

2024

Annual Report

Vilas
COUNTY

Public Health
Department



Vilas County Public Health Department

330 Court Street, Eagle River, WI 54521

715-479-3656

<https://health.vilascountywi.gov>

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Department Overview

Our Mission

Protecting and promoting the health and safety of the people of Vilas County through partnerships with our community.

Our Vision

Everyone living their best life.

Our Core Values

- Accountability
- Empowerment
- Equity
- Flexibility
- Honesty/Integrity



Vilas County Board of Health

Carolyn Ritter
Lake Edwards
Arleen Harsvick
Joseph Wildcat, Sr.
Ronald Kressin – Retired February 2024

Advisory Board

Michael Schaars, MD
Julie Christensen, RN
Dave Poupart, RN
Sandra Supinski, RS

Vilas County Public Health Department Staff

Tammi Boers, RS, BS
Director/Health Officer

Stephanie Van Natta, RN, BS, IBCLC
Asst. Director/Deputy Health Officer
WIC Director and CPA – began September 2024

Dominica (Nica) Hedberg, RN, BSN
Public Health Nurse

Rachael Cornelius, CMA (AAMA), BSLA
Community Health Coordinator

Brenda Husing, RD, CD, CLS – through August 2024
Registered Dietician

Bobbie Halada – began May 2024
Administrative Assistant II

Heidi Kissner – through May 2024
Administrative Assistant II

Amy Springer, RS, BS
Registered Sanitarian

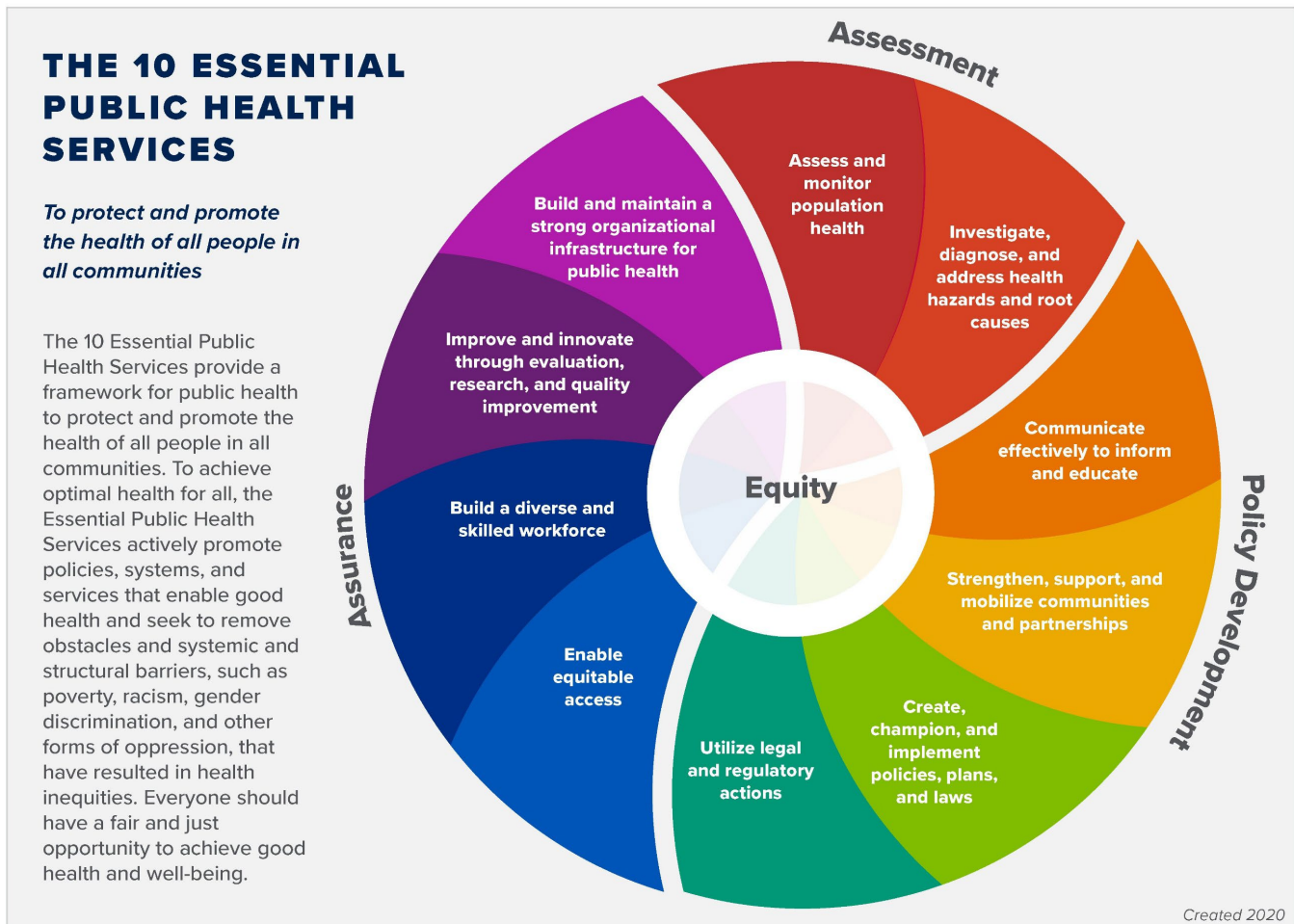
Graydon Skok, BS
Environmental Health Technician

Sarah Zelten, BSN, RN – through August 2024
Environmental Health Technician

10 Essential Public Health Services Overview

The 10 Essential Public Health Services (EPHS) describe the public health activities that all communities should undertake to achieve optimal health for all.

