



KENDALL COUNTY
HEALTH DEPARTMENT

COMMUNITY HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD

January 7th, 2026 -Room 201

I. Call to Order

Mr. Pope called the meeting to order at 5:05p

Members present: Alexander Pope, Jennie Perry, Jennifer Pienkos, Melinda Lasky, Debra Wilmot

Members not present: William Nelson

Staff present: RaeAnn VanGundy, Rachel Hendrickson, Sara Karantonis, Lauren Crowl, and Sylvia Rubio

II. Welcome & Introductions

Mr. Pope welcomed all board members attending and introductions were conducted by everyone in attendance.

III. Public Comment

None

IV. Executive Director Comments

Mrs. VanGundy provided updates.

- CARF accreditation occurred in October 2025 for Mental Health Services. There are 1600 standards that were reviewed, with some modifications found during the survey. Some of the programs reviewed include Crisis Intervention Integrated Substance Abuse, Outpatient Treatment Substance Abuse, and Prevention for Substance Abuse. These programs are available for adults, children, and adolescents. The surveyors found that Kendall County Health Department offers essential resources for the community.
- Flu Preventive Measures- (see attached) IDPH news release Influenza rates climb statewide and need for taking precaution to keep people safe.
- Elise Dressel, Communicable Disease Coordinator, created The Germ Gazette for local school nurses which will be issued quarterly. It includes disease trend updates, surveillance reports, and QR codes for additional resources. Moving forward, the current issue of The

Germ Gazette will be shared at our quarterly meetings.

- Community Health Summit Breakfast will be held 1/29/2026. At this event, the IPLAN Partner Assessment data from July 2025 and community survey results from July – October 2025 will be reviewed. The top three health priorities for the next five years will be identified at this event with the help of community members,

V. Better Birth Outcomes (BBO)

- Lauren Crowl provided an overview of the new Better Birth Outcomes-Comprehensive (BBO-C) program, including program eligibility and goals. The goal of this program is to reduce maternal and infant morbidity and mortality. This program replaced the Family Case Management (FCM) program and works alongside IRIS.

VI. Food Borne Illness

- Sara Karantonis reviewed the process of Foodborne Illness investigations. The process involves the Environmental Health Services team (EHS) and Community Health Services team (CHS).
- When EHS is contacted by a Kendall County caller, the following information is obtained: when illness occurred, what food was eaten, and where it happened. This is forwarded to (CHS) and a three-day food history with the caller begins. EHS will look at their inspection records and note if the establishment had any documented findings.
- CHS and EHS collaborate in annual drills to discuss potential scenarios and identify steps to be taken to identify source(s) of infection.

VII. Comments/Announcements

Melinda Lasky- stated no changes in cleaning process since Covid, continue to wipe down, no flu spike noticed.

Jennie Perry- suggested KCHD to partner with provider at RUSH to write outpatient order for samples to be obtained/tested for flu which would also be cost effective for patients.

VIII. Adjournment

Mr. Pope motioned to adjourn the meeting at 5:50pm. Approved by voice.

Submitted by:

Sylvia Rubio

Administrative Assistant of Community Health Services

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 5, 2026

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KEY POINTS FOR MEDIA:

- Basic precautions, like getting immunizations, washing hands, and staying home when sick, can reduce the spread and help keep people safe
- Influenza activity in the state has moved to “Very High,” the most severe of five categories of respiratory illness spread
- First pediatric death from flu this season reported in Illinois

IDPH Urges Flu Shots, Other Preventive Measures as Influenza Rates Climb Statewide

Influenza climbs to “Very High” levels in state; COVID-19 also on the rise

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is urging residents to take precautions against the spread of influenza (flu) and other seasonal respiratory illnesses, as rates continue to climb across the state. Flu activity in the state has climbed to “Very High” in recent days, the most severe of five categories of respiratory illness activity, as defined by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In addition, COVID-19 rates have climbed to “Moderate” levels in Illinois. These trends are similar to what is being seen across the nation.

Illinois is also reporting its first influenza death in a child this season. [Nationally](#), there have been nine pediatric deaths due to influenza this season. During the 2024/2025 season, Illinois reported 12 pediatric deaths from influenza, 6 from RSV and 3 from COVID.

Data on seasonal respiratory illnesses across the state is available at IDPH’s [Seasonal Respiratory Illness Dashboard](#), which is updated weekly.

