

A Path to Better Health—for All

The Year 2025 in Review





Introduction

From data to action: Targeted strategies and trusted partnerships deliver measurable impact across Rochester and the Finger Lakes.

In 2025, Common Ground Health-Rochester RHIO turned insight into impact. Guided by data insights and deep community engagement, we worked to promote health equity throughout Rochester and the Finger Lakes.

From equipping trusted messengers in barbershops and salons to publishing ground-breaking data analysis to shaping statewide policy on play and aging, our work demonstrates what's possible when evidence meets collaboration. We rolled out digital tools to capture lived experience in the health record and convened stakeholders to talk about how to improve outcomes for recipients of Medicaid.

As we look ahead, our pathway is clear: systemic change requires sustained investment and strong partnerships. Together, we can build healthier futures for every family, every neighborhood, and every generation.

We see our future in addressing the most pressing needs across our region through targeted, scalable interventions in, among others,

- maternal and child health,
- mental health and
- chronic disease prevention.

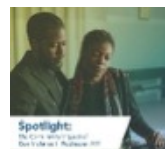
These three areas drive long-term costs and health disparities. We also look forward to a new combination that will help us drive value for the community without losing services. The combined entity will increase regional health planning capacity, improve health outcomes, and support future system-wide savings.

2025 Timeline



January

The Love from the Start campaign began by underscoring the importance of caregiver's loving relationships with infants and toddlers.



March

Spotlight: Community Impact of Gun Violence in Rochester, NY, released.



May

The Geoclassification Index was released to expand insight into rural demographics.



July

The Food Policy Council screened *Farming While Black* at the Little Theater.



September

A Call to Women of Color drew more than 350 women to Genesee Valley Park to celebrate wellness, connection, and empowerment.



November

Spotlight: So Much More than Academics—School-Based Opportunities to Address Self-Harm Among Youth released.

February

Rochester students celebrated Global School Play Day.



April

The 2025 Speak Life! Health Equity Conference focused on generational resilience and the health impacts of discrimination.



June

Volunteers repainted the Story Walk at the Phillis Wheatley Library in Rochester.



August

The Playful Learning Summit focused on the power of play and creativity inside and outside the classroom.



October

The new Ryan R-Center playground in Rochester's Beechwood neighborhood was built in one day with the help of community volunteers.



December

The SACE Not Forgotten Project delivered gift bags of needed goods to nursing home residents in Rochester's most under-resourced areas.



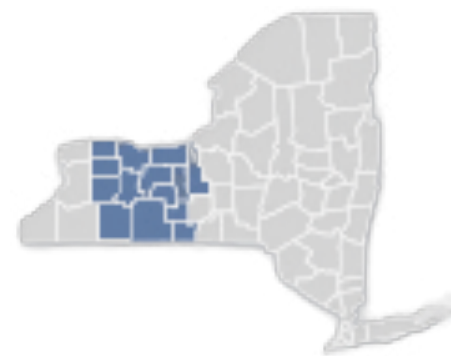


The Year in Numbers

Rochester Regional Health Information Organization

- **1.7 million residents** across 14 counties in the Finger Lakes region served by the Rochester RHIO
- **99.89% uptime** for the Rochester RHIO network from April – Dec. 2025
- **28 million messages** sent via Results Delivery from the Rochester RHIO
- **1.2 million alert messages** sent via the Rochester RHIO
- **112 million clinical data messages** inbound to the Rochester RHIO: 97 million admit/ discharge/ transfer notices, laboratory and radiology results and clinical documents; and 15 million continuity-of-care documents.
- **13 county health departments** supported with opioid overdose reports

- **5,603 social care needs screenings** done by care providers securely transferred to Forward Leaning IPA, the social care network.
- **2,235 provider and community-based organization participants** benefitted from the Rochester RHIO's services.
- **466,991 patient records** accessed in the Rochester RHIO's Explore+ clinical viewer.
- **278,963 unique patients** with at least one affirmative consent value and 1.7 million automatic consents in the Rochester RHIO
- **2,457 service applications** processed in 2025 by the Rochester RHIO