EPHS promotes policies, systems, and overall community conditions, aligning with the three core functions of public health: assessment, policy development, and assurance.



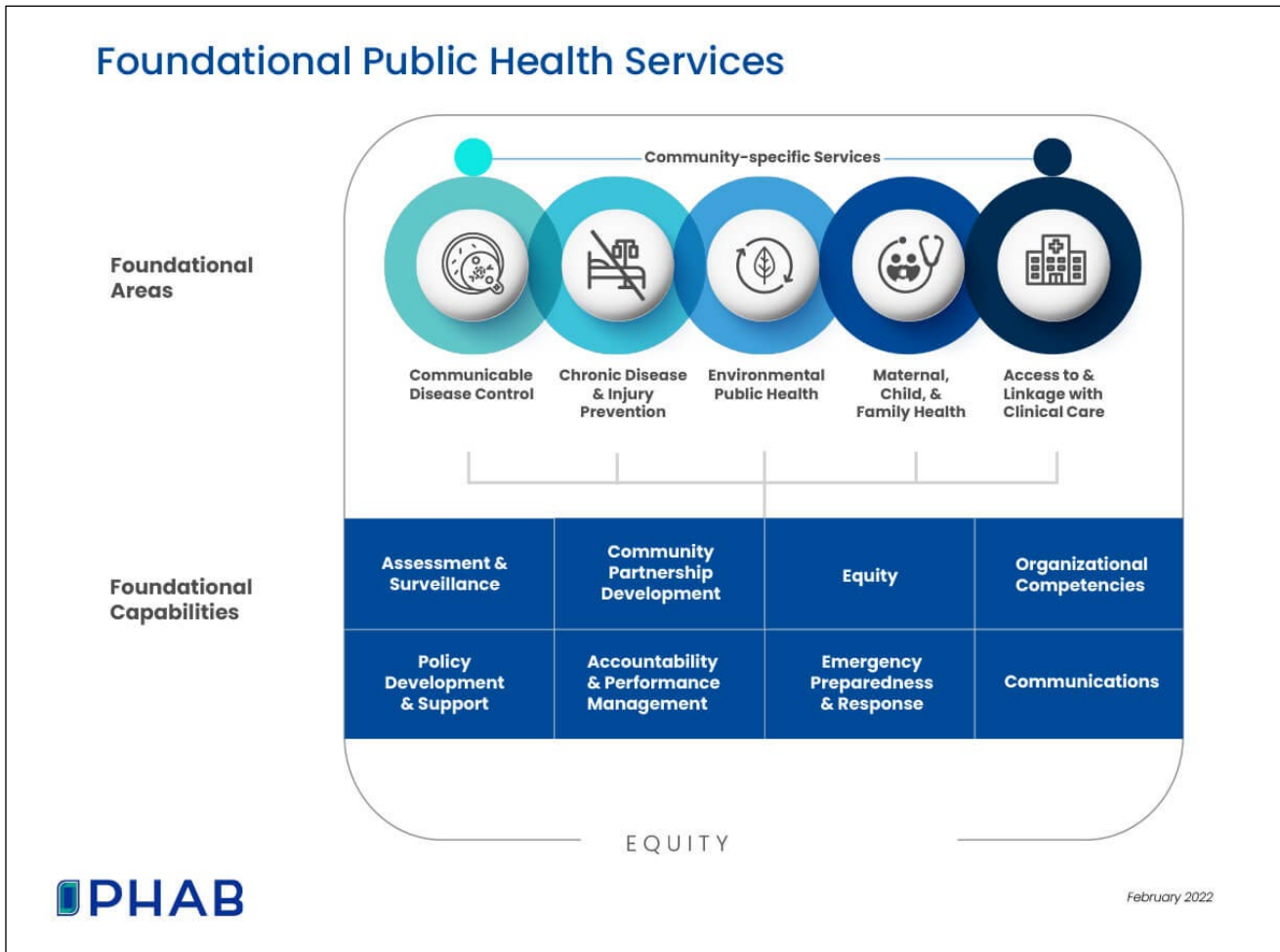
However, public health has changed over the past 25 years, and many public health leaders agreed it was time to revisit how the 10 Essential Service Framework can better reflect current and future practice and how it can be used to create communities where people can achieve their best possible health.

High-performing public health departments use data, evidence-based practices to be good stewards of public money and to address the community priorities. Delivering services and protections in our communities at this level requires a strong foundation of public health infrastructure.

Introducing the Foundational Public Health Services

The Foundational Public Health Services framework provides an overview of the responsibilities of public health and sets a standard for what should be available in every county. Although communities have different needs, the FPHS framework sets the minimum level of services that should occur and focuses on community health, well-being, and achieving health for all.

There are five Foundational Areas and eight Foundational Capabilities.



How do the 10 Essential Services of Public Health (EPHS) and the Foundational Public Health Services (FPHS) Connect?

The 10 EPHS and FPHS were developed for different reasons. The 10 EPHS was developed to describe the activities the public health should work on in all communities. The FPHS was developed to provide an infrastructure of public health services to make the case for sustainable funding and to describe what is needed everywhere for public health to function anywhere.

Foundational Public Health Services defines what work is required by local health departments, and the 10 Essential Public Health Services illustrates how that work is done. This implementation of public health best practice is also required by State Statute.

Foundational Public Health Services – VCPHD

Foundational Areas (public health programs and services aimed at improving the health of the community).



