referrals result in follow-through to preventive screenings or health services.

HEALTH EDUCATION AND OUTREACH FUNDING

The HEO unit is funded by grants from state and federal agencies. Some state grants are ongoing, while others are competitive and temporary. All federal grants are competitive and are typically awarded for 3-5 year grant cycles.

Topic Funding Levels by Fiscal Year



Of note:

- The primary source of funds for alcohol prevention is the Substance Abuse Block Grant from the Maryland Department of Health.
- The primary source of funds for obesity prevention is Core public health funds from the Maryland Department of Health. We also receive funds from the Cancer and Chronic Disease Bureau of the Maryland Department of Health.
- Due to the nation's opioid addiction and overdose epidemic, the federal government has provided an increase in available funds to facilitate state- and territory-level efforts to ensure the full continuum of prevention, harm reduction, treatment and long-term recovery services.
- The primary source of funds for tobacco prevention is the Cigarette Restitution Fund Program from the Maryland Department of Health.

DATA COLLECTION

Every effort was made to follow best practices to collect data as outlined in the logic models in the HEO Strategic Plan. Data was collected during the fiscal year July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024. Staff entered data from their community events, after school programs, client interactions, campaigns, and media communications into a departmental database which tracked the activities throughout the year.

The HEO Health pre-survey, administered in September and October to targeted groups, and the HEO Health post-survey, administered six to nine months later to the same targeted groups, contain the data that is the basis for most of the outcomes reported. The targeted groups include those whom HEO staff have the opportunity to educate and interact with on an ongoing basis. The youth who are included in those targeted groups are those in after school programs, Youth in Action Teams, Community Planning Groups, and Garrett County high school students who are in a Sexual Risk Avoidance Education (SRAE) class. The adults who are included are those in Community Planning Groups, worksites or community groups whom Outreach Workers consistently visit, and parents of after school participants. Only data that represents both pre- and post-results is reported.

In the pages that ensue, *outputs*, displayed throughout with green numbers, are defined as activities or items produced or completed by HEO staff. *Outcomes*, displayed with blue numbers, are defined as measures of outputs, or the level of performance or achievements resulting from the outputs. Every effort was made to accurately interpret and disseminate the findings in this report.

ALCOHOL

Excessive alcohol use² can be harmful to health. Youth who drink alcohol are more likely to experience problems in school, unplanned sexual activity, increased risk of suicide, increased risk of alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes, and changes in brain development. Binge drinking, among adults or underage persons, is associated with many problems, including unintentional injuries, violence, fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, chronic diseases, and alcohol use disorders. The staff of HEO use strategies such as campaigns, coalitions, community education, after school programs, parent education, policy change initiatives, school health, and worksite wellness to reduce risky behaviors related to alcohol use and abuse. (Citation: National Research Council and Institute of Medicine. *Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility*)

In Fiscal Year 2024 (July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024):

- ◇ 2,459 people were educated through 148 alcohol prevention presentations, classes, trainings, or events; and 9 media occurrences³
- ◇ 128 digital media posts⁴ were placed, engaging 596 people

Alcohol Outcomes for Adult and Youth who completed the pre and post HEO Health Survey		
	Adult	Youth
Increased knowledge of alcohol prevention (101 adults, 220 youth)	18%	22%
Changed their perception of Garrett County alcohol use to be more accurate (101 adults, 220 youth)	33%	30%
Adults decreased youth access to alcohol by locking, disposing, or monitoring it (101 adults)	30%	N/A
Youth changed their intent to drink alcohol to "not likely" (220 youth)	N/A	15%

- ◇ 461 high school students completed the alcohol section of the HEO Youth Health Survey
- ◇ 393 youth pledged to abstain from underage drinking
- ◇ 441 adults pledged to monitor and secure alcohol
- ◇ 157 resource packets⁶ were distributed
- ◇ 17 changes occurred in organizational practices⁸ at worksites or in community organizations; one town allows for the HEO prevention messages in their social media and the others were 'Store, Monitor, Secure' banners and 'Communities Working Together . . . Preventing Underage Drinking' signs displayed in Garrett County towns and parks.



