

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

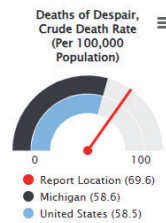
June  
2025



## MySidewalk Data

Within the report area, there were 764 deaths of despair. This represents a crude death rate of 69.6 per every 100,000 total population.  
Note: Data are suppressed for counties with fewer than 20 deaths in the time frame.

Report Area	Total Population, 2019-2023 Average	Five Year Total Deaths, 2019-2023 Total	Crude Death Rate (Per 100,000 Population)
Report Location	219,508	764	69.6
Alcona County, MI	10,410	43	82.6
Alpena County, MI	28,657	76	53.0
Arenac County, MI	15,009	46	61.3
Cheboygan County, MI	25,676	82	63.9
Crawford County, MI	13,649	39	57.1
Iosco County, MI	25,306	107	84.6
Montmorency County, MI	9,442	35	74.1
Ogemaw County, MI	20,921	78	74.6
Oscoda County, MI	8,374	34	81.2
Otsego County, MI	25,223	64	50.8
Presque Isle County, MI	12,999	45	69.2
Roscommon County, MI	23,842	115	96.5
Michigan	10,015,119	29,369	58.6
United States	331,563,969	970,307	58.5



Note: This indicator is compared to the state average.

Data Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC - National Vital Statistics System. Accessed via CDC WONDER, 2019-2023. [Show more details](#)

### Deaths of Despair (Suicide + Drug/Alcohol Poisoning)

This indicator reports average rate of death due to intentional self-harm (suicide), alcohol-related disease, and drug overdose, also known as "deaths of despair", per 100,000 population. Figures are reported as crude rates. Rates are resummairized for report areas from county level data, only where data is available. This indicator is relevant because death of despair is an indicator of poor mental health.

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Note: Data are suppressed for counties with fewer than 20 deaths in the time frame.



Last week, Lisa Bolen, Kimberlee Hincka, and Frances Ommani represented NEMCSA at the national CAPLAW Conference in Boston. With over 600 attendees from Community Action Agencies (CAAs) across the country, the event offered invaluable opportunities including:

- **Up-to-date insights on legislative funding** that impacts CSBG and other vital programs
- **Workshops and sessions** on legal compliance, financial stewardship, and nonprofit leadership
- **National networking** with peer agencies and leaders to exchange best practices and explore collaborative solutions

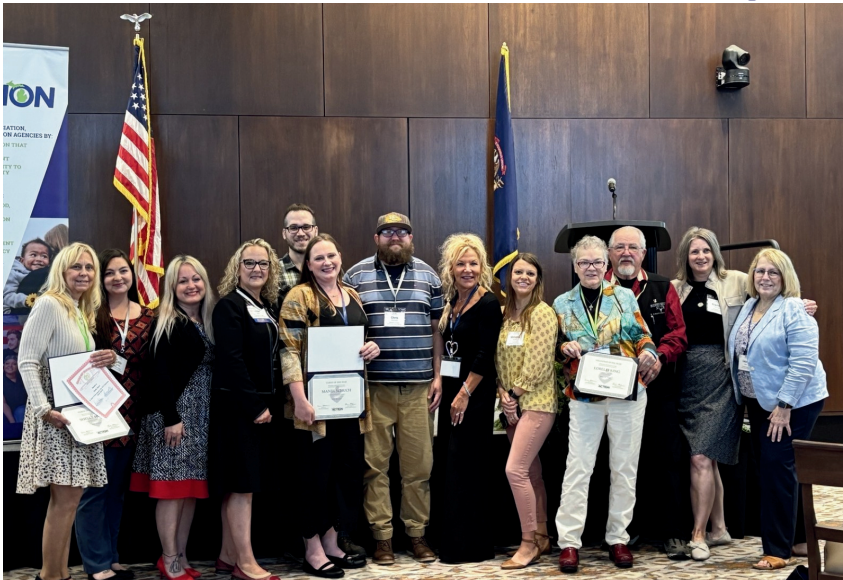
This conference strengthened NEMCSA's capacity to remain innovative, informed, and mission-focused as we continue to serve Northeast Michigan.