The Year in Numbers

Common Ground Health

- **3,500 views** of the new County Health Statistics Dashboard in the first 3 months since launch.
- **100 regional leaders** convened to improve health outcomes for Medicaid recipients.
- **44 partners** from 19 organizations advised our team in creating a 290-page behavioral health community needs assessment.
- **528 residents** surveyed on barriers to kids playing safely outdoors.
- **700+ ads** highlighted importance of early childhood relationships, receiving more than 17 million impressions.
- **150+** community volunteers built a playground in one day as part of a play-equity initiative.
- **25 mental health clinicians** trained and supported in culturally responsive care; 200 trained since 2021.
- **6,869 Narcan kits** distributed in the community.
- **1,674 people** received culturally responsive mental health supports for community members and for trauma responders.
- **4,913 individuals** reached and 854 connected to health resources by barbers and stylists, ambassadors, faith community members and older adults.
- **200 clinicians**, nonprofit leaders and community members discussed generational resilience at Speak Life! 2025 Health Equity Conference.
- **17 clinicians** and other community representatives engaged at a provider forum on improving care for the Indigenous community.
- **85 planning and land-use professionals** trained in age-friendly planning at four-hour conference.
- **240 Not Forgotten holiday gift bags** with daily necessities distributed to older adults in need.





Launching the Love from the Start campaign

Healthi Kids, an initiative of Common Ground Health-Rochester RHIO, used the new Love from the Start campaign in 2025 to raise awareness about the critical role early relationships play in healthy child development. Even one loving, responsive caregiver can make a difference in a child’s lifelong physical, mental and cognitive health.

The nine-county campaign used bilingual billboards, bus shelter posters, convenience center ads, transit display, social media message, television and radio ads and media coverage. Healthi Kids and partners also reached parents and families at Infant-Toddler Play Days, summits in Wayne County, and at Parent Cafés and distributed teething rings, flash cards and magnets.

The campaign will continue with additional storytelling to promote a culture of health from the very start. Learn more at LoveFromTheStart.org.

Deepening understanding about the far-reaching impact of gun violence

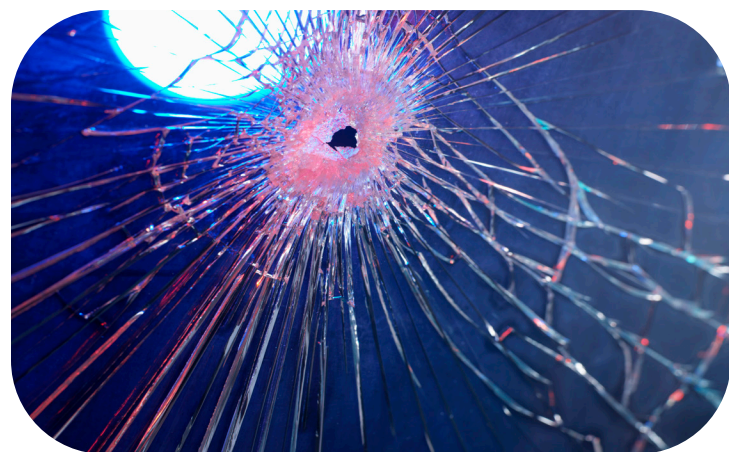
In April 2025, Common Ground Health released The Community Impact of Gun Violence in Rochester, a spotlight examining the profound and lasting effects of gun violence on individuals, families and neighborhoods. Beyond the immediate tragedy of injuries and loss of life, the report highlights how gun violence disrupts mental health, employment, housing stability and economic well-being. Victims often face trauma, job loss and financial strain, while housing insecurity compounds the challenges as families struggle to relocate from homes marked by violence.

Key findings include:

- Nearly 70% of Rochester’s gun violence victims are Black males.
- Reported shootings have declined significantly, from 419 in 2021 to 205 in 2024.
- Victims over 30 years old now account for 42% of cases—up from 31% in 2020—creating gaps in services that primarily target younger individuals.

The spotlight calls for reframing gun violence as a public health crisis rather than solely a criminal justice issue. It identifies contributing factors such as adverse community environments—like poverty, discrimination and violence—and adverse childhood experiences including abuse and homelessness. Addressing these root causes requires community-driven prevention strategies and policies.

To read the full spotlight, visit CommonGroundHealth.org/gunviolence.



