



Rhode Island Department of Health

Rhode Island Commission on Older Adults

April 25, 2025





Mission and Priorities

Mission and Leading Priorities









RIDOH's mission is to prevent disease and protect and promote the health and safety of the people of Rhode Island.

Three Leading Priorities Guide Our Work:

- Address the socioeconomic and environmental determinants of health.
- Eliminate health disparities and promote health equity.
- Ensure access to quality health services for all Rhode Islanders, including the state's vulnerable populations.

The Breadth of RIDOH's Work

As one of the only states without local public health departments, RIDOH's scope is extremely broad. Our work entails direct partnership with the community. Some examples of our critical public health programs include:

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
|  | We promote healthy lifestyle changes and offer programs to manage or prevent chronic conditions. |  | We regulate hundreds of healthcare facilities and tens of thousands of healthcare professionals. |
|  | We work to support babies, mothers, and families during the crucial first months and years of life. |  | We serve as a hub for critical public health data. |
|  | We ensure that the food and water you consume is healthy and safe. |  | We operate premier State Health Laboratories, and we run the State's only medical examiners' office. |
|  | We address infectious diseases and emergency preparedness. |  | We address childhood lead poisoning to keep children safe and healthy. |

Essential Public Health Functions

1. Monitor health status to identify community health problems.
2. Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards in the community.
3. Inform, educate, and empower people about health issues.
4. Mobilize community partnerships to identify and solve health problems.
5. Develop policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts.
6. Enforce laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety.
7. Link people to needed personal health services and assure the provision of healthcare when otherwise unavailable.
8. Assure a competent public health and personal healthcare workforce.
9. Evaluate effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services.
10. Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems.



Public Health Accreditation

Accreditation is official recognition that RIDOH has met rigorous standards for public health performance.

- Gained accreditation in November 2015; reaccruited in 2024
- Being accredited means RIDOH is committed to:
 - Transparency
 - Accountability
 - A culture of continuous quality improvement so we can meet our community's needs as effectively as possible





Organization

Director of Health

Jerome Larkin, MD

- Board certified in Internal Medicine, Infectious Diseases, and General Pediatrics
- Previous experience:
 - Medical Director for Inpatient Infectious Disease Consultation Services, Rhode Island Hospital
 - Co-Director, Pediatric HIV Clinic, Hasbro Children's Hospital
 - Medical Director, Infectious Disease Clinic, Rhode Island Hospital



Public Health in Rhode Island

- No local health departments
- 11 acute-care hospitals
- 15 Health Equity Zones
- Department of Health is part of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services
- Director appointed by Governor for 5-year term
 - Required by statute to have an MD with experience in public health
- Unlike some states, Rhode Island has a State medical examiner within the Department of Health
- Rhode Island provides universal vaccine coverage for children and adults
- FY25 RIDOH Budget – 64.0% federal; 24.6% restricted receipt; 10.5% general revenue



RIDOH Structure

Public Health Programmatic Work

Community Health and Equity

- Chronic Disease Prevention and Management
- Health Promotion
- Perinatal and Early Childhood Health
- Preventive Services
- Maternal and Child Health
- Health Equity Institute
- Health Equity Zones (HEZs)

Environmental Health

- Healthy Homes and Environment
- Food Protection
- Drinking Water Quality and Engineering
- Environmental Health Risk Assessment and Toxicology

Health Laboratories

- Environmental Sciences
- Forensic Sciences
- Biological Sciences
- Clinical Toxicology and Laboratory Support

Medical Examiners

- Medical Examiner

Emergency Preparedness and Infectious Disease

- Acute Infectious Disease Epidemiology
- Emergency Preparedness and Response
- HIV, Hepatitis, Sexually Transmitted Diseases, and Tuberculosis Epidemiology

Health Care Quality and Safety

- Emergency Medical Services
- Health Facilities Regulation
- Professional Boards and Licensing

Department Operations

Central Management

- Finance and Operations
- Legal Services
- Information Technology
- Human Resources
- Public Health Communication