# Remembering Kristin Berles



It is with a very heavy heart that I share some incredibly sad news. Our dear colleague and friend, Kristin Berles, passed away last week after suffering a heart attack. Kristin worked in our Community Programs/School Success Programs as a Budget Manager. Kristin was a beloved member of the NEMCSA family—kind, compassionate, and deeply dedicated to our mission and to the people we serve. Her warmth and strength touched so many lives across our agency, and her absence will be profoundly felt. During this time of mourning, please keep Kristin's family in your thoughts. We know that many of you considered her not just a coworker, but a true friend. We want to remind you that NEMCSA offers an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), which provides confidential support services, including counseling. If you need someone to talk to, please don't hesitate to reach out. More information about how to connect with the EAP is available on our Employee SharePoint or through Human Resources. Let's continue to support one another as we grieve this tremendous loss together.

## Legislative Day at the Capitol



NEMCSA proudly joined agencies from across the state at the State Capitol for Michigan Community Action's Legislative Day! A day filled with advocacy, connection, and powerful celebration. We are thrilled to share that one of our dedicated volunteers and three incredible NEMCSA program clients were honored as Volunteers and Clients of the Year. Their stories of perseverance, courage, and transformation moved the entire room; there truly wasn't a dry eye in the house. These individuals reminded us all what Community Action is about: standing in the gap, walking alongside others, and helping pave a path toward hope and opportunity. We also spent the day meeting with lawmakers and advocating for the programs that uplift and empower families across Northeast Michigan. Thank you to Michigan Community Action for hosting this meaningful event and for amplifying the voices of those we serve. This IS Community Action, in action.



# PACE NORTHEAST MI

Construction at PACE Northeast Michigan wrapped up last month. The township inspectors granted certificate of occupancy on May 9th and Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) was on site for the State's Readiness Review on May 12th. The reviews went very well. MDHHS replied with a short list of contingencies to be addressed. These were expected. Deliveries of equipment and supplies to comply with the MDHHS requests have been received in the past weeks and all items will be summarized in a report that Jeff Meden will send to MDHHS by June 13th. Once satisfied, the MDHHS review and State program approval will be submitted to the Centers for Medicare/Medicaid Services (CMS) by the end of June. CMS has a 90-day window to inspect the PACE Northeast Michigan center themselves (this virtually never happens) or inquire about the report (this rarely happens). During these 90 days, the PACE NEMI team will be hired. This team will include the 11-member interdisciplinary team of nursing, social work, dietary, physical therapy, occupational therapy, homecare, transportation, and day center staff. Once hired, the team will receive training from Palmetto PACE Advisory Group, our consultants assisting with our start up. Additional training will come directly from MDHHS and from on site shadowing at PACE Central Michigan. The PACE NEMI center looks great! Furniture is in place, NEMCSA's IT team has been busy setting up computers, and operational equipment is being stocked throughout the building. The NEMCSA board meeting in August will be held at PACE NEMI so all board members will have an opportunity to tour the completed facility.





# Program Impact AREA AGENCY ON AGING

## Older Michiganians Day

Region 9 AAA had a group of 27 individuals in attendance for Older Michiganians Day and gathered over 530 signed letters from program participants and community members in support of the OMD platform. The letters were hand-delivered to each legislative office representing Region 9's 12 counties. Lorelei King, Crawford County, provided a welcome speech for the event.



## Older Michiganians Day 2025 a HUGE Success for the Aging Network.

The Capitol lawn was bustling with energy on Wednesday May 7th as more than 480 people covered the south lawn to advocate for older adult funding in the areas of MI Choice, Caregiving, and Silver Key requests. This is a critical time to advocate for older adults!



Legislative speakers included Senator Sylvia Santana, Senator Sam Singh, Representative Carol Glanville, and Senator Mark Huizenga. If you have not signed on to our legislative platform letter, please visit the 4AM website and make sure you tell your legislators to support these critical programs. You can sign the letter and have it sent directly to them via email through this link: <https://4ami.org/advocacy/take-action#/>

## REGION 9 AREA AGENCY ON AGING PRESENTS: Elder Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation Prevention Conference

Friday, August 15, 2025  
10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.  
Plainfield Township Hall  
(Eagle Point Plaza)  
415 East Main Street  
Hale, MI 48739



Approximately one in  
ten Americans aged 60+  
have experienced some  
form of elder abuse.

