

**From:** Susan Jagers <sjagers@aohc.net>  
**Sent:** Sunday, January 4, 2026 5:01 PM  
**To:** Andrea Cinadr  
**Subject:** AOHC Newsletter January 4, 2026

To view this bulletin in a web browser, [click here](#).



January 04, 2026

[Classifieds](#)

[Calendar](#)

[Board of Directors](#)

[Staff](#)

[Ohio News](#)

[National News](#)

[Funding Opportunities](#)

[Educational Opportunities](#)

[AOHC Board and Public Affairs Committee Minutes](#)

Agenda Items for ODH "Together We Can" Calls, weekly on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays:  
[email.local.support@odh.ohio.gov](mailto:email.local.support@odh.ohio.gov)

Agenda Items for Joint AOHC-ODH Task Forces - [click here](#) to submit

## Ohio News

### Ohio Awarded Rural Health Transformation Funds

Ohio has received approval of more than \$200 million in federal Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) funding through the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, part of a historic \$50 billion nationwide investment to strengthen rural health care systems.

This award enables the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) to begin implementing its multi-year program focused on expanding access to care, strengthening the rural health workforce, modernizing facilities and technology, and supporting innovative service models tailored to rural communities.

As announced on the last We Can Call with ODH, we expect RFPs to be issued soon. Ohio is going to issue 11 different RFPs—most RFPs will come from the ODH, although Ohio EPA, Department of Public Safety, and Department of Children and Youth will each be issuing an RFP. The state expects fairly short response deadlines for each. Evaluation and scoring will occur in late February/early March with awards in mid-March. Approved grantees or contractors will be expected to sign multi-year contracts with the state and have project metrics and reporting requirements.

## Ohio Petitioners File Signatures to Repeal SB 56

Activists in Ohio have taken the first step toward a statewide referendum to overturn portions of Senate Bill 56, the controversial law signed late last year that imposes tighter restrictions on intoxicating hemp products and alters aspects of the state's cannabis framework. A citizen group called Ohioans for Cannabis Choice has submitted an initial petition with more than 1,000 voter signatures to both the Ohio Secretary of State and the Attorney General's Office, triggering the formal referendum process.

SB 56, which Gov. Mike DeWine signed into law in December 2025, bans most intoxicating hemp products and makes significant changes to Ohio's adult-use cannabis laws, including new criminal penalties and regulatory shifts that opponents say undermine the will of voters who legalized recreational marijuana in 2023.

If certified, the petitioners will move on to collect the roughly 248,000 valid signatures needed from across the state to place the measure on the November 2026 ballot. A successful referendum would pause the law's implementation until voters decide its fate.

Petitioners are targeting provisions they say roll back voter-approved cannabis policy and sharply restrict hemp products. Specifically, they oppose sections of the law that ban most intoxicating hemp products, recriminalize certain marijuana-related conduct, and override portions of Issue 2, the 2023 voter-approved adult-use cannabis law. The petition also aims to restore protections eliminated by SB 56, including limits on discrimination related to lawful cannabis use, and to reverse changes affecting possession rules and cannabis regulation more broadly.

## Join the 2026 Fall Conference Planning Team!

The 2026 Fall Conference Committee is seeking volunteers from health departments of all sizes to help create an exceptional event. This is a great opportunity to collaborate, share ideas, and ensure the conference agenda meets the needs of our members.

Virtual Planning Committee meetings will be held on the second Friday of each month at 1:00 PM, beginning in January.

Volunteer Responsibilities:

- Attend planning meetings
- Complete the conflict-of-interest documentation
- Assist with budget planning
- Help develop the conference agenda
- Support speaker recruitment
- Provide onsite support during the event

If you're interested in joining this exciting effort, please contact:

Angela DeRolph – [angela.derolph@perrycountyohio.net](mailto:angela.derolph@perrycountyohio.net) and Denise Ross – [dross@aohc.net](mailto:dross@aohc.net)

We look forward to working with you to make the 2026 Fall Conference a success.