Youth report that the most common source for alcohol is from social sources such as friends, relatives, or other adults. What's In Your Cabinet? Properly store, monitor, and secure all alcohol and medications in the home.

CHRONIC DISEASE AND OBESITY

Obesity is closely linked to or causes a large number of health conditions, including heart disease, stroke, diabetes, high blood pressure, asthma, sleep apnea, gallstones, kidney stones, infertility, and as many as 11 types of cancers. Evidence shows that obesity prevention policy and environmental change efforts should focus on facilitating a handful of key behaviors: limiting unhealthy foods, increasing physical activity, limiting screen time, improving sleep, and reducing stress. The staff of HEO use strategies such as campaigns, coalitions, community education, weight loss support groups, after school programs, parent education, policy change initiatives, school health, and worksite wellness to promote healthy choices and reduce risky behaviors related to being overweight and/or obese. (Citations: Centers for Disease Control, Institute of Medicine. *Bridging the Evidence Gap in Obesity Prevention*)

In Fiscal Year 2024 (July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024):

- ◇ 1,549 blood pressures were checked on 462 different adults with 35% of adults participating in regular blood pressure checks⁷
- ◇ 3,076 people were educated on healthy eating and physical activity through 192 healthy eating or physical activity presentations, classes, trainings, or events; and 53 media occurrences³
- ◇ 96 youth were fitness tested in after school programs
- ◇ 22 diet consults were conducted
- ◇ 60 digital media posts⁴ were placed, engaging 2,170 people
- ◇ 4 changes occurred in organizational practices⁸ at worksites or in community organizations; one was a walking trail added at the Splash Pad in Mountain Lake Park, one was a town adding HEO prevention messaging to their newsletter, and two were doctor offices now offering partnership to use cognitive tests for Alzheimer's and Dementia

Obesity Outcomes for Adult and Youth who completed the pre and post HEO Health Survey		
Healthy Eating	Adult	Youth
Increased knowledge of healthy eating (101 adults, 220 youth)	31%	19%
Changed their perception of eating breakfast to be more favorable (101 adults, 220 youth)	25%	32%
Increased their daily intake of fruits (101 adults, 220 youth)	44%	39%
Increased their daily intake of vegetables (101 adults, 220 youth)	44%	30%
Increased their daily water intake (101 adults, 220 youth)	41%	5%
Physical Activity	Adult	Youth
Increased knowledge of physical activity (101 adults, 220 youth)	33%	18%
Changed their perception of Garrett County physical activity to be more accurate (220 youth)	N/A	25%
Increased their daily physical activity (101 adults, 220 youth)	33%	14%

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CHRONIC DISEASE AND OBESITY *continued*

- ◇ 29 adult Body Mass Indexes (BMIs) were checked
- ◇ 1,105 youth completed the Play Hard, Live Clean⁵ water/milk challenge at the elementary schools and no-caffeine challenge at the middle schools
- ◇ 461 high school students completed the obesity section of the HEO Youth Health Survey
- ◇ 30 adults participated regularly in Take Off Pounds Sensibly (TOPS) weekly chapter meetings
- ◇ 36 adults completed the four-month blood pressure self-monitoring program, Healthy Heart Ambassadors (HHA)

Eating a variety of fruits and vegetables, including a variety of colors, may help manage weight, cholesterol and blood pressure.

CDC studies show physical activity can improve thinking, help you sleep better, and reduce the risk of depression and anxiety.



Real People. Real Weight Loss.®

Helping Millions to Take Off Pounds Sensibly Since 1948
www.tops.org

Two TOPS Chapters in Garrett County are supported by the Garrett County Health Department and are funded from the Maryland Department of Health Chronic Disease Prevention division.