Advancing age-friendly communities at home and across the state

In 2025, Common Ground Health-Rochester RHIO and its partners made significant strides toward creating communities where residents of all ages can thrive. A major milestone came in July when the Town of Irondequoit passed a resolution designating itself as an Age-Friendly Community. This commitment ensures that housing, transportation, public spaces, health services and civic engagement opportunities are accessible and inclusive, fostering healthy aging and intergenerational connection. This achievement reflects the advocacy of the Monroe County Aging Alliance (MCAA) for embedding age-friendly policies where older adults can remain active, engaged and supported.

At the state level, Governor Kathy Hochul released New York’s first-ever Master Plan for Aging, a comprehensive blueprint to help older adults age with dignity and independence. The plan includes 126 proposals across nine pillars, addressing housing, healthcare, caregiver support, social engagement and combating ageism. Common Ground Health played a key role in shaping this plan, with then-Co-CEO Wade Norwood serving on the Stakeholder Advisory Committee and Director of Strategic Initiatives Melissa Wendland advocating for its implementation. By aligning local and state efforts to build age-friendly systems and policies, we are laying the foundation for communities that support healthy aging now and for generations to come.



Prioritizing mental health through data, analysis and community knowledge

In 2025, Common Ground Health-Rochester RHIO deepened its commitment to addressing mental health challenges through the Monroe County Behavioral Health Needs Assessment. This report underscored the urgent need for comprehensive, community-driven solutions to improve behavioral health across the lifespan. Commissioned by State Sen. Samra Brouk and State Assemblymember Sarah Clark, the assessment highlighted rising rates of anxiety, depression and substance use, as well as systemic gaps in crisis services, workforce diversity and coordination.

The report revealed that 34% of residents had at least one behavioral health diagnosis in 2023, and emergency department visits for mental health concerns remain significantly higher than state averages. Importantly, the assessment identified youth mental health as a critical priority, noting alarming trends in self-harm and suicide risk.

Building on these findings, Common Ground-Rochester RHIO published “So Much More Than Academics: School-Based Opportunities to Address Self-Harm Among Youth” in November. The spotlight explained that self-harm is now the leading behavioral health-related reason for youth emergency department visits in the Finger Lakes region, with 71% of affected youth returning for additional care within the same year. One in ten high school students reported seriously considering suicide, and rates of self-harm among children ages 6–13 have increased more than fivefold since 2006. Both reports call for proactive, collaborative strategies—such as school-based mental health support, social-emotional learning, and community partnerships—to prevent crises and promote resilience.



Community Health Educators: A campaign that saves lives

In 2025, Common Ground Health’s Community Health Educators (CHEs) took center stage in Monroe County’s Call to Action ad campaign—mobilizing trusted neighborhood voices to combat the opioid crisis. Building on our Get It Done program, where 25 barbershop and salon owners are trained to deliver health education and screenings, 14 CHEs expanded their roles to distribute Naloxone (Narcan) and provide overdose prevention education directly in shops and salons.

Two CHEs—Clarissa “Cee Cee” Davis (DaVine Hair Designs) and Ithmar “Flash” Robinson (Flash Hair Designs)—were featured in countywide TV, radio, and social media PSAs, urging residents to carry naloxone and reduce stigma around substance use disorder. As part of the broader campaign effort and expanded access to naloxone, Monroe County saw a 43% drop in opioid-related deaths in 2024, the first decline after years of increases.

This campaign exemplifies our efforts to achieve health equity that focus on pairing evidence-based prevention with trusted messengers and place-based outreach. It also highlights the power of partnership to grow impact, align resources, and save lives across the region.



Gaining insight through RRHIO overdose data

Rochester RHIO has long supported access to real-time data to local health departments through use of our clinical query portal (Explore+). In 2025, Common Ground Health-Rochester RHIO deepened this partnership by joining Monroe County’s new Overdose Fatality Review team. The multi-disciplinary team confidentially reviews data on overdose deaths to identify emerging trends and barriers to prevention. They look for gaps in services and opportunities for prevention and education. They also focus on the County’s underserved populations, including immigrants, LGBTQ+, deaf and hard of hearing individuals, who may require targeted and specialized interventions.

