

Central MA Regional Health Department



Grafton, Shrewsbury, West Boylston

Building a Stronger Regional Health Department from the Ground Up

Public Health Excellence (PHE) funds helped the Towns of Shrewsbury, Grafton, and West Boylston come together in July 2025 to form the Central Mass Regional Health Department, improving access, timeliness, and scope of public health services across all three communities. In its first year, the Department built its team, listened to residents, and brought health education directly into the community.

Community Voices Shape Opioid Recovery

Recovery from substance use disorder is an ongoing journey, yet the services meant to support it are often episodic and disconnected. To better understand local needs, the Department held community listening sessions in Shrewsbury and West Boylston, **uncovering shared priorities between the two communities and a common truth: access to care requires trust, simplicity, and proximity – and without them, even available services go unused.** Based on this community input, the Department proposed pooling funds across communities to reduce duplication and expand capacity, and creating a Regional Opioid Task Force to oversee how opioid funds are used.



Bringing Health Education Directly to Residents

Throughout the year, the Department met residents where they **already gather**, hosting immunization clinics, health fairs at high schools/Councils on Aging, and providing fall prevention and tick safety presentations from the Regional Public Health Nurse. **The Department also used newsletters to reach residents directly, keeping the community informed and protected at every turn.**



"At the core of our approach, we are committed to programming that is reflective of community priorities, sustainable, and impactful to those affected by the opioid epidemic. We look forward to continued engagement with the community as we begin programming around substance use prevention, intervention, and treatment!"

Annette Garcia, Central MA Regional Health Department Director