OPIOID & PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Prescription drug misuse can have serious medical consequences. Increases in prescription drug misuse over the last 15 years are reflected in emergency room visits, overdose deaths associated with prescription drugs, and treatment admissions for prescription drug use disorders, the most severe form of which is an addiction. (National Institute on Drug Abuse) To fight prescription drug abuse, the staff of HEO aims to first prevent drug misuse and abuse and secondly, increase access to and support for substance use disorder treatment and recovery services.

In Fiscal Year 2024 (July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024)

- ◇ **3,382** people were educated through **104** opioid¹¹ or prescription drug misuse prevention presentations, classes, trainings, or events; and **49** media occurrences³
- ◇ **144** digital media posts⁴ were placed, engaging **2,399** people
- ◇ **922** resource packets¹² were distributed
- ◇ **4** changes in organizational practices occurred at worksites or in community organizations; all four were new partners in dispensing Narcan

Opioid & Prescription Drug Outcomes for Adult and Youth who completed the pre and post HEO Health Survey		
	Adult	Youth
Increased knowledge of prescription or opioid drug prevention (101 adults, 220 youth)	15%	13%
Changed their perception about addiction to be more sensitive (101 adults, 220 youth)	13%	13%
Increased adult medication safety by disposing, locking, or monitoring prescriptions (101 adults)	41%	N/A
Youth changed their intent to misuse prescription drugs to "not likely" (220 youth)	N/A	2%

- ◇ **201.5** pounds of unwanted drugs were collected at drop boxes, a 37% increase from last fiscal year
- ◇ **461** high school students completed the prescription drug misuse section of the HEO Youth Health Survey
- ◇ **754** Deterra pouches¹⁴, lock boxes¹⁵, and/or timer caps¹⁶ were distributed
- ◇ **33** overdose response trainings occurred, **425** people were trained, and **785** units of Narcan were dispensed
- ◇ **7** clients were linked to care as a result of harm reduction services (dental and transportation)

One Pill Can Kill. More than half of the overdoses in Garrett County in 2023 involved opioids.



TOBACCO

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of disease, disability, and death in the United States, yet addiction to nicotine from cigarette smoking, smokeless tobacco (chew), cigars, and vaping (using e-cigarettes) is still a major public health problem. To combat the high rates of nicotine use in Garrett County, the staff of HEO promote tobacco control interventions including actions to prevent youth from starting to use tobacco, smoke-free environments, and programs to help tobacco users quit.

In Fiscal Year 2024 (July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024):

- ◇ **160** individuals participated in tobacco treatment services¹⁷, including **137** students who were caught in possession of a nicotine product on school property
- ◇ **23** individuals began a 6-week tobacco treatment program and **12** individuals completed the program (**52%** completion rate)
- ◇ **36** tobacco licensees were assessed and educated about tobacco laws
- ◇ **123** compliance checks¹⁸ were conducted on licensees resulting in **96%** compliance
- ◇ **2,555** people were educated through **159** tobacco prevention presentations, classes, trainings, or events; and **29** media occurrences³
- ◇ **101** digital media posts⁴ were placed, engaging **1,109** people

Tobacco Outcomes for Adult and Youth who completed the pre and post HEO Health Survey		
	Adult	Youth
Increased knowledge of tobacco prevention (101 adults, 220 youth)	37%	11%
Changed their perception about Garrett County tobacco use to be more accurate (101 adults, 220 youth)	22%	28%
Adults reduced their tobacco use (101 adults)	9%	N/A
Youth changed their intent to vape to "not likely" (220 youth)	N/A	7%

- ◇ **461** high school students completed the tobacco section of the HEO Youth Health Survey
- ◇ **46** youth pledged to abstain from nicotine use
- ◇ **38** resource packets were distributed¹⁹
- ◇ **4** changes occurred in organizational practices⁸ at schools, worksites, or in community organizations; one allows posting HEO prevention messages on social media, one was displaying a 'Lungs to Last a Lifetime' banner at sport events, and two were placing cigarette butt containers in public areas



"I've learned a lot in the classes and it's great hearing what works from other people who are going through the same thing at the same time"
~ cessation client

INCREASE ACCESS TO AND USE OF PREVENTIVE SCREENING AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Getting preventive care reduces the risk for diseases, disabilities, and death – yet many people don't access recommended preventive health care services. Services like screenings, dental check-ups, and vaccinations are key to keeping people of all ages healthy. The staff of HEO focuses on improving health by helping people get timely, high-quality health care services. In their everyday work, one of the goals of staff is to connect Garrett County residents with preventive screening and/or support services. When possible, staff check back with contacts to determine if they have followed through with referrals or need additional assistance.