Data, Information, and Health Systems Planning

- Health Data and Analysis and Public Health Informatics
- Health Systems Policy and Planning
- Vital Records

Workforce Development and Engagement

- Office of Learning and Growth
- Office of Employee Relations, Wellness, and Recognition

Policy, Planning, and Strategy

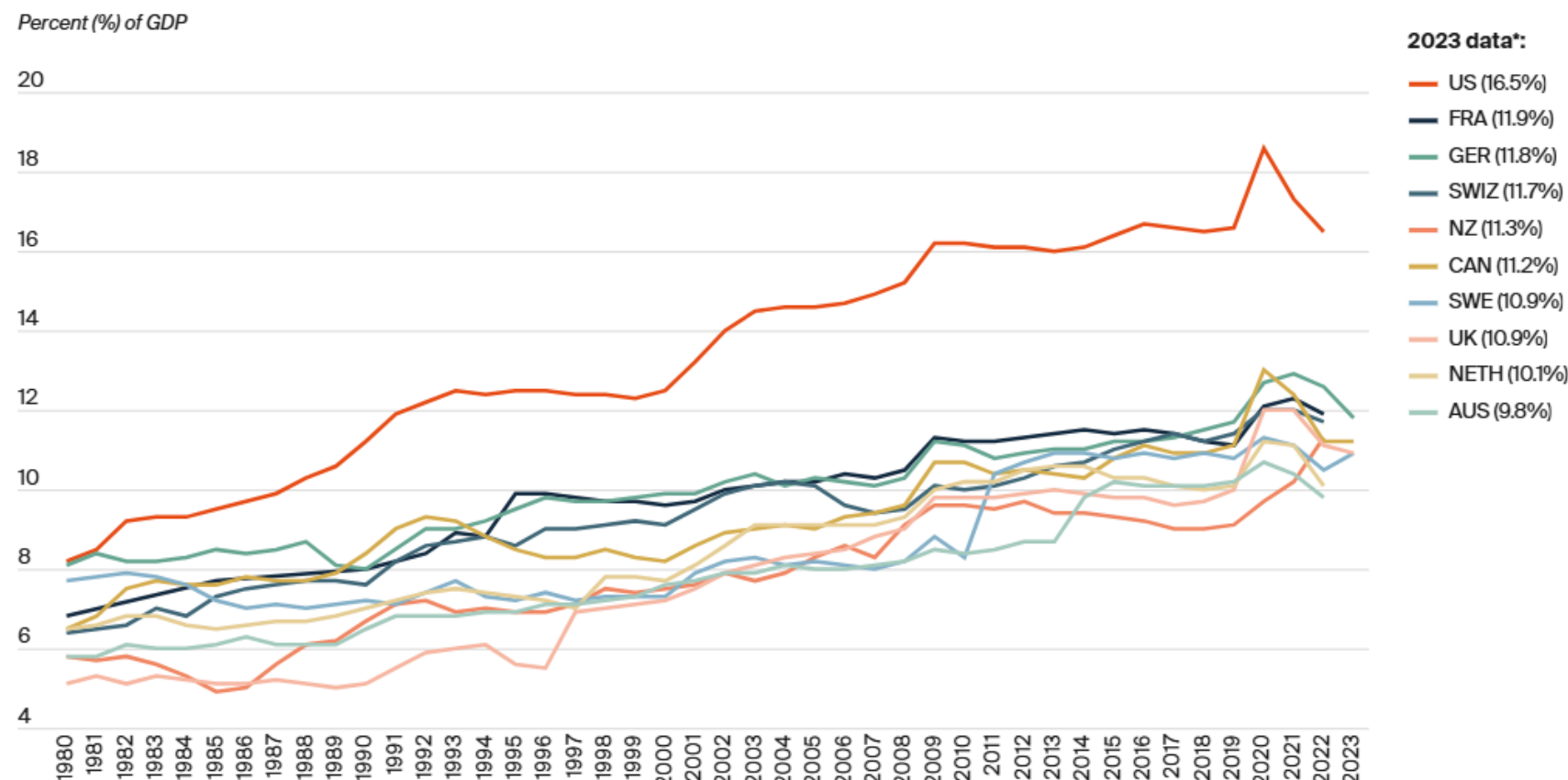
- Health Regulation
- Public Affairs and Legislation
- Academic Affairs and Accreditation