Communicable Disease Control

- Disease Investigation
- Disease Prevention Education
- Immunizations
- Immunization Coalition



Chronic Disease & Injury Prevention

- Vilas County Coalition on Activity & Nutrition
- Vilas County Youth Coalition
- Tri-County Mental Health Coalition
- Northwoods Tobacco-Free Coalition



Environmental Public Health

- Animal Bite Investigation
- Child Lead Poisoning
- WI DATCP Licensing & Inspection Program
- WI DNR Transient Community Water Program
- Human Health Hazard Investigation
- Lead
- Radon
- WellTAP



Maternal, Child, & Family Health

- Growing Together – Family Support Group
- Community Baby Shower
- Home Visitation Program
- Breastfeeding Coalition
- WIC



Access to & Linkage to Clinical Care

- Immunizations
- TB Skin Testing
- Blood Pressure Checks

Foundational Capabilities (consist of the skills and capacities needed to support basic public health programs and activities).

Assessment & Surveillance

- Community Health Assessment
- Disease Surveillance

Community Partnership Development

- Community Health Improvement Plan

Optimal Health for All/Equity

- Staff Training
- Core Competency Assessment

Organizational Competency

- Workforce Development Plan
- Vilas County

Policy Development & Support

- Policy Support from Board of Health
- Policy Development & Support from Staff
- Creation & Updating Policies

Accountability & Performance Management

- Strategic Plan
- Performance Management Plan

Emergency Preparedness & Response

- Public Health Emergency Plan
- Local Emergency Planning Committee

Communications

- Health Promotion Outreach
- Community Engagement
- Communications Plan

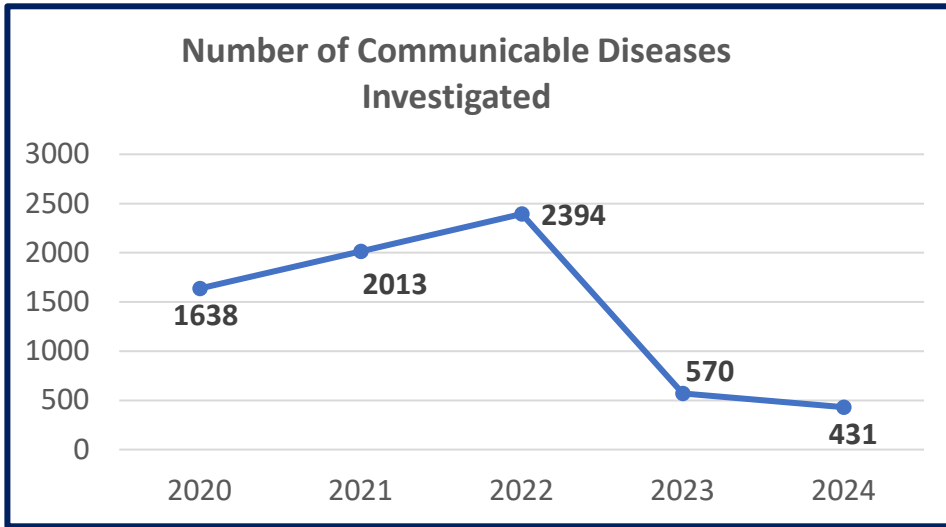
Communicable Disease and Control

Wis. Stat. 252.05: Any health care provider who knows or has reason to believe a person treated or visited has a communicable disease is required to report per Administrative Rule DHS 145.04 (1). This includes reporting of a case or suspected case.

Reportable Diseases include all illnesses consistent with a disease whether it is lab confirmed.

Probable Diseases are those illnesses that meet the clinical case definition and are not laboratory confirmed.

Confirmed Diseases are illnesses that meet the case definition and are confirmed by laboratory testing.



2024 Top Communicable Disease

1. Coronavirus – **179**
2. Lyme Disease – **78**
3. Ehrlichiosis/Anaplasmosis – **29**
4. Chlamydia – **20**
5. Pertussis (whooping cough) – **18**
6. Giardiasis – **10**
7. Influenza (flu) – **10**

Vilas County Public Health Department (VCPHD) provides tuberculosis skin tests to screen health care workers, school employees, and students before they enter the workforce to make sure they do not spread disease.

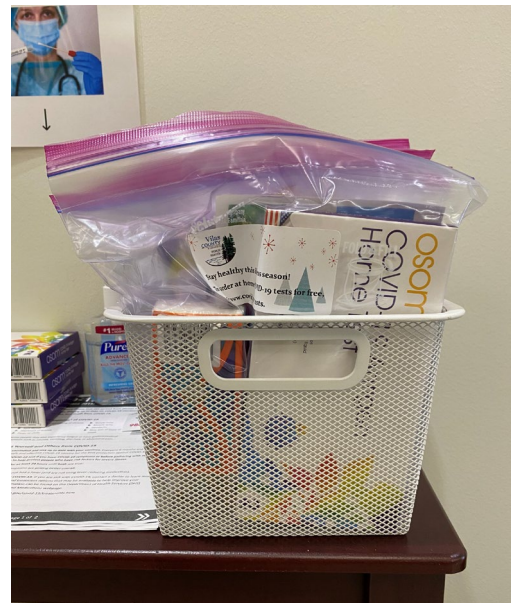
We provided 69 skin tests in 2024.

Respiratory Illnesses

In 2024, VCPHD continued to do community outreach to prevent respiratory illnesses, like the common cold, influenza (flu), respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and COVID.

We used radio ads, press releases, Facebook posts, information and resources on our website, and distributed respiratory illness kits.

Over **500** respiratory illness kits were distributed throughout the county at local libraries and town offices.