## Digital Accessibility: Key Highlights for Ohio Local Health Departments

Federal and state expectations for digital accessibility have increased significantly. The 2024 ADA Web Accessibility Rule now requires WCAG 2.1 AA compliance, and Ohio's IT-09 Digital Accessibility Standard sets a clear benchmark for public entities. Local Health Departments (LHDs) should ensure that websites, documents, forms, and PDFs are accessible to all users.

While final guidance continues to evolve, there is general consensus that Ohio's compliance deadline is **April 24, 2027**. There continues to be discussion about how compliance timelines apply to city health departments, particularly whether they are considered part of a city or a separate political subdivision. Recent conversations suggest that city health departments may be treated as separate entities, which would align them with the 2027 compliance date. That said, this interpretation has not yet been formally confirmed. Additionally, some LHDs may need to meet earlier timelines if their websites or digital services are managed by a city or county entity that is subject to earlier compliance requirements.

AOHC is actively exploring additional ways to support LHDs in advancing these efforts and will continue to share clarifying guidance as it becomes available.

### What LHDs Need to Know

- **Federal ADA Rule (2024):**  
All public-facing digital content must meet WCAG 2.1 AA. This applies to websites, online services, and documents posted online.  
Rule: <https://www.ada.gov/resources/2024-03-08-web-rule/>
- **Ohio IT-09:**  
Establishes statewide digital accessibility requirements. While not binding on LHDs, it represents the standard Ohio expects.  
Policy: <https://das.ohio.gov/technology-and-strategy/policies/it-09>
- **Understanding accessibility checkers and their limitations**  
Built-in accessibility checkers in Microsoft and Adobe are a helpful starting point. These automated tools can identify common technical issues such as missing alt text, document titles, headers, and basic color contrast problems. However, automated checkers alone are not sufficient. They often miss more complex accessibility issues, including:
  - Improper reading order
  - Poor or inconsistent heading structure
  - Text placed over images
  - Inaccurate or misleading alt text
  - Logical issues that affect screen-reader users
  - For this reason, accessibility review typically requires a combination of **automated tools, visual inspection, and manual review**.

### Accessibility tools and guides to support LHDs:

LHDs are encouraged to use multiple tools and references when reviewing digital content, including:

- WAVE Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool (visual checker):  
<https://wave.webaim.org/>
  - WAVE Browser Extensions: <https://wave.webaim.org/extension/>
  - AChecker Web Accessibility Checker: <https://achecker.ca/>
  - Microsoft 365 Accessibility Checker (Word, Excel, PowerPoint):  
<https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/improve-accessibility-with-the-accessibility-checker-a16f6de0-2f39-4a2b-8bd8-5ad801426c7f>
  - Adobe Acrobat Pro PDF Accessibility Tools:

<https://helpx.adobe.com/acrobat/using/create-verify-pdf-accessibility.html>

- W3C WCAG Tools List: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/test-evaluate/tools/>

### High-risk content for LHDs:

“High-risk content” refers to content that *is most likely to present accessibility challenges* and most often cited in accessibility complaints or compliance reviews. For LHDs, this commonly includes:

- Data tables and charts
- Forms and fillable PDFs
- Multi-language content
- Any document posted to a public website

These materials often require additional attention beyond automated checks to ensure they are fully accessible.

## National News

*The Senate returns from break on January 5, and the House comes back to Capitol Hill on January 6.*

## ACA Subsidies Expired—Will Congress Act When They Return?

The [AP reports](#) that the expired subsidies were first given to Affordable Care Act enrollees in 2021 as a temporary measure to help Americans get through the COVID-19 pandemic. Democrats in power at the time extended them, moving the expiration date to the start of 2026.

On average, the more than 20 million subsidized enrollees in the Affordable Care Act program are seeing their premium costs rise by 114% in 2026, according to an analysis by the health care research nonprofit KFF.