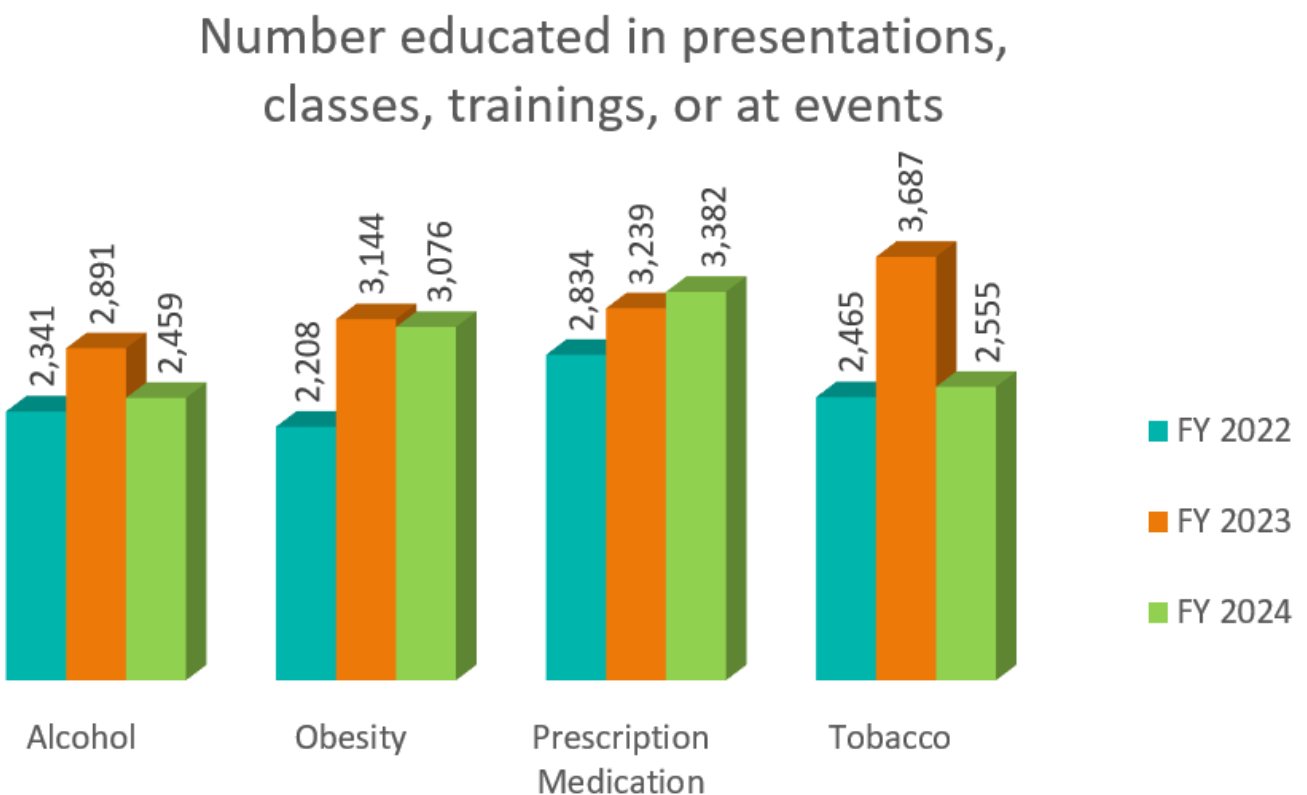
	# Referrals To/For	# Follow Through	% Follow Through
GCHD tobacco treatment services	74	5	7%
MD Quit Line	76	8	11%
Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP)	2	0	0%
Cancer Prevention, Education, Screening, and Treatment Program (CPEST)	9	0	0%
Lung CT scan based on pack year history	6	0	0%
Substance use disorder treatment and/or recovery services (outside GCHD)	1	1	100%
Follow-up for blood pressure	71	13	18%
Social Services programs	8	4	50%
Community Action programs	30	15	50%
MD Coalition of Families programs	2	1	50%
Other GCHD Units	131	42	32%
Other	199	56	28%
Totals	609	145	24%