Chronic Disease & Prevention

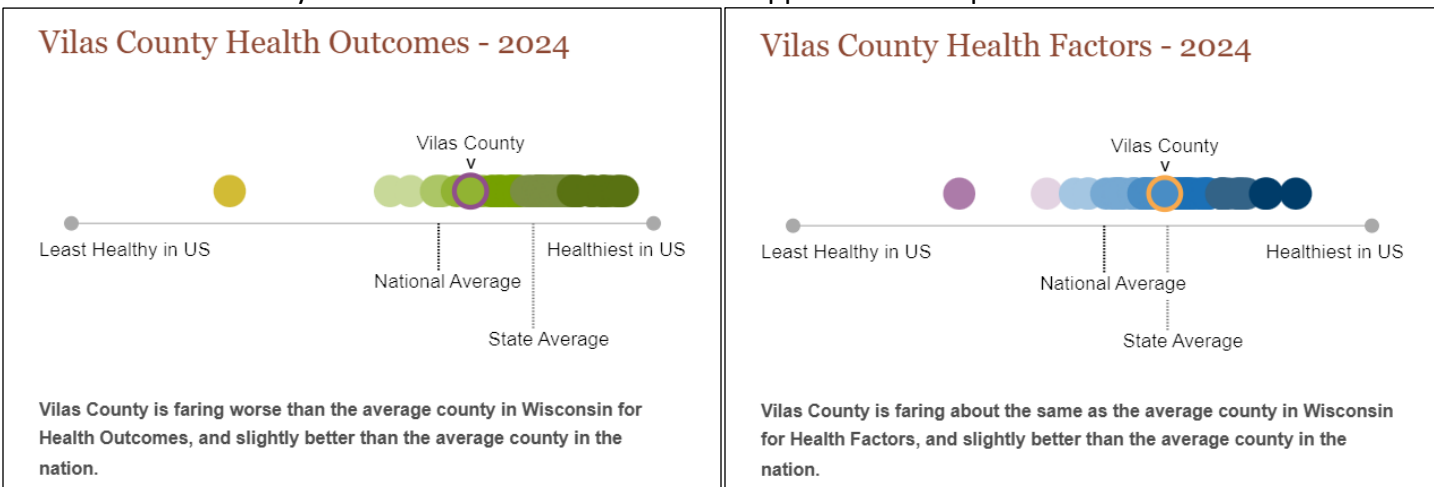
Top Causes of Death in Vilas County

1. Malignant Neoplasms (cancer) – **78**
2. Diseases of the Heart – **75**
3. Other Causes – **54**
4. Accidents/Unintentional Injuries – **26**
5. COVID-19 – **20**
6. Cerebrovascular Diseases (conditions that affect the flow of blood to the brain) – **16**
7. Chronic Lower Respiratory Diseases – **15**

Source: WI WISH <https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/wish/index.htm> (Data is from 2022 – most current available)

2024 County Health Rankings

The County Health Rankings are provided by the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps program through the UW-Population Health Institute. This program provides data, evidence, guidance, and examples to build awareness of the many factors that affect health and to support health improvement for all.



Key Findings for Vilas County:

- **9,800** Premature Death Rate (vs. WI at 7,100) – Years of potential life lost before age 75/100,000 population (age-adjusted).
- **18%** Children in Poverty (vs. WI at 13%)
- **70%** Alcohol-Impaired Driving Deaths (vs. WI at 35%)
- **1380:1** Primary Care Physicians (vs. WI at 1,250:1)
- **3.9%** Unemployment (vs. WI at 2.9%)
- **2,122** Preventable Hospital Stays (vs. WI at 2,451)
- **99.1** Dentists (vs. WI at 1,360:1)
- **57%** Mammography Screening (vs. WI at 50%)
- **9%** Uninsured (vs. WI at 6%)

For the full report, visit <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org>

Vilas County Public Health Department works collaboratively with community partners to coordinate and implement prevention programs. This is completed through numerous coalitions throughout the county.

Coalition on Activity and Nutrition (CAN)

The Vilas County Coalition on Activity and Nutrition (CAN) has come together to identify chronic illnesses in our area and provide evidence-based strategies within our community. The coalition is comprised of school districts, county departments, Northwoods Children Museum, Vilas Area Biking and Walking Council, local libraries, Peter Christensen Health Center, and Trees for Tomorrow. The focus of the coalition is to support physical activity and nutrition to help residents be able to choose healthier lifestyles.

Milestone Senior Living - Healthcare Fair Event

Participated at the Milestone Senior Living - Healthcare Fair Event to provide chronic disease prevention, nutrition education, and blood pressure checks. **There were approximately 75 attendees (8/28/24).**

Kids Movement Class

The class was hosted by the Children’s Northwoods Children’s Museum with Wild Side Fitness. The event was a strategy by CAN to increase physical activity in children. The classes were held on 10/01/24 and 10/15/24. **There were 25 and 20 children participating, respectively.**