This work builds on an initiative which started in 2024 through which the Rochester RHIO provided the Monroe County Department of Public Health with data from ED visits. This use of HIE data follows secure controls on what information can be shared about overdoses. Now Monroe County, Wayne County and Yates County receive weekly case reports which allow them to support overdose case management. Additionally, Allegany, Cayuga, Chemung, Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Schuyler, Seneca, Wayne, Wyoming, Yates counties get monthly surveillance reports with community-level trend data on opioid overdoses. Counties use these reports for enhanced community education, harm reduction, funding advocacy, legislative reporting, and advocating for improvements to health plans.

Every fatal overdose represents a life cut short. By working together, county teams can connect people with the help they need.

Health coalitions and advisory groups collaborate to drive health equity

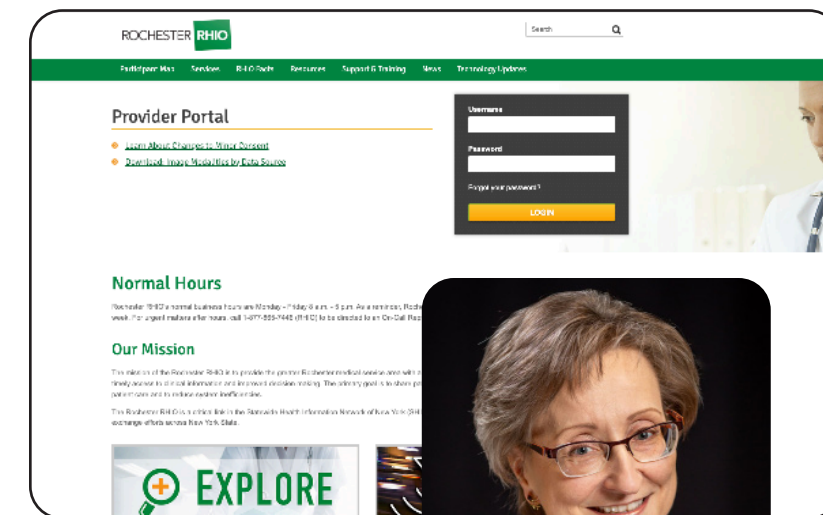
In 2025, Common Ground Health-Rochester RHIO’s African American, Latino, and Indigenous Health Coalitions, along with the New American Health Advisory Group, continued to serve as powerful voices for equity, advocacy and community-driven solutions. These groups worked tirelessly to identify health disparities, elevate cultural perspectives and influence policies that improve health outcomes for historically marginalized populations.

The African American and Latino Health Coalitions underwent a reimagining process this year, rebuilding membership and sharpening priorities to address chronic disease inequities and minimize the impact of budget cuts on consumers. Both coalitions expanded outreach, strengthened partnerships, and increased opportunities for health education and screenings.

The Indigenous Health Coalition advanced its vision for holistic wellness and cultural healing, focusing on advocacy, data equity and community education. Highlights included a health care provider forum and classes on eating for wellness, with a long-term goal of establishing an urban Indigenous health center in Rochester.

The New American Health Advisory Group, the newest addition, began addressing mental health stigma and isolation among immigrant and refugee communities by planning after-hour wellness circles in trusted spaces.

These efforts culminated in an inspiring all-coalition gathering in October, where nearly 60 members celebrated progress, shared updates, and reaffirmed their collective strength. Together, these coalitions exemplify Common Ground Health’s commitment to health equity—ensuring that community voices guide solutions for a healthier, more inclusive region.



Rochester RHIO earns Validated Data Stream Designation in NCQA Data Aggregator Validation Program

For the third year in a row, Rochester RHIO earned the Validated Data Stream designation in the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) Data Aggregator Validation program. NCQA is a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to improving health care quality. The clinical data within the data stream passed a rigorous validation process from NCQA to ensure data accuracy and build trust in data.

The validation applies to Rochester RHIO’s data from outpatient, hospital-based and diagnostic lab and imaging-care settings, and it includes clinical and health-related social needs (HRSN) data. Data streams that earn validation undergo a rigorous, end-to-end look at the quality and integrity of data and the procedures used to manage and safeguard it. From ingestion at primary sources through transmission to end users, it verifies adherence to NCQA process, system and data standards.