“Illinois is facing a significant winter surge in seasonal respiratory illnesses with flu activity at very high levels,” said IDPH Director Dr. Sameer Vohra. “Vaccinations remain the most effective tool to prevent severe illness from flu, COVID-19, and RSV. Simple steps like covering coughs and sneezes, washing hands regularly, staying home when sick if you are able, and improving ventilation are also critical to preventing further spread. If you develop symptoms, it is important to get evaluated and treated early in your illness, especially if you are 65 years or older, are a young child under the age of 2 years, are pregnant, have chronic conditions, or care for someone at risk. IDPH is monitoring the situation closely and working with our partners in public health and healthcare to protect Illinois families across the state.”

According to IDPH’s [Illinois Vaccination Coverage Dashboards](#), 21.9% of Illinoisans have received their flu shot this season, while only 6.8% have received COVID-19 immunization. Speak to your provider, pharmacist, or local health department for information on how you can obtain vaccines for yourself and loved ones. You can also find out more about vaccine availability in your area via the state’s [vaccine locator dashboard](#).

While anyone can potentially become seriously ill from seasonal respiratory illnesses, the most susceptible are the very young, very old, pregnant individuals, and those who are immunocompromised or have other underlying health conditions.

IDPH recommends the following steps to reduce your risk of contracting or spreading seasonal respiratory illness:

- Get immunized. With flu season usually peaking between December and February, and lasting until May, it's not too late to get your flu shot and other immunizations, such as for COVID-19 and RSV (for those who are eligible). For more information on respiratory illness vaccines, view IDPH's [immunization guidelines](#).
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water - it is one of the most effective ways to reduce spread of illness. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are also effective if soap and water are not available.
- Stay home when you are ill, if able, and wear a mask if not.
- Cover coughs and sneezes. Wearing a mask when ill will further help prevent viral spread. An N95 or comparable mask offers the best protection.
- Minimize close contact with sick people.
- Antiviral treatments can minimize symptoms and speed up recovery when started quickly after symptoms emerge. Antiviral treatments for flu are most effective when given within 48 hours of starting to feel ill. For COVID-19, treatment must be started within 5 to 7 days after symptoms appear. Older adults, young children and those who are pregnant or have [certain underlying conditions](#) are at risk for complications and should contact a healthcare provider to be assessed for the need for treatment as soon as possible.

You can learn more about infectious respiratory illnesses and best practices to prevent their spread on the IDPH website at [Infectious Respiratory Disease](#).

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THE GERM GAZETTE

Quarterly disease trend update for school & daycare health staff



Quarter 1

Jan-March 2026

In The Air: Respiratory Illness

What to do about it?

- Actively monitor for signs & symptoms of respiratory illness, and send ill children home
- Encourage frequent hand washing with soap & warm water (for at least 20 seconds)
- Teach proper cough & sneeze etiquette (i.e., use & dispose of tissue, or elbow/clothing if necessary)
- Enhance cleaning & disinfecting practices ([CDC guidance for early care and education settings](#))
- Notify the Kendall County Health Department of cases of reportable disease

SURVEILLANCE SPOTLIGHT:

2024-2025 Respiratory Season

During the 2024-2025 respiratory season in Kendall County, there were 29 cases of respiratory disease reported among pre-school and school-aged individuals (3-18 years old). Reported diseases included haemophilus influenzae (invasive disease), pertussis, streptococcus pneumoniae (invasive disease), and ICU admissions of COVID-19, influenza and RSV.

52%

of cases were hospitalized; of these, 87% were admitted to the intensive care unit (ICU) with COVID-19, influenza, or RSV.

48%

of cases were diagnosed with pertussis, also known as whooping cough

Data is as of 1/2/2026, is subject to change, and is sourced from Illinois' National Electronic Disease Surveillance System

What Are We Seeing Across Illinois?

From 12/21-12/27, respiratory illness activity in Illinois was high, during this time:

- Labs identified influenza as the most common viral infection
- Approximately half of all emergency department visits among children under 5 years old were due to broad acute respiratory illness (ARI); includes COVID-19, flu, RSV, & others)
- Children aged 5-17 years had the highest proportion of hospitalizations due to broad ARI among all groups*

2025-26 VACCINE COVERAGE

among Kendall County residents aged 6 months to 17 years

INFLUENZA

17.1%

COVID-19

1.1%

MYTH OR FACT:

All respiratory illnesses can be treated with antibiotics

Antibiotics only treat respiratory illnesses that are caused by bacteria. Antibiotics are not effective against viruses. For most respiratory illnesses, you can take over-the-counter medicine.

FOR QUESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR TO NOTIFY KCHD OF REPORTABLE DISEASE:

CALL 630-553-9100 EXT. 8046

RESOURCE CORNER



Respiratory illnesses Going Around (other than COVID-19, flu, & RSV)



Illinois Department of Public Health Reportable Disease Poster



Communicable Disease School Nurse Guidance

Foodborne Illness