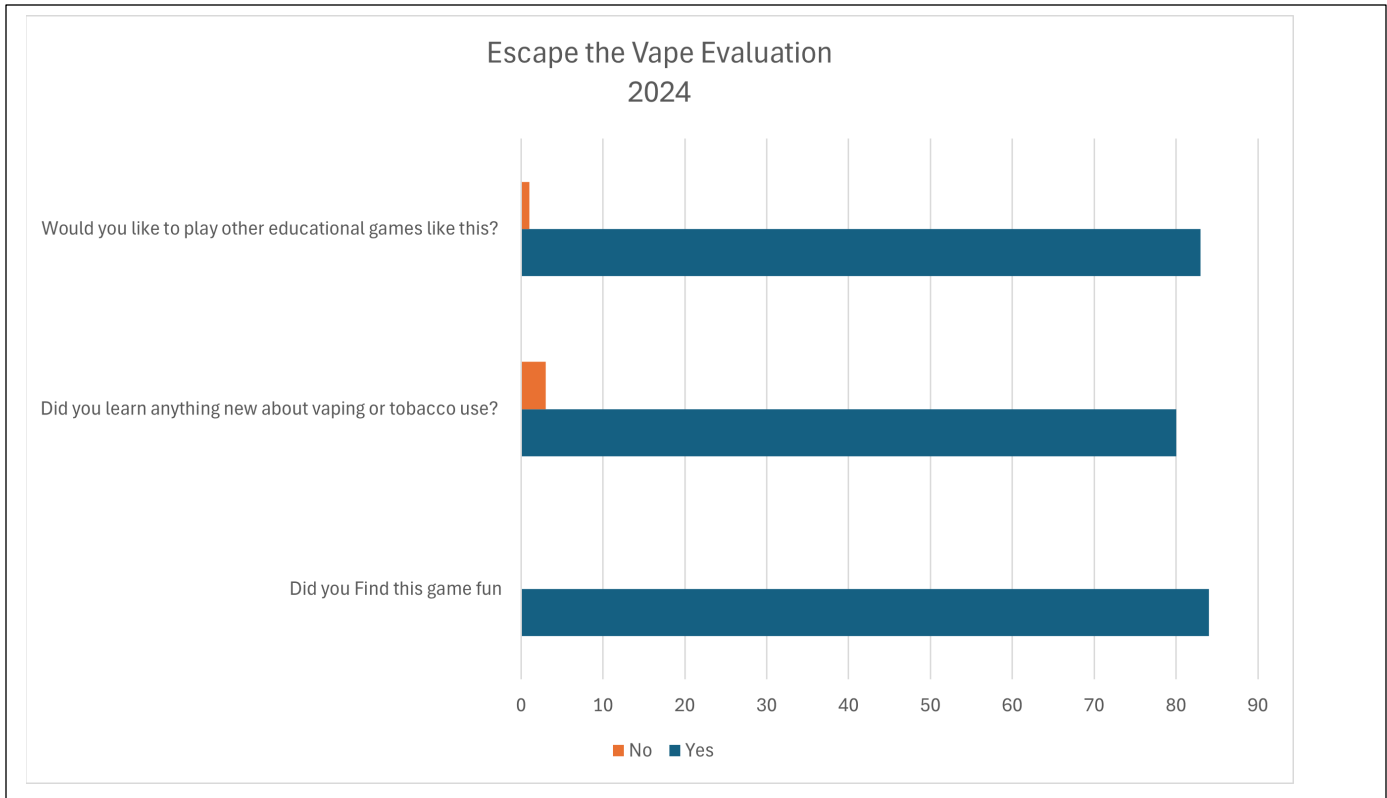
Northwood’s Tobacco-Free Coalition (NWTFC)

NWTFC is made up of seven Northwoods counties: Florence, Forest, Langlade, Lincoln, Price, Oneida, and Vilas and focuses on tobacco and nicotine prevention and use. Together the counties work to address health concerns through outreach and education with local and state leaders and local school districts.

Escape the Vape

An interactive activity with Northland Pines 6th Grade Students to provide education on nicotine use prevention. There were 78 students (3/18/24). Northland Pines 5th Grade Students were also provided with the same opportunity on 4/4/24; **there were 68 students.**

This was held again for Northland Pines 6th Grade Students on 12/6/24; **there were 53 students.**



Unfiltered Youth Voice: Anti-vaping

An interactive program provided to Northland Pines 5th Grade Students; there were 80+ students. This was the first year this program was implemented in Vilas County. The program’s goals are to

- Educate and raise awareness about the dangers of vaping and tobacco use and marketing tactics of the tobacco/vape/nicotine companies,
- Provide a space for youth to discuss the impact of tobacco/vaping/nicotine on their lives, and
- Offer resources to support youth in overcoming nicotine addiction.

Students were encouraged to write or draw on their “impact cards” which were sent to the capitol as part of a state-wide initiative to educate policy/decision makers about the harmful effects of these products on youth and communities.

WINS

Vilas County had 45 assigned inspections, but only 29 were formally completed. Inspections were not completed due to a variety of reasons such as a business is permanently closed, no longer sells tobacco, we arrive outside of business hours, the participants know someone at the business, or the participants feel uncomfortable/unsafe going in.

There was a total of 3 tobacco sales in Vilas County. The places that sold were re-checked and they did not sell again.

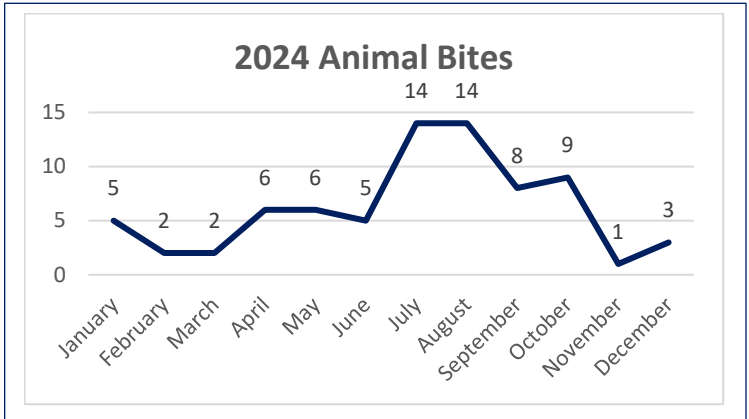
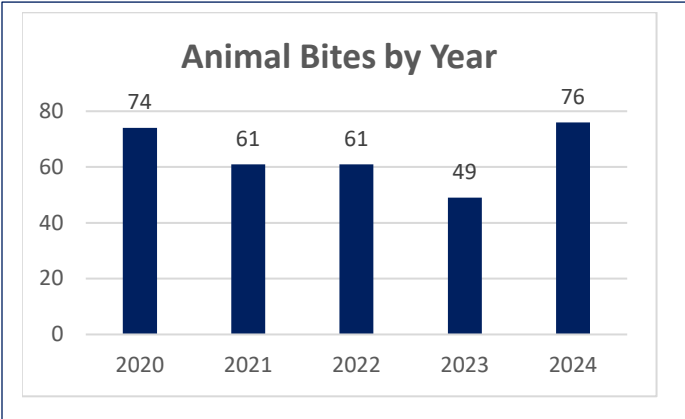
In total, for all 7 counties (Forest, Florence, Langlade, Lincoln, Oneida, Price, & Vilas) there were 13 sales out of 206 assigned inspections. This means **94% of the NTWFC region did not sell to minors.**