### SAVE THE DATE



### Why Join Us:

- Expert Speakers
- Get to know the Resources in your Community
- Complimentary Breakfast and Lunch
- Local Vendors
- Great Prizes and Giveaways!

(989) 358-4630

deant@nemcsa.org

www.nemcsa.org

## Caregiver Empowerment and Wellness Conference 2025 Crawford County



Another Caregiver event took place on Thursday, May 15, 2025, at the Saganing Tribal Center. This is the AAA's first joint event with the Saganing Tribe. Forty participants attended, with thirteen vendors. Topics Included:

- Take a Break, Before you Break
- Technology Tools for Caregiving
- Understanding Alzheimer's & Dementia with an Update on Dementia in Native American Communities



## Volunteer of the Year!

MI Community Action Volunteer of the Year: Lorelei King. As the Michigan Senior Advocates Co-Chair, Lorelei has proven herself to an effective advocate and very active community volunteer.

Congratulations Lorelei and thanks for all you do!





# Program Impact

## EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

### *From Student to Advocate*



#### **Rep. Bierlein Stands Up for Head Start Funds**

VASSAR — State Rep. Matthew Bierlein can relate to the preschoolers he visited Monday in a federally-funded Head Start program in Vassar.

 The Advertiser /

State Representative Bierlein recently visited a NEMCSA Head Start classroom in Vassar, where he read to the children and shared his personal connection to the program, having been a Head Start student himself. He emphasized the program's critical role in early childhood education and urged federal leaders to recognize and support its long-term value. Bierlein also noted that while it is primarily an educational program, many working families rely on it to help cover their childcare needs. When these programs aren't available, many parents are left without reliable alternatives - making it difficult for them to maintain steady employment. *Read the full article by Tom Gilchrist on The Tuscola County Advertiser.*

*Check  
out this  
Early  
Head  
Start  
Success  
Story!*



### **A Family Transformed: Ginger's Early Head Start Journey**

When Ginger first enrolled her family in NEMCSA's Early Head Start program in September 2022, she was juggling life with young children. Understandably hesitant at first about welcoming home visitors into the everyday chaos, Ginger soon discovered just how impactful the support would be. Home Visitor, Laura, began working with the family that fall; building a strong, trusting relationship through consistent visits and compassionate care. Over time, the two oldest children successfully transitioned into the Head Start program, while Laura continues to provide in-home visits for the younger two.

**"The program has been a game-changer for my family,"** Ginger shared. "The staff have been consistently warm, understanding, and non-judgmental. Their professionalism and expertise have made a significant impact—not only on my children's progress but also on my own confidence as a parent."

Ginger says that what she once feared would be overwhelming became a source of joy, support, and growth. Her story is a shining example of how Early Head Start empowers families, fosters development, and nurtures both children and caregivers alike.



# Program Impact

## BRIDGES OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY

### BOSS Program Success Stories

The BOSS Program continues to support transformative progress across Northeast Michigan. This past month, there were several inspiring participant achievements:

- A BOSS family transitioned out of subsidized housing and into an unsubsidized apartment that meets their family's needs.
- A participant completed a class with a 95% and is halfway through her medical terminology certification.
- One woman secured her own housing, moved out of a shared rental, and purchased a vehicle.
- Multiple participants completed emotional resiliency and financial literacy courses.
- We celebrated a new BOSS graduate!
- A BOSS family increased their household income.
- One BOSS participant graduated from Delta College with honors:
  - Associate in Arts
  - Cumulative GPA: 3.687
  - Vice President's List (Spring & Fall 2024)
  - President's List (Winter 2025 – 4.0 GPA!)
  - She will begin her bachelor's program at SVSU this summer.