**Protecting and improving
the health of people and
their communities**

Healthcare Spending

Health Care Spending as a Percentage of GDP, 1980–2023



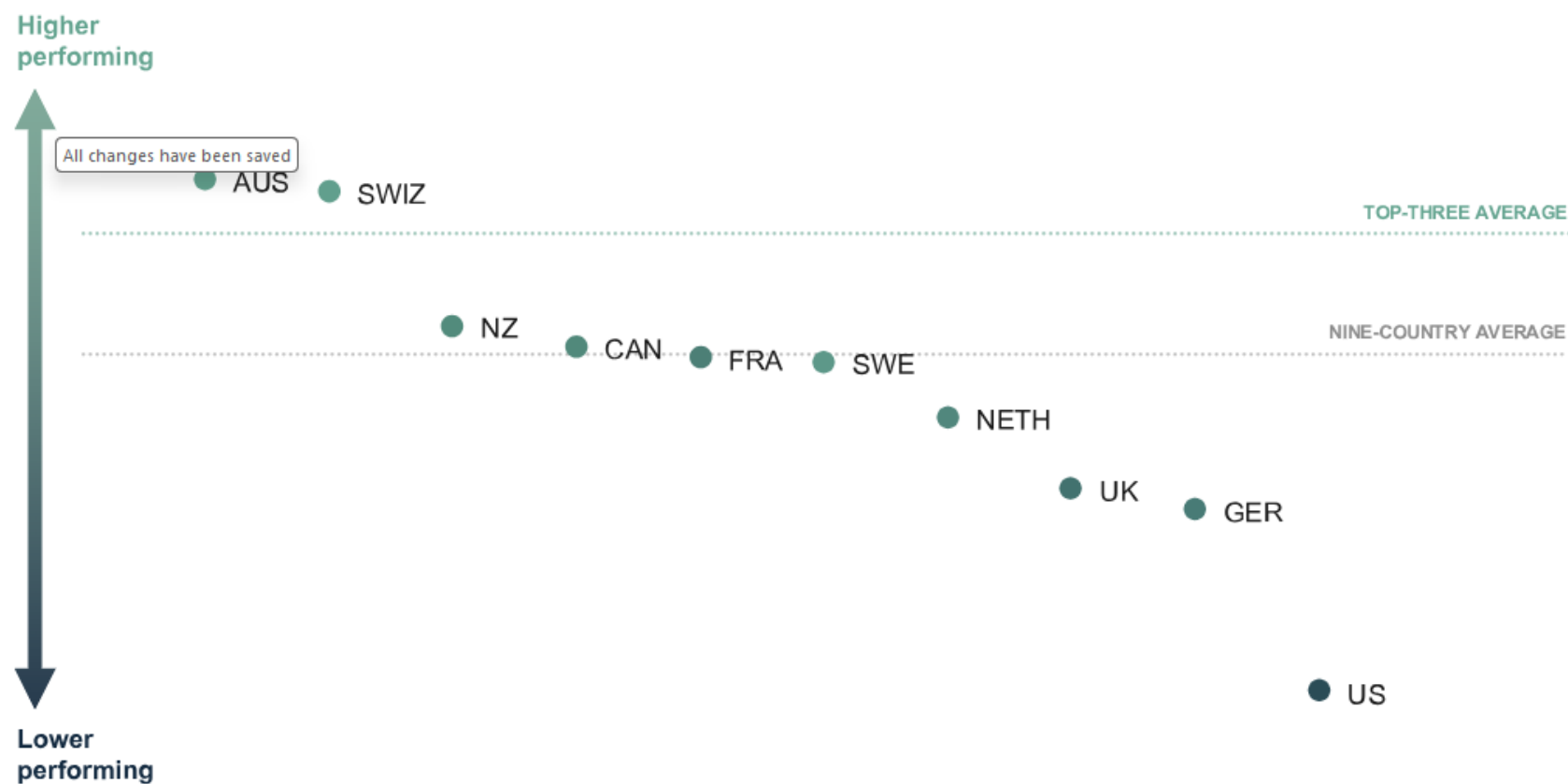
Notes: GDP = gross domestic product. Current expenditures on health. Based on System of Health Accounts methodology, with some differences between country methodologies.
* Data for CAN, GER, SWE, and the UK from 2023; data for AUS, FRA, NETH, NZ, SWIZ, and the US from 2022.