During Fiscal Year 2024 (July 1, 2023- June 30, 2024), staff referred **609** Garrett County residents to a support service or a preventive screening. While only **24%** were *known* to follow through, it is very possible that there were more. Staff are only able to follow up with clients with whom they have repeat contact with. Sometimes a referral may be the result of an incoming phone call, a one time client, or a passer-by at a health fair or community event. Among the 145 successes were connections to health insurance, dental services, flu/COVID/RSV vaccine, high blood pressure checks, housing and energy assistance, and behavioral health services.

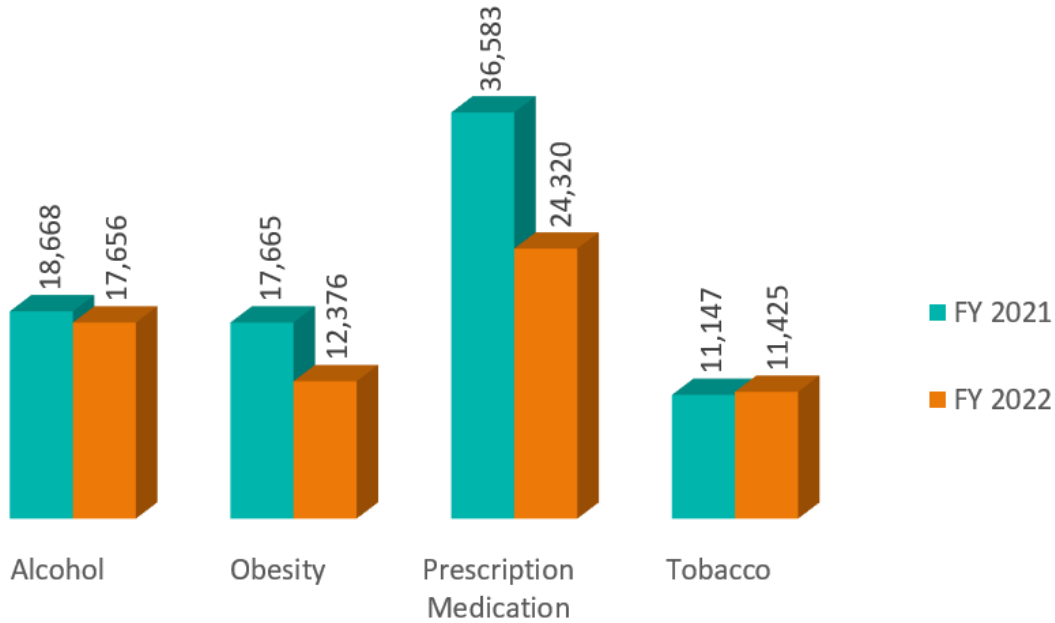


NUMBER EDUCATED IN PRESENTATIONS, CLASSES, TRAININGS, OR AT EVENTS

Throughout the year, HEO staff educate community members through presentations, classes, trainings, or at events, about the priority areas - prevent/reduce obesity, prevent/reduce tobacco use, prevent/reduce alcohol use, and prevent/reduce opioid and prescription drug misuse. The chart below illustrates the number of community members educated by topic area and fiscal year.