*This project was supported, in whole or in part, by federal award number SLFRF4951 awarded to The State of Michigan by the U.S. Department of the Treasury.*

## COMMUNITY RESOURCES



- Total individuals assisted in April: 158
  - 124 community members
  - 22 internal staff
- 57 referrals made
- 51 resources shared
- 100+ contacts came in via the Community Resource Line

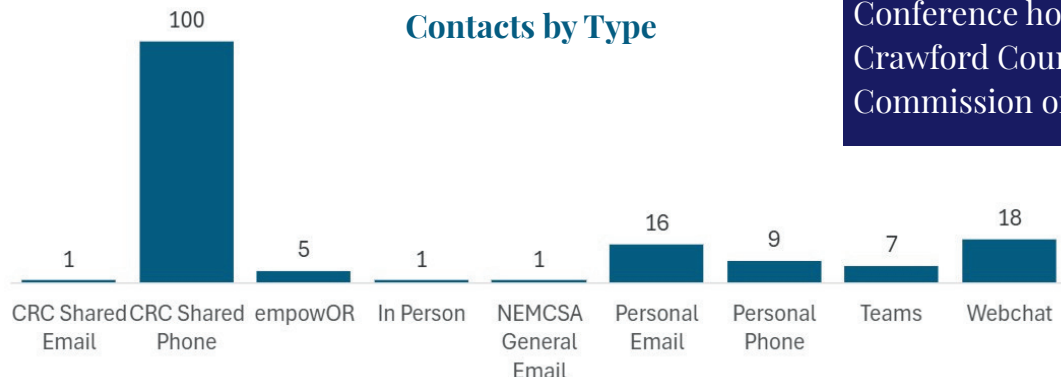
Five Episodes  
Now Available!

💡 Have ideas or want to  
join as a guest?

Share your suggestions,  
topics, or feedback by  
completing the form  
here:

[Podcast Feedback Form](#)

### Contacts by Type



Madison attended and presented at two county collaborative meetings and the Road to Recovery event in Gaylord. Amanda represented NEMCSA at the annual Caregiver Conference hosted by Crawford County Commission on Aging.



[CRC@NEMCSA.ORG](mailto:CRC@NEMCSA.ORG)



989-358-4757



# Program Impact

## SCHOOL SUCCESS

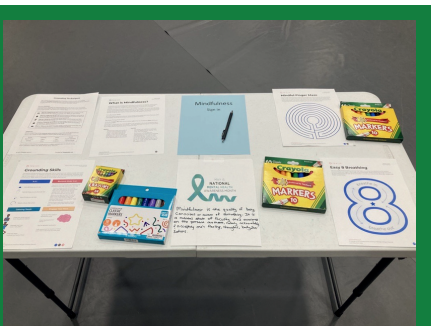


Brian Colorite, School Success Program Career Development Coordinator at Tawas Area Middle/High School, orchestrated an incredible Career Fair that brought together 32 local businesses and colleges for an exciting opportunity to connect with 8th through 12th graders. Students had the chance to explore a wide range of post-secondary paths, ask insightful questions, and engage directly with industry and education professionals. Numerous community organizations participated and the gym was buzzing with energy, while the students truly shined with their curiosity and enthusiasm!

Meet School Success Liaisons from IRESA Alternative Education sites. From left to right, Erin Bray at Oscoda, Kelsie Short at Ogemaw (West Branch) and Madison Nachtrieb at Tawas. Erin, Kelsie, and Madison have demonstrated exceptional dedication this year, working closely with one another, their school teams, and School Success leadership to thoughtfully implement programming that addresses the unique needs and challenges of students in alternative education.



School Success and the Nourishment of Student Minds, Bodies and Souls: Many elementary School Success liaisons are working on a new project that works to help support students in developing mindfulness and emotional well-being, positive decision making and self-confidence, physical health and fitness, and so much more. Carson Schneider, School Success Liaison at Atlanta Community School, is fostering this project through the use of spotlight snacks, movement, and practical learning. Before becoming a member of the group, the student pictured often had specific food preferences and was hesitant to try new things. However, through the Mind, Body, and Soul Project he was able to become more confident in trying unfamiliar foods and found out that he loves Mott's No Sugar Added Applesauce, so much so that he reported back to his family and picked this snack out while grocery shopping so that he could enjoy it at home, too! Ms. Carson is so proud of the progress he has made since becoming a member of the group, and this is just one of the many success stories liaisons will strive to support through the introduction of the Mind, Body, and Soul Project.