Health analysts have predicted the expiration of the subsidies will drive many of the 24 million total Affordable Care Act enrollees — especially younger and healthier Americans — to forgo health insurance coverage altogether.

Last week, a bipartisan group of senators worked to strike a compromise that could resurrect the enhanced ACA premium tax credits, setting up ongoing negotiations and potential action.

## Funding Opportunities

### NACCHO

For more information on all of NACCHO's funding opportunities, click here:  
<https://www.naccho.org/opportunities/opportunities/funding-opportunities>

## Educational Opportunities

### AOHC Educational Opportunities in 2026

Course	Dates
<b>New Employee Training</b> Delaware Health Department 470 S. Sandusky St. Delaware, Ohio 43015	March 4 July 8 November 4
<b>Health Commissioner University</b> Embassy Suites, Dublin 5100 Upper Metro Place Dublin, Ohio 43017	May 11-13
<b>Fiscal Training</b> Embassy Suites, Dublin 5100 Upper Metro Place Dublin, Ohio 43017	April 14-15
<b>LEHDS</b> Embassy Suites, Dublin 5100 Upper Metro Place Dublin, Ohio 43017	April 14-15

Click [here](#) for more information and course descriptions.

**Spring Conference – April 27-29, 2026**

The Ohioan Hotel & Event Center, Lewis Center (formerly the Nationwide Hotel & Conference Center)

**Fall Conference – September 21-23, 2026**

Embassy Suites, Dublin

## New Strategic Financial Planning Training and Skill-Building Series

Thanks to one-time grant funding from the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), the Public Health Service Council of Ohio (PHSCO) is offering a Strategic Financial Planning Training and Skill-Building Series. This pilot project expands upon the financial planning portion of AOHC's Finance for Health Departments course.

Participants will be learning strategic financial planning skills from Noah Stuby and Evan Dillahunt of Greene County Public Health and applying them to their own health departments' financial data.

Due to the hands-on nature of this training and support opportunity, a total of 10 local health departments can be accommodated—two from each AOHC district. A registration fee of \$150 will be charged to cover food and beverage costs that are unallowable under the grant.

This series will include four days of in-person training and four virtual toll-gate sessions spread over seven months. **Attendance is mandatory for all eight sessions.**

- In-person training sessions will be held at the AOHC office on January 29, March 12, May 14, and July 7, 2026.
- Virtual sessions will be held on February 12, April 9, May 28, and July 21, 2026.

To be considered for this opportunity, please apply at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FinancialSkillsCourse> between **December 22, 2025, and January 9, 2026**. All applicants will be notified of selection decisions by January 16, 2026.

AOHC is pleased to support this pilot project. Please direct any questions to Anne Goon at [director@phsco.org](mailto:director@phsco.org).

## **Call for Abstracts: 2026 Ohio Public Health Combined Conference--Deadline Extended**

AOHC, Ohio Department of Health, Ohio Association of Boards of Health, Ohio Environmental Health Association, Ohio Public Health Association, and the Ohio Society for Public Health Education are excited to announce that abstract submissions are now open for the 2026 Ohio Public Health Conference!

This year's conference focuses on creating meaningful learning opportunities, advancing public health practice, and recognizing the dedication of Ohio's public health workforce. We welcome submissions that highlight innovative programs, research, best practices, lessons learned, and strategies that strengthen and support public health in Ohio.

Topics of interest and full submission details are included in the [Call for Abstracts](#). Deadline to submit: Friday, January 16, 2026

We encourage public health professionals, partners, and leaders across Ohio to share their expertise and help shape an inspiring and impactful 2026 conference. Submit your abstract here: [Abstract Submission](#)



©2026 AOHC | Association of Ohio Health Commissioners  
110A Northwoods Blvd - Suite A2, Columbus, OH 43235  
voice: (614) 781-9556  
fax: (614) 781-9558  
email: [aohc\\_2@aohc.net](mailto:aohc_2@aohc.net)