Number Reached by Digital Media

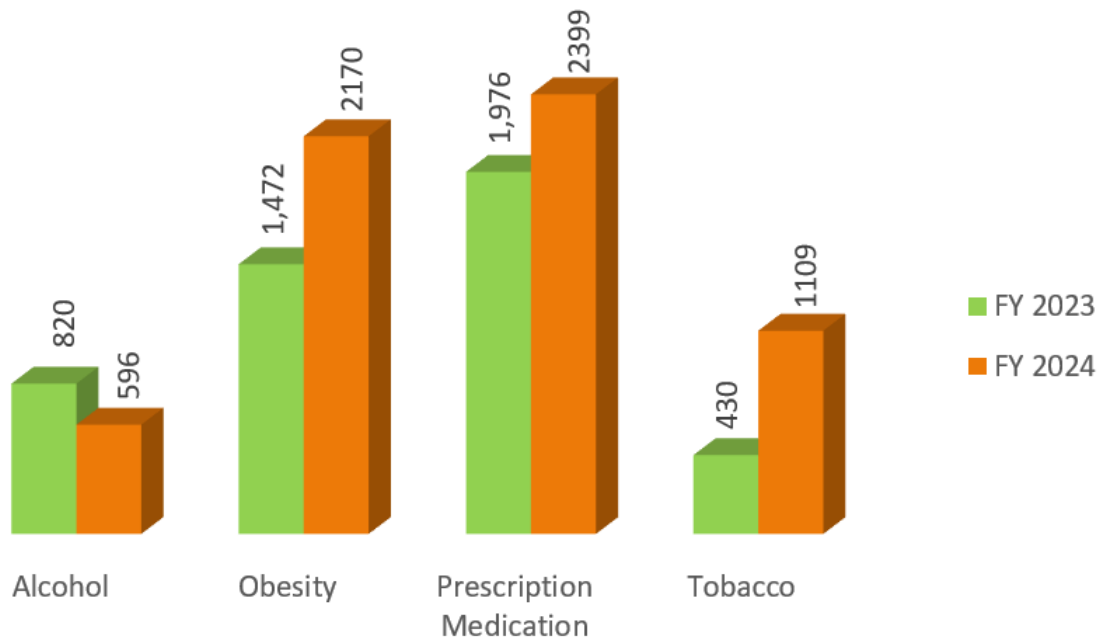


Number reached by digital media

Another method used by HEO staff to disseminate information and promote services is digital media which includes mass emails, website posts, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. When in-person education became challenging during the COVID-19 pandemic, digital media was a valuable tool for reaching members of the public. Prior to Fiscal Year 2021, the number reached through digital media was not tracked.

Some evidence of the impact of digital media can be gleaned from the number of people reached that then complete online pledges, surveys or challenges or those who comment or share a post or lastly, those who then register for a class. This is referred to as “engagements”, and was tracked for the first time in Fiscal Year 2023.

Number Engaged by Digital Media



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

¹ **Risky behaviors** - those health behaviors that potentially expose people to harm and prevent them from living their healthiest life (e.g. smoking, drinking alcohol excessively, physical inactivity, lack of fruits and vegetables)

² **Excessive alcohol use** includes:

- Binge drinking, having 4 or more drinks on an occasion for a woman or 5 or more drinks on an occasion for a man.
- Heavy drinking, defined as 8 or more drinks per week for a woman or 15 or more drinks per week for a man.
- Any alcohol use by pregnant women or anyone younger than 21.