May is Mental Health Awareness Month, a crucial time dedicated to raising awareness about mental health, reducing stigma, and promoting well-being for everyone. Recognizing how important mental health is to overall success and happiness, School Success Liaison, Gina Murphy partnered with Tawas Middle/High School social workers Amanda and Sophie to create a meaningful opportunity for students to focus on mindfulness and gratitude. Students engaged in activities designed to help them build healthy habits for managing stress and emotions. By participating in these stations, students not only practice valuable self-care skills but also get the chance to sign in and be entered into a drawing to win a t-shirt or a journal. Celebrating Mental Health Awareness Month like this highlights the importance of caring for our minds as much as we do our bodies—and encourages everyone to take small, positive steps toward mental wellness every day.



# Program Impact

# HOUSING

## Shelter Diversion

In May, staff enrolled six new participants into the Shelter Diversion Program. Six participants were able to be successfully diverted from having to enter shelter or a place not meant for human habitation to rent across our region, assisting with different needs such as security deposit, first month's rent, gas cards and utilities. The program welcomes Darlene Romel as our Shelter Diversion Specialist!

## Housing Pathways for Young Adults

Catrina Johnston joined our team as the new Youth and Young Adult Case Manager on May 5th. She has recently taken on 5 new cases and is doing amazing. We are happy to have her!



We recently signed another lease agreement for a transitional unit and have already moved a family in. We now have three participants in Transitional Housing, four participants in our Rapid Rehousing, and four participants who are literally homeless working with our street outreach.



## Community Reentry Simulation

Housing Resource Specialists Jaime and Stacy attended a session of Community Reentry Simulation in Grayling, held at Kirtland Community College. During the simulation, participants were able to experience the struggles felt upon initial release from incarceration. Stacy "spent some time back in jail" for not struggling to meet the expectations of her fictitious parole scenario, which included paying fines, finding employment with a criminal record, and securing stable housing. Simulation training allows our case management staff to be able to approach helping the vulnerable populations we serve with empathy and a trauma-informed lens!



## Building Michigan Communities

Our Financial Sustainability Coordinator Ashley, Financial Coach Ashley, and Youth and Young Adult Coordinator Elise, attended the Building Michigan Communities Conference in Lansing. Sessions they attended included topics such as: Driving change for youth experiencing homelessness, Bridging the Gap between affordable housing and homelessness, MSHDA's Housing navigation program overview, and much more.

To find out more about Homeless & Prevention Services, call: 989-358-4678.



# Program Impact

## FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT

### Housing Counseling

In May, four participants completed Homebuyer Education and Pre-Purchase Counseling. Three of those participants have already been pre-approved for a mortgage and will be purchasing a home within the next three months. The other participant is actively working with our Financial Coach to reduce their debts so that they're able to reduce their debt-to-income ratio and increase their credit score.

One recently homeless client contacted the agency about completing Rental Counseling so that they're able to maintain their housing after assistance ends through the homeless program.

Staff also worked with four households to complete foreclosure counseling and assist them with avoiding foreclosure on their homes.

### Family Self-Sufficiency Program

The Family Self-Sufficiency Program currently has 20 participants. We hope to see our client count grow when MSHDA re-opens the HCV waiting list and begins to lease up new clients that are eligible for the program.

**To find out more about the Financial Empowerment Programs, Call: 989-358-4627.**

## WATER PROGRAM

**In May, The Water Affordability Program  
successfully provided the following assistance:**

**\$16,065**

**WATER BILLS PAID**

**\$12,057**

**PLUMBING BILLS PAID**

**22**

**HOMES ASSISTED TOTAL**



**To find out more about the Water Program, Call: 989-358-4675.**

# Program Impact

## WEATHERIZATION

During the Northern Michigan ice storm, a rather large tree fell on a client's home, hitting the furnace venting going out of the roof. It was damaged to the point that all the fuel gases typically vented out the roof were being vented back into her house. If not for the carbon monoxide (CO) detector the Weatherization Program installed to alert her, she would have had no idea CO was being pumped into her home and why she was feeling so fatigued. This client is very grateful for our program as she had no carbon monoxide detector in her home prior to us coming in and installing one to avoid what could have been fatal if not discovered. Every home that receives an inspection from our program, who does not already have one, receives a carbon monoxide detector immediately.