Environmental Public Health

Animal Bites

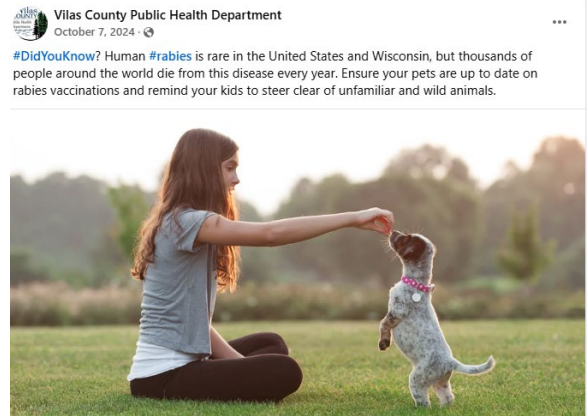
VCPHD investigates all animal bites according to Vilas County Chapter 10: Animal Control and Welfare. We work closely with law enforcement, the local humane officer, area emergency rooms, local animal shelters, and veterinarians to prevent rabies.

We also sent in 4 bats to the WI State Lab of Hygiene for rabies testing – all were negative.



Key Takeaways from Animal Bite Investigations:

- Most bites or bat contact occur during the summer months.
- Most people do not know how to safely remove bats from cabins or homes.
- 15% (10 out of 66) of the dogs that bit were not current on rabies vaccinations.



Lead

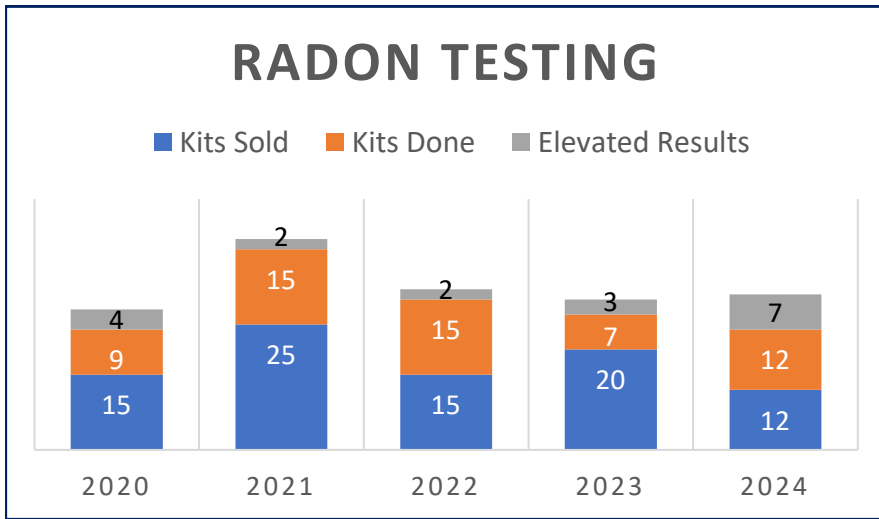
The VCPHD Lead Program promotes and provides blood lead screening of children 6 months to 6 years of age. In 2024, a lead outreach campaign to local childcare providers was launched to inform their participating families. Educational handouts were provided to 7 childcare providers in the county.

One childcare provider stated that the resources provided were good information of how children come in contact with lead, and a good reminder of how to prevent lead poisoning in young children.



Radon

In 2024, 12 Radon kits were sold, 12 were completed, and 7 were elevated (radon levels of 4 picocuries per Liter (4 pCi/L) or higher). The lowest radon test result level was 1.6 pCi/L and the highest was 7.1 pCi/L.



Human Health Hazards

The Vilas County Public Health Department (VCPHD) investigates situations with the potential of a human health hazard, as defined by Chapter 14 Vilas County Human Health Hazards Ordinance. Enforcement of the Human Health ordinance is the role of the Vilas County Board of Health and Health Officer.

Human Health Hazards include issues like garbage, water issues (no running water), abandoned/ dilapidated structures, items where vectors can live, and other issues that affect public health. We continued to work on 12 ongoing cases that were not resolved in past years and 28 new cases with our partners: Vilas County Social Services, Vilas County Zoning Department, Vilas County Sheriff's Office, and Vilas County Corporation Counsel.

By the end of 2024:

- 13 human health hazards were resolved, and
- 14 human health hazard complaints did not meet the definition of a human health hazard.

New Cases	2023	2024
Garbage	8	5
Mold	1	4
Water Issues	3	4
Air Quality	0	1
Abandoned/ Dilapidated Structure	3	1
Misc. items in the yard, i.e. tires, containers	2	5
*Other	1	7



*Other complaints consist of hoarding, domestic animal feces, or vectors such as rats.