“With this designation, health plans and payers know that they can trust our aggregated clinical data to be accurate and that they can rely on it for supplemental HEDIS® quality reporting,” said Marlene Bessette, then co-CEO of Common Ground Health-Rochester RHIO.

Advancing maternal and early childhood health equity in 2025

Maternal health remained a core focus for Common Ground Health in 2025, as we worked to address persistent disparities in birth outcomes across Rochester and the Finger Lakes. Our commitment was highlighted at the 14th Annual Dr. Bernard Guyer Lecture in Public Health, held November 12 at Monroe Community Hospital. This year's theme—transforming birth care—dovetailed with our mission to ensure safe, respectful and culturally aligned care for every mother.

During the event, Common Ground Health Chief Program Officer Dina Faticone shared sobering data: Severe maternal morbidity in the Finger Lakes has risen 38% since 2012, with the sharpest increases among women ages 20–34. These trends, coupled with lived experiences from families, underscore the urgent need to dismantle barriers rooted in racism, poverty and gaps in access.

Our efforts in 2025 included amplifying early relational health through Healthi Kids' Love from the Start campaign, supporting maternal health initiatives like the Maternal and Child Health Improvement Plan, and partnering with organizations such as HealthConnect One, Healthy Baby Network, URMHC's Center for Community Health and Prevention, and Finger Lakes Performing Provider System (FLPPS). Together, we are driving policy advocacy, community engagement, and data-informed strategies to improve outcomes.

This work reflects our broader health equity mission and the strength of our coalitions—ensuring that every mother, child and family in our region can thrive.



Small moments:
BIG connections.

Learn more at LoveFromTheStart.org

LOVE FROM THE START
Early relationships matter.

A new era for health dawns as FLPPS and Common Ground Health-Rochester RHIO combine

Finger Lakes Performing Provider System (FLPPS) and Common Ground Health-Greater Rochester Regional Health Information Organization (Rochester RHIO) combined operations April 1, 2026. FLPPS CEO Carol Tegas (pictured below) now serves as CEO of the new combined organization.

The new organization will build on the strengths and experience of each entity. These include FLPPS' skills improving healthcare delivery and health outcomes through collaborative partnerships. These strengths also include Rochester RHIO's expertise providing a secure, quality-ensured health and social determinant information exchange and Common Ground's data analysis, convening and community-engagement experience. Rochester RHIO and Common Ground combined in 2024.



"Each of these organizations is integral to improving healthcare across the Finger Lakes region," Tegas said. "Together, we will be in an even stronger position to further transform health delivery. I look forward to building on the tremendous work that Common Ground-Rochester RHIO leaders – including Marlene Bessette and former co-CEO Wade Norwood – have done before me."

Bessette is retiring as Common Ground Health-Rochester RHIO CEO in March.

"Carol and I have worked closely for

years, and this merger of all three legacy organizations has been underway since 2024," Bessette said. "She can expertly lead a team to scale interventions that address costly and preventable health conditions across our region. She is able to adapt approaches to rural and underserved communities, and she is committed to breaking down barriers, so people can live their healthiest lives."

As CEO of FLPPS since its inception over a decade ago, Tegas has been responsible for working with clinical and community partners across the Finger Lakes region, implementing large-scale healthcare system transformation initiatives and innovative programs to improve health outcomes. These efforts include the five-year \$565 million NYS Delivery System Reform Incentive Payment (DSRIP) Program, the Greater Rochester Health Home Network Medicaid care management program, and most recently, the new \$118 million NYS Career Pathways Training Program under their Workforce Investment Organization (WIO).

An accomplished, visionary healthcare executive, Tegas has more than 35 years of experience in healthcare and nonprofit strategic planning and governance, including previously serving as executive director of Rochester Community IPA, a network of over 3,000 physicians and providers.

"Carol is the right choice to be the CEO of this new combined organization," said Norwood, who transitioned from co-CEO to Chief Advancement and Government Relations Officer for Common Ground Health-Rochester RHIO Jan. 1, 2026. "Carol has boundless energy, embraces challenges and has a keen auditor's eye for details. From the moment we met, almost twenty years ago, I've known her to be a friend and a community visionary that shares my love for our region and its children and families."

Common Ground Health



ROCHESTER RHIO