³ **Media occurrences** - includes public information that is generated by the HEO staff and released in the form of advertisements in the newspaper or radio, billboards, press releases, etc. This does not include digital or social media. (Note: this number stopped being tracked in March 2024)

⁴ **Digital media posts** - digital and social media posts, including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter

⁵ **Play Hard Live Clean** - a healthy lifestyle campaign for Garrett County kindergarten through twelfth grade students

⁶ **Resource packets for alcohol control** - packets distributed to alcohol licensees to promote safe alcohol serving and selling practices; includes resources such as ID wristbands and signage; could also refer to packets distributed to adults to discourage the sharing of alcohol with minors

⁷ **Regular blood pressure checks** - any participant in blood pressure monitoring services who participates in 50% or more of the opportunities to have a blood pressure check

⁸ **Organizational practices or policies** - the execution or implementation of a plan or an idea in an organization; in HEO, the organizational practices that staff try to impact are those that may lead to improved health for employees (e.g. designation of walking trails inside or outside a facility, vending machines with healthy options, adoption of policies to prevent the use of tobacco or vaping devices). A policy is similar to an organizational practice except it is in written form, so a change would involve modifying, replacing, or repealing a written policy already in effect within an organization

⁹ **Mindfulness** - the practice of being present and fully engaged with whatever is happening at the moment

¹⁰ **Fitness assessments** - tests performed to measure an individual's body mass index, flexibility, blood pressure, heart rate, and/or cardiovascular endurance

¹¹ **Opioid** - a class of drugs used to treat moderate to severe pain

¹² **Resource packets for prescription drug misuse and prevention** - packets distributed to pharmacies, physicians, treatment and recovery services, law enforcement, and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) providers with overdose response resources

¹³ **Narcan/Naloxone** - a medication used to treat a narcotic overdose in an emergency situation

Proper storage and disposal tools:

¹⁴ **Deterra pouch** - carbon-activated pouch that deactivates wet and dry prescription and over-the-counter drugs

¹⁵ **Lock box** - a secure container that ensures medication is only accessible to the prescription holder and helps reduce misuse of medication by others

¹⁶ **Timer cap** - a bottle cap that fits onto pill bottles and displays the time elapsed since the bottle was last opened; helps to prevent misuse of medication by others

¹⁷ **Tobacco treatment services** - services provided by staff of the health department to assist individuals with giving up nicotine

¹⁸ **Compliance check** - inspections of retailers to determine their compliance with federal laws and regulations, in this case with the Tobacco Sales to Minors law

¹⁹ **Resource packets for tobacco control** - packets distributed to tobacco retailers to promote compliance with the Tobacco 21 law; could also refer to a quit kit distributed to individuals from the public who express an interest in quitting tobacco

SERVICES OFFERED IN HEALTH EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

After School Programs

- Oakland (grades 3-8)
- Friendsville (grades 3-5)
- Grantsville (grades 3-5)

Anti-Stigma

Coalitions and Committees

- Garrett County Drug-Free Communities Coalition
- Opioid Intervention Team
- Overdose Fatality Review Team
- Steps to Better Health Committee

Community Education / Presentations

Community Planning Groups

- Accident Planning Group
- Club 21550
- Friendsville Community Partners
- Mtn Lake Partners

Diet Consults

Harm Reduction

Healthy Heart Ambassadors (HHA)

Overdose Response

Parent Education

Play Hard, Live Clean (PHLC)

- All Garrett County schools K-12

Prevention Education of Risky Behaviors:

- Alcohol, Chronic Disease and Obesity,
- Opioid and Prescription Drugs, Tobacco

Responsible Beverage Service Training (TIPS)

School Health & Wellness

- Fitness testing
- Go 4 Health at Garrett College
- Prevention education
- Sexual Risk Avoidance Education (SRAE)

Taking Pounds Off Sensibly (TOPS) Classes

Tobacco Treatment Services

Trauma Informed Care / Mind Body Wellness

Worksite or Community Wellness

- Appalachian Crossroads
- Broad Ford Elementary Staff
- Crellin Senior Center
- Fechheimer
- Friendsville Senior Center
- Garrett County Health Department
- Grantsville Senior Center
- Kitzmiller Senior Center
- Liberty Square
- Mary Browning Senior Center
- Meadows East
- Starner Hill
- Swanton Senior Center
- The Green Turtle
- The Hub Zone

Youth in Action (YIA)

- Northern High School
- Northern Middle School
- Southern High School
- Southern Middle School

HEALTH EDUCATION AND OUTREACH LOGOS



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