Food Safety and Recreational Licensing

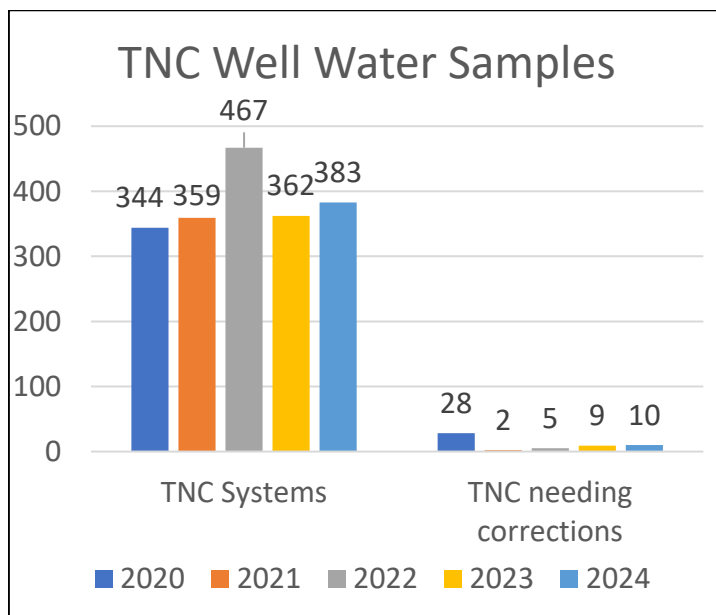
Type of Facility Inspected	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Restaurants	201	211	214	195	167
Campgrounds	31	35	36	36	38
Recreational Camps	12	12	12	12	11
Pools	32	32	31	32	35
Bed and Breakfast	4	4	3	3	2
Tourist Rooming Houses	812	890	988	991	1142
Hotels/Motels	107	99	100	100	97
Schools	8	8	8	8	8
Retail Food Establishment	76	77	75	77	83
Temporary Food Stands	7	7	14	15	22
Tattoo/Body Piercing	0	3	2	2 & 1 temporary	3

The Vilas County Public Health Department (VCPHD) is contracted as an agent of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) to provide public health inspections and licensing for a variety of establishments. For 2024, 1608 licenses were issued for public facilities such as taverns, restaurants, temporary food stands, hotels/ motels, tourist rooming houses, bed and breakfasts, recreation and education camps, campgrounds, swimming pools, retail food stores (grocery and convenience), and body art facilities.

Water Quality Issues

VCPHD offers free annual well water testing to low-income families with pregnant women or children aged 1 or less in their home. Water is tested for bacteria and nitrates, which can be harmful to pregnant women and children. In 2024, we provided 3 water test kits.

Through a contract with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), transient non-community (TNC) water supply systems (wells that serve 25 or more people 60 or more days a year) and private wells were tested and inspected in the county, ensuring safe and dependable water for the public.



→ **There were 88 Homeowner kits** (bacteria, nitrates, arsenic & cumulative) tested.

→ **A total of 2,676 water samples were tested** in-house or shipped down to the ERIC Lab (UW-Oshkosh) for further testing.

→ **925 tourist rooming house (TRH) Nitrate samples were tested.** 10 of these samples came back above the maximum contaminant level (MCL) of 10mg/L.

For more information on well water, visit:

<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Wells>

We have contracted with UW-Oshkosh to complete the DATCP and DNR programs addressed above.

Beach Testing

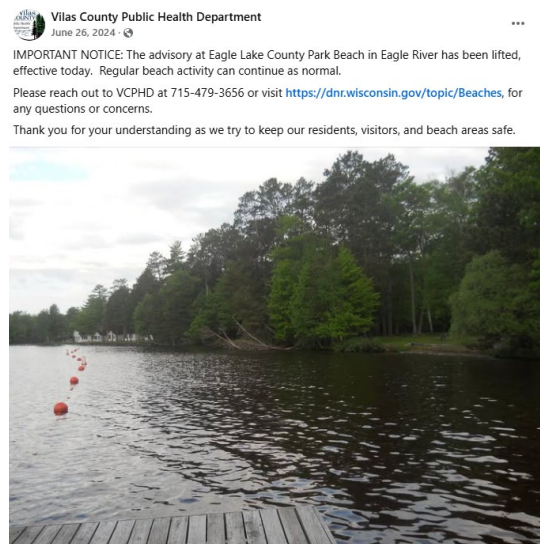
11 public beaches are monitored at several locations throughout the summer (Memorial Day weekend - Labor Day weekend). The beach water is tested for fecal coliforms and *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) as indicators of more hazardous bacteria. This is completed by summer interns arranged through UW-Oshkosh.

Public Beaches monitored:

- Crystal Lake
- Big Arbor Vitae
- Brandy Lake
- Black Oak Lake
- Eagle Lake
- Hunter Lake
- Hunter Lake
- Silver Lake
- Torch Lake
- Koller Memorial Park
- Little Star Beach

The Health Department does address complaints about blue-green algae blooms on public beaches and boat landings. **We had 3 complaints in 2024.**

If blue-green algae is observed at time of visit, beaches and/or boat landings are posted with a caution signage.



Maternal, Child, & Family Health

Since 2023, Vilas County Public Health Department's Maternal and Child Health Program has become more robust to take a proactive approach to support healthy development for all families in our community.

Home Visitation with Baby Program

In 2024, VCPHD continued to offer the Home Visitation with Baby program. This home visit program provides education and support for new families in the following areas: newborn safety, safe sleep, nutrition, breastfeeding, developmental milestones, immunizations, and post-partum mental health.