Remember: Carbon monoxide is dangerous because it interferes with the body's ability to use oxygen. It binds to hemoglobin in the blood, effectively displacing oxygen and reducing the amount of oxygen delivered to the body's tissues and organs. This can lead to various health problems, including fatigue, headaches, dizziness, and in severe cases, loss of consciousness, coma, or death.

## VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS

### FOSTER GRANDPARENT/SENIOR COMPANIONS

On May 6th, the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion programs celebrated decades of volunteer service at their 50th and 40th recognition luncheon. The event's theme, Shining the Light on Decades of Service, focused on the 60th anniversary of the Foster Grandparent program, 50 years as a NEMCSA program and the 50th anniversary of the Senior Companion program, 40th year as a NEMCSA program. The event honored Senior Companion volunteer Helen Eagleson for her 16-year tenure as a Senior Companion and is pictured with her Station Supervisor, Jennifer Altman, Activities Director of Medilodge of Rogers City. Foster Grandparent Christine Hoffmeyer was also honored with a plaque for 16-years of service and is pictured with her teacher Barbara Hoffmeyer. We had great attendance from our sponsors and partners with principals, teachers, and Senior Companion station supervisors taking time from their busy schedules to honor their volunteers. Included in the pictures are the volunteers from Mio-AuSable Schools, Helen Teegarden and Laura Halsey with their principal, Chris Grobe who was also a featured speaker sharing the impact of the Foster Grandparents on the students and the value they bring to the school community. The Senior Companion volunteers from Medilodge of Tawas City DeAnn Gardyszewski, Kevin Hill, Diane Macreno, Dorothy Mirasolo with her son, are pictured with their station supervisor Michelle Ulman, Activities Director. The event concluded with a wonderful display of deserts that helped carry the theme throughout the day.



*We ♥ our Volunteers*





# EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION

In September 2023, the NEMCSA Wellness Committee launched an Employee Appreciation Program designed to celebrate the dedication and hard work of our team. This program gives staff the opportunity to recognize their co-workers' by highlighting the positive impact they make every day. Each month, one lucky employee is randomly selected to receive \$75 worth of NEMCSA Merchandise of their choice – a small way to say a big “thank you” for all that they do.

## 625

EMPLOYEE SUBMISSIONS

## 21

LOGOWEAR WINNERS

WORDS OF APPRECIATION FROM STAFF  
TO THEIR CO-WORKERS

JUNE Employee Anniversaries are celebrating...

# 80

COMBINED YEARS OF SERVICE




*Thank you for  
going above  
& beyond.*









## Current Job Openings:

- Volunteer Programs Specialist
- School Success Behavior Tech
- School Success Liaison
- Options Counselor - Aging
- Services Coordinator - Aging
- Family Educator
- Family Services Coordinator
- Bus Driver & Bus Aide
- Preschool Teachers
- Teaching Assistants & Classroom Aides



There are endless benefits to joining the NEMCSA Team, apply today!

 Competitive Wages	 No Cost Employee Health Insurance	 Work from Home Opportunities	 Paid Time Off
 Retirement Fund	 Work-Life Balance	 Career Development Opportunities	 Student Loan Forgiveness

Employee benefits contingent on employment status.

Find more information and apply  
online at [www.nemcsa.org/careers](http://www.nemcsa.org/careers)

**THURSDAY AUGUST 14<sup>TH</sup>, 2025**  
**11:00AM - 2:00PM**

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**NEMCSA'S BIRTHDAY  
BASH!**



**We're turning 57, and we want to celebrate with YOU!**

**NEMCSA MAIN OFFICE – 2569 US 23 S,  
ALPENA, MI 49707**

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**WHETHER YOU'VE PARTNERED WITH US, BEEN  
SERVED BY US, OR SIMPLY WANT TO LEARN MORE  
ABOUT THE HEART BEHIND OUR MISSION—COME  
CELEBRATE THE DIFFERENCE WE'RE MAKING  
TOGETHER.**