Data: OECD Health Data, July 2024.

Source: David Blumenthal et al., *Mirror, Mirror 2024: A Portrait of the Failing U.S. Health System – Comparing Performance in 10 Nations* (Commonwealth Fund, Sept. 2024).
<https://doi.org/10.26099/ta0g-zp66>

Health Outcomes

Americans live the shortest lives and have the most avoidable deaths.



Note: To normalize performance scores across countries, each score is the calculated standard deviation from a nine-country average that excludes the US. See "How We Conducted This Study" for more detail.

Data: Commonwealth Fund analysis.

Source: David Blumenthal et al., *Mirror, Mirror 2024: A Portrait of the Failing U.S. Health System – Comparing Performance in 10 Nations* (Commonwealth Fund, Sept. 2024).
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Social Determinants of Health

Social determinants of health are the nonmedical factors that influence health outcomes.

- Conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, worship, and age
- Addressing these factors accelerates progress towards **health equity** – where everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be healthy.

Social Determinants of Health



Social Determinants of Health
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 Healthy People 2030

Diversity in Rhode Island

Rhode Island is home to many different cultures, health beliefs, and health practices.

- **Language:** Nearly **1 in 4** speaks a language other than English at home
- **Foreign-born population:** 14.7%
- **Racial and ethnic diversity:** 82% White, 18% Hispanic/Latino, 9% Black/African American
- **Age:** Nearly **1 in 5** are 65 years and older
- Population with a **disability:** 14.3%

Sources:

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/RI/PST045224>

https://data.census.gov/profile/Rhode_Island?g=040XX00US44





Promoting Healthy Aging & Supporting Older Adults

The work of each RIDOH Division impacts people across the lifespan, including older adults.

Please note: The following slides provide *examples* of RIDOH work that are more specific to older adults.

Division of Environmental Health

Catherine Feeney, Associate Director

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Centers of:

- **Healthy Homes & Environment**

- Climate change
- Healthy housing
- Environmental contaminants
- Health risk assessments
- [Senior Resiliency Project](#) – assists long-term care, assisted living and independent living senior housing facilities to prepare for storms, floods, and other climate-related extreme weather events

- **Food Protection**

- **Drinking Water Quality**

Division of Emergency Preparedness & Infectious Disease

Christine Goulette, Associate Director
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Centers of:

- **Acute Infectious Disease Epidemiology**
 - e.g., flu, COVID-19, measles, bird flu, Ebola, pertussis
- **HIV, Hepatitis, Sexually Transmitted Diseases, & TB Epidemiology**
 - [RIDOH's TESTING 1-2-3 Program](#)
 - [Free condoms](#)
- **Emergency Preparedness & Response**
 - [Special Needs Registry](#)
 - E.g., flooding, power outages, safe drinking water, winter storms, hurricanes, extreme heat

Division of Healthcare Quality and Safety

Jacqueline Kelley, Associate Director

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Centers of:

- **Emergency Medical Services**

- EMS Licensing & Regulation
- [Stroke Task Force](#) in collaboration with RIDOH Diabetes & Cardiovascular Health Program
- [Mobile Integrated Health and Community Paramedicine Program](#)
 - Pilot project
 - *West Warwick Community Paramedicine Program* response to address the needs of patients experiencing cognitive decline

