

Public Health

Conditions & Trend

(1) *The Public Health section of the Bowdoinham 2024 Comprehensive Plan is new. External events and conditions such as extreme weather events noted in the climate section, and increases in infectious diseases such as Covid, and insect-borne diseases, impact community members. Emergency Medical Services have greatly increased in cost in recent years. There are many public health resources of which community members may not be aware.*

There is a Local Health Officer (LHO) that serves Bowdoinham. The recommended activities of this committee are beyond the scope of that position. However, it is recommended that the committee share information, and connect with the LHO on a periodic basis.

The Town does not have a Public Health Plan. With the high rates of community members over age 60 and ages 0-10, a Public Health Plan should have a focus on socially vulnerable populations.

A Public Health Committee could connect community members to local resources and information through articles in Bowdoinham's newsletter and/or on the Town of Bowdoinham website. Additionally, if there is a public health emergency, the Select Board would seek information and guidance from the committee to address such a situation.

Environmental

Prevention of environment-related health concerns such as:

- Insects (brown tail moth caterpillar infestation, tick borne-exposures, mosquito-borne diseases, etc.)
- Animal concerns (rabies, etc.)
- Weather related threats such as extreme heat, cold, rain, etc.

Infectious Diseases

Ways to prevent/reduce infectious diseases such as Covid, flu, RSV, pneumonia, measles, whooping cough (immunization clinics, or other strategies, etc.)

Emergency Medical Services

- An Emergency Medical Services Committee was established and began meeting in Fall of 2023. This is led by the Bowdoinham Fire Chief to assess the Emergency Medical Service needs and possible alternatives to meet the needs specific to Bowdoinham.

Health Care Resources

There are many medical providers and services in Sagadahoc County.

- Richmond Area Health Center (RAHC) is the only Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) in Sagadahoc County and is a part of Health Reach Community Health Centers. FQHCs are established in areas that have limited access to other health resources. RAHC serves Bowdoinham and other surrounding towns with primary care and mental health services; accepts all types of private insurance, MaineCare, Medicare, and offers sliding fee scales for qualified individuals and families.

- The MidCoast-Parkview Hospital and related practices provide information and resources for health care and mental health and substance use treatment, including diverse types of providers.
- Other healthcare systems in Lewiston (Central Maine Medical Center), Augusta (Maine General), and Portland (MaineHealth) are also accessible to many.
- There are Urgent Care providers in Brunswick and other nearby communities.

Public Health Systems and Planning Resources: There are existing resources in Sagadahoc County, the MidCoast Public Health District, and the State of Maine, that can be accessed by any individual. Access to planning processes, health and mental health services are part of these services.

(2) Current Inventory of local, county, public health district, and state resources

- The Sagadahoc County Board of Health (BOH) serves as an official advisory board to the Sagadahoc County Commissioners.
- MidCoast Public Health District. Maine has 8 public health districts. Midcoast Public Health District (District 4) includes Knox, Lincoln, Sagadahoc, and Waldo Counties. Maine CDC supports prevention systems within the public health districts. This is a 10-year commitment that started in 2023.
- Midcoast Maine Prevention Network. There is a system of eight (8) local Maine Prevention Networks that focus primarily on prevention of underage substance use including tobacco and marijuana use, and prevention of underage alcohol and other drug use; and support for healthy eating and appropriate physical activity for good health. MidCoast Hospital hosts the MidCoast Prevention Network at Community Health Improvement.
- Needs Assessments and Plans. The Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention has published the 2022 Maine Shared Community Health Needs Assessment and the 2022 State Public Health Systems Assessments which can be found on their website.

Analysis

(1) Is there a process to assess and address the needs for Emergency Medical Services?

There is an Emergency Medical Services Committee that has been established by the Select Board with initial members appointed and meetings convened in Fall of 2023. There is an identified town employee to staff this committee.

(2) Are existing public health resources accessible to the town and community members?

Public health resources can be found in a variety of ways, though there is no central hub for this information. Public service announcements are passed on by the Town office through newsletters, its website and Facebook page. Other resources include community group social media accounts and to a lesser extent the library. Local radio, tv, and mailers from national and state sources are most widespread.

(3) Is there a Public Health Plan for Bowdoinham?

There is no Public Health Plan.

(4) *Is there a system in place to provide information regarding resources and health information to the town and community members?*

There is no plan or process for sharing health and public health related information.

Age Friendly

Conditions & Trend

(1) *The Age Friendly section of the Bowdoinham 2024 Comprehensive Plan is new. The rapid growth in our older population has significant impact on the community, including housing needs, access to support and health service, accessibility, risks of isolation, and civic and social engagement.*

Data on the characteristics of Bowdoinham’s older population came largely from the 2020 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates conducted by the US Census. Another major source of information about Bowdoinham’s older population was from findings of listening sessions held in the Summer of 2022 with major Town stakeholders whose work brings them into close contact with older adults, especially those at-risk.

Growth in Older Population

There has been a dramatic increase in the percent of Bowdoinham’s population 60 years and over in the past 20 years, increasing from 14% of the population to 29%. This trend will continue until the baby boom bubble recedes after 2040.

Percent Distribution of Older Population in Bowdoinham			
Age Cohort	2000	2010	2020
60 to 64 years	4%	7 %	9%
65 to 74 years	5%	9%	14%
75 to 84 years	4%	3%	5%
85 years & over	1%	1%	1%
Total 60 years & over	14%	20%	29%

Source: 2020 U.S. Census Bureau

Impact on Housing

Fifty-seven percent of households in Bowdoinham had one or more people 60 years or over residing in it. One in five households included a person 65 and over as the primary head. Often as people age, their homes are no longer safe due to stairs, inaccessible bathrooms, fire hazards or other barriers. Some homes may be too large and unaffordable to maintain. Although a high percent of Bowdoinham’s housing is owner occupied, rental arrangements often become the option of choice for older adults who plan to live off the proceeds from the sale of their homes. The simultaneous rise in the number of young families suggests the need for a flexible housing market which can meet the needs of all ages and abilities.