

# Vermont Community Sunscreen Dispenser Program

Site Survey Results | 2024



The Vermont Community Sunscreen Dispenser Program, coordinated by [Vermonters Taking Action Against Cancer](#) (VTAAC), Dartmouth Cancer Center, University of Vermont Cancer Center, and IMPACT Melanoma, supplied **community park and recreation sites** and **local health offices** with a free pole-mounted automated sunscreen dispenser and a start up supply of sunscreen. To understand the implementation and effectiveness of the program in 2024, a survey was sent to all **40 sunscreen dispenser recipients from 2023 and 2024**. This brief summarizes key findings from the 21 community sites (75% response rate) and 12 local health offices (100% response rate) who responded to the survey.



For more information and a map of free sunscreen sites, visit [VTAAC's Community Sunscreen Dispenser Program webpage](#).

## How did **community sites** enhance sun safety for Vermonters in 2024?

All community sites responding to the survey used their sunscreen dispenser in summer 2024. The dispensers were located by doors leading in and out of main buildings, near pools or beaches, moved around for events or by season, and near other high trafficked areas. All sites shared that the implementation of the sunscreen dispenser went well.

### **43%** used all of their initial sunscreen supply.

Among the sites that used their initial supply, at least 40% were unable to obtain additional sunscreen. About 13% of sites reported obtaining additional sunscreen as a challenge.

### **20%** shared that visitors' low receptiveness to free sunscreen was a challenge.

Other challenges included misconceptions that sunscreen is only needed on sunny days, inadequate signage, dispenser assembly, and vandalism or damage to the dispenser.

### **33%** used the sun safety social media and press release toolkit.

The toolkit provided by the sunscreen dispenser program was used to post to social media and distribute printed materials.

### **All but one** site implemented at least one sun safety activity in addition to the sunscreen dispenser.

The most common activities were promoting sun safety among youth in summer camps/programs and among staff.

### **Community sites have plans to sustain or expand their sun safety efforts.**

Plans involve enhancing messaging through diverse communication channels, improving free sunscreen signage, and obtaining additional sun safety materials, such as shades and additional sunscreen.

"This was just the start of sun safety for us. **This is going to become the norm for us to make sun safety a priority** for all outdoor events and part of our ongoing wellness education programming annually."

– Community site sunscreen dispenser recipient

## How did local health offices enhance sun safety for Vermonters in 2024?

Of the 12 local health offices, 9 used the sunscreen dispenser for at least one community event. Of those who used the dispenser, about 90% used it at community celebrations/festivals and 56% at Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) clinics or other family and child health activities and services. Three offices received the dispenser too late in the season to use it and are looking for future opportunities.

### **43%** of those who used the dispenser reported low receptiveness to free sunscreen as a challenge.

Other challenges included the misconception that sunscreen is only needed on sunny days, difficulty transporting the dispenser, lack of opportunities to use it, and other health office programming priorities.

### **42%** used the sun safety social media and press release toolkit.

Of those who did, most posted to social media, distributed printed materials, or shared it with community partners.

**Local health offices and their patrons had a positive experience using the sunscreen dispensers.** Many offices plan to use it at more community events in the future.

“Staff and community members **engaged positively with the sunscreen dispensers and sun safety outreach.** Staff provided feedback that community members responded especially well to events where they had materials to give out, such as the sunscreen samples, educational cards, or UV [ultraviolet] bracelets.”

– Local health office sunscreen dispenser recipient

### **Ways to use the findings of this brief:**

- Inform future efforts to increase sun safety behaviors among visitors of community sites and local health offices.
- Enhance messaging to the public about the need for sunscreen, including on cloudy days and during winter.
- Find ways to provide supports for sites to maintain their sunscreen dispensers and increase their use – including clear instructions for set up and take down, regular maintenance, and obtaining additional sunscreen.

*This survey was conducted by Professional Data Analysts, external evaluator, in partnership with VTAAC and with support from the Vermont Department of Health Comprehensive Cancer Control Program. Email Sharon Mallory, MPH, at [Sharon.Mallory@Vermont.gov](mailto:Sharon.Mallory@Vermont.gov) with questions.*

“People were very appreciative! So often we would hear patrons say, ‘**oh thank goodness because we forgot our [sunscreen]**.’ We didn’t keep any data but anecdotally we all feel like there were less sunburns at the lake this year and I think the consistent use of the dispenser — or just seeing the dispenser to remind patrons to apply sunscreen — was a major factor.”

– Community site sunscreen dispenser recipient