- **Health Facilities Regulation**

- Manage and coordinate the licensing of healthcare facilities
- Operate a public-centered, responsive, and uniform enforcement program in accordance with State licensing standards
- Certify facilities that provide services for the federal Medicare and Medicaid programs

- **Professional Boards and Licensure**

Division of Community Health & Equity

Kristine Campagna, Associate Director

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Centers of:

- **Chronic Disease Prevention & Management**
 - Dementia, diabetes, cardiovascular health, cancer, healthy eating, active living
- **Health Promotion**
 - Tobacco, drug overdose, prescription drug monitoring, violence & injury prevention
- **Preventive Services**
 - Immunization, oral health
- **Maternal & Child Health**
 - Community health workers
- **Health Equity Institute**
 - Office of Minority Health
 - Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity
- **Health Equity Zones (HEZs)**
 - 15 HEZs

Center for Chronic Disease Prevention & Management

Nancy Sutton, Chief

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- **Diabetes & Cardiovascular Health Program**
 - [Community Health Network](#) – Free and low-cost programs for diabetes prevention, blood pressure self-management, chronic disease and pain management, Alzheimer's and dementia
 - World Diabetes Day – November 13th
 - Quality Improvement initiatives with primary care with focus on community/clinical linkages
- **[Cancer Registry](#)**
- **Colorectal Cancer Screening Program (CRCS)**
 - CRCS Advisory Committee; Work w/FQHCs, free clinics, other safety-net clinics to increase CRC screenings through *patient navigation*; **Pilot** - physicians volunteer/clinics provide free stool tests, referral to colonoscopy at no cost to patients if positive stool test or high-risk patients
- **Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening Program**
 - 401-222-4324 or visit health.ri.gov/breast-and-cervical-cancer-screening for income and age eligibility
 - Available to people age 65+ that are income eligible, uninsured, or have financial barriers to screening
- **Comprehensive Cancer Prevention Program** – [RI Cancer Prevention & Control Plan, 2022 - 2026](#)
 - [Partnership to Reduce Cancer in Rhode Island](#): Cancer Summit (October 15th); Lung Cancer Committee - Lung Cancer Round Table (May 14th); Skin Check 2025

Healthy Eating & Active Living (HEAL)

HEAL State Plan, 2023-2028

Nutrition Security

- Collaboration with State agencies, Health Equity Zones (HEZ), and other key partners on coordinating resources, and increasing access and sustainability
- *Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program* (Dpt. of Environmental Management)
- *Produce Prescription Program* (RI Food Policy Council)
- SNAP fruit & vegetable incentive programs: *Bonus Bucks* (Farm Fresh RI) and *Eat Well, Be Well* (Dpt. Human Services)
- *WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program* (Women, Infants, & Children Program)
- Food Service Guidelines and Procurement (Dpt. of Administration)
 - Interagency Food and Nutrition Policy Advisory Council (IFNPAC), Local and Healthy Food Procurement Subcommittee
 - Seeks to advance regulatory changes that increase local food availability and promote nutrition standards across State agencies, aligning with the Federal Food Service Guidelines
- Updating [Relish Rhody](#) - Commerce, DEM, RIDOH leading with IFNPAC + 122 partners

Healthy Eating & Active Living

Physical Activity

- Rhode Island Streets Transformation Project (2023-2025)
 - Collaboration with GrowSmartRI, Providence Streets Coalition, RIDOH Alzheimer's Disease & Related Disorders Program, AARP-RI, Age-Friendly RI, Health Equity Zones (HEZ)
 - Community design to promote physical activity and active transportation for Rhode Islanders
 - Integrating age-friendly & dementia-friendly approaches
 - **Partnership for Providence Parks (P3)** will host a guided summer walk series for older adults living in Fox Point Manor
 - **Trinity Square Together** will install signage that directs pedestrians, motorists, and cyclists to key resources such as health services, transportation options, and community centers in order to improve the safety and accessibility of Trinity Square.

Alzheimer's Disease & Related Disorders (ADRD) Program

ADRD State Plan, 2024-2029

- RI Alzheimer's Disease & Related Disorders (ADRD) Advisory Council
- Other key partners: Alzheimer's Association – RI Chapter; URI Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEP), RI College, Care Transformation Collaborative – RI (CTC-RI); Age Friendly RI; Health Equity Zones (HEZ)
- Public Education
 - [Brain Health Guide](#)
 - Rhode Island Alzheimer's Association Workshops
- Healthcare Systems & Professional Education
 - Facility Dementia Operational Plans within hospitals, hospice, home nursing care, & FQHC
 - Workforce – Primary care professionals education opportunities; Dementia Certificate Program (RIC); Dementia Competent Practice: Promoting Dignity and Person-Centered Care Training
 - Primary care – ECHO series, Dementia Quality Improvement Project (IHI 4Ms Model)

Center for Health Promotion

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- **Tobacco Control Program**

- Rhode Island Nicotine Helpline - Connects people with nicotine dependency to multi-session live telephone counseling or web coaching, self-help tools, and referrals to other addiction treatment and cessation services
 - 1-800-QUIT-NOW (784-8669) or <https://ri.quitlogix.org/en-US/Enroll-Now>
 - Quit Works – Free Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT)

- **Drug Overdose Prevention Program**

- **Violence & Injury Prevention Program**

- Support for Veterans
 - Crisis Hotline
- Falls Prevention Workshop – Matter of Balance

Center for Perinatal & Early Childhood Health

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- Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
 - Supplemental Nutrition Program
 - Guardians and Temporary Guardians of children eligible for WIC services may apply for WIC

Center for Maternal & Child Health

Deb Garneau, Chief

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- **Community Health Worker (CHW) Program**
 - CHW Certification – [RI Certification Board](#)
 - Reimbursement for CHW Services – RI Medicaid, Medicare
 - Charting a Roadmap for Community Health Workers in Rhode Island
 - *Roadmap 1 Advancing the role, agency and leadership of community health workers*
 - *Roadmap 2 Workforce development for supervisors and community health workers*
 - *Roadmap 3 Payment and sustainability*
 - *Roadmap 4 Place and people-based approach to coordination*
 - Healthy Aging aligned CHW initiatives
 - [Diabetes/CVH Specialty Certification](#)
 - [Older Adult Specialty Certification](#)

Center for Preventive Services

Tricia Washburn, Chief

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- **Oral Health Program**

- [Oral Health for Older Adults](#)
- [Oral Health for Caregivers](#)
- EOHHS online training for caregivers: [Oral Assessment and Mouth Care for Dependent Older Adults](#)
- Free dental clinics: [RI Mission of Mercy](#) - October 4th & 5th; [Donated Dental Services](#); [RI Free Clinic](#)

- **Asthma Program**

- *Cool It Off!* is a program that helps residents of the Providence Housing Authority who have a household member with asthma (including an older adult) stay cool in the heat of summer
- Air conditioner, installation, \$25/month (June-September) for electricity, education on asthma management
- DOH.Asthma@health.ri.gov

- **Immunization Program**

- [Vaccines for Older Adults](#)
- [Asthenis Public Health Hub](#) – clinic in Providence provides vaccines to the un-/underinsured

Health Equity Zone Initiative & Health Equity Institute

Chris Ausura – HEZ; Michelle Wilson – Health Equity Institute

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Health Equity Zones ([HEZ](#))

- Collective, community-led process including community needs assessment, identifying priorities, and implementing a data-driven action plan to address barriers to health
- Improving access to healthy food, safe, affordable housing, green spaces, transportation, economic opportunity, and quality education, all of which affect older adults
- East Providence HEZ has prioritized support for older adults & social isolation

Health Equity Institute

- [Commission for Health Advocacy & Equity](#)
- [National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health and Health Care \(CLAS\)](#)
- Refugee Health Program



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RIDOH Health Information Line: 401-222-5960

Thank you!