This program is for all new moms and families at no cost. **12 Home visits were completed in 2024.**

Community Baby Shower

In May, VCPHD hosted the first Community Baby Shower. Partners that helped make this a successful event included: local libraries, VC Social Services, Tri County Council for Domestic Abuse, healthcare providers, Northwood's Child Development Center, Head Start, Peter Christensen Community Health, Birth to 3, and mental health and stress relief agencies.

The baby shower was for pregnant women and participating families with their children ages 0 – 12 months of age.

The event was promoted through press releases, radio, VCPHD website, Facebook posts, and personal invitations. Most participants heard about the event through a family or friend.

We had a low turnout of 8 families, but all participants agreed or strongly agreed that it was worth their time, and all would recommend it to others.



Growing Together Classes

In 2024, VCPHD began collaborating with Olson Memorial Library to offer learning opportunities for families with young children.

In November, mindfulness/mental health theme for families was provided and a hands-on activity leading into the holiday season. **Participation: 8 kids and 6 adults.**

In December, lead prevention was provided and a hands-on activity to promote the use of senses. **Participation: 5 kids and 3 adults.**

The program was promoted through media, Facebook posts, the Health Department's website, and word of mouth.



Join us for a fun activity and learning opportunity for children and their grown-up!

Second Thursday of every month
Olson Memorial Library
9:30 AM - 10:30 AM

- Craft or activity every session
- No fee
- Learn about area resources
- Connect with your children
- Connect with other Families

Next meeting:
Thursday November 14th
Activity: Paint your own ceramic tray

For accurate material amounts please RSVP using QR code below:



Growing Together
Family Support Group -brought to you by the Vilas County Public Health Department

WIC – Nutrition

In 2024, the Vilas County WIC program provided nutrition services to **215** clients.

- Breastfeeding incidence is 83%.
- Referrals were made to Foodshare, primary care providers, dental services, and other food resources in our community.

What families like most about Vilas County WIC:

“I’ve never felt judged, and that’s a big win for a program who work with families.”

“At WIC they offer breastfeeding information that so many hospitals don’t share.”

“I really like how helpful and kind everyone is.”

Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP)

- Participants enrolled in WIC are eligible for FMNP vouchers during the summer months.
- In 2024, **475 participants were issued \$30 in vouchers** to use at local farmers markets or farm stands for fruits and vegetables.

Access to & Linkage with Clinical Care


Immunizations for Children and Adults

VCPHD provides vaccines at no cost to resident's age birth to 19 who qualify through the Wisconsin Vaccine for Children's Program. Adult vaccines are also offered, such as Tetanus, Influenza (flu), and Hepatitis B.

Vaccinations					
Type	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
COVID Vaccine	-	1153	88	22	1
Influenza (flu)	1055 28 – kids	769 15 – kids	697 16 – kids	502 (253 were High Dose 65+)	399 (215 were High Dose 65+)
Tetanus/Pertussis	31	24	46	21	15
Hepatitis A	-	-	12	2	0
Hepatitis B	14	-	14	5	8
Monkey Pox	-	-	2	2	-
Meningococcal	-	-	0	0	1



We provided 23 off-site flu clinics throughout the county in 2024 & gave a total of 156 flu shots.



Avoid The Flu!

2024 SEASONAL FLU SHOT SCHEDULE
VILAS COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

The Vilas County Health Department will be conducting flu clinics as follows:


OCTOBER 8 TUESDAY	LAC DU FLAMBEAU TOWN HALL	2:30 PM – 3:30 PM
OCTOBER 14 MONDAY	ST. GERMAIN COMMUNITY CENTER	9:00 AM – 10:00 AM
OCTOBER 15 TUESDAY	Boulder Junction Community Center Presque Isle Community Center Winchester Town Hall	2:30 PM – 3:30 PM 9:30AM – 11:00AM 11:30AM - 12:30PM
OCTOBER 17 THURSDAY	Manitowish Waters Community Center Sayner – Shepard of the Lakes Lutheran Church	2:30PM - 3:30PM 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM
OCTOBER 21 MONDAY	ARBOR VITAE TOWN HALL	9:30AM - 10:30AM
OCTOBER 22 TUESDAY	KALMAR CENTER – EAGLE RIVER LAND O LAKES FIRE BARN CONOVER COMMUNITY CENTER	1:00 PM – 3:00 PM 9:00 AM – 10:00 AM 10:30 AM – 11:30 AM
OCTOBER 24 THURSDAY	PHELPS TOWN HALL	10:00 AM – 11:00 AM

The cost of the Quadrivalent (all ages) flu shot is \$30.00.
The cost of the High Dose – (65 and older) flu shot is \$75.00.
These are payable in cash or check. We will bill Medicare Part B. If you have any questions on billing, please call 715-479-3656.

There are some restrictions. All clinics are subject to vaccine supply.

Any clinic cancellations will be announced on the radio.

For more information call the Vilas County Public Health Department : **715-479-3656**



Vilas County Public Health Department
November 12, 2024

Flu shots are still available at the Vilas County Public Health Department by appointment! Call 715-479-3656 to schedule.



Vilas County Public Health Department
August 22, 2024

The Vilas County Public Health Department can help you look up whether your child is up to date on vaccines and give you information on vaccines that may be due. Call 715-479-3656.



Blood Pressure Checks

Due to the rural nature of our community and access to healthcare, a Public Health Nurses began to provide blood pressure checks. Some of these checks were provided at the Milestone Senior Living – Healthcare Fair Event (8/28/24).



Oral Health

In 2024, NorthLakes Community Clinic offered preventative dental services including an oral health screening, fluoride varnish applications, sealant placement, sealant retention, and oral health education to all children grades Pre-K through 12th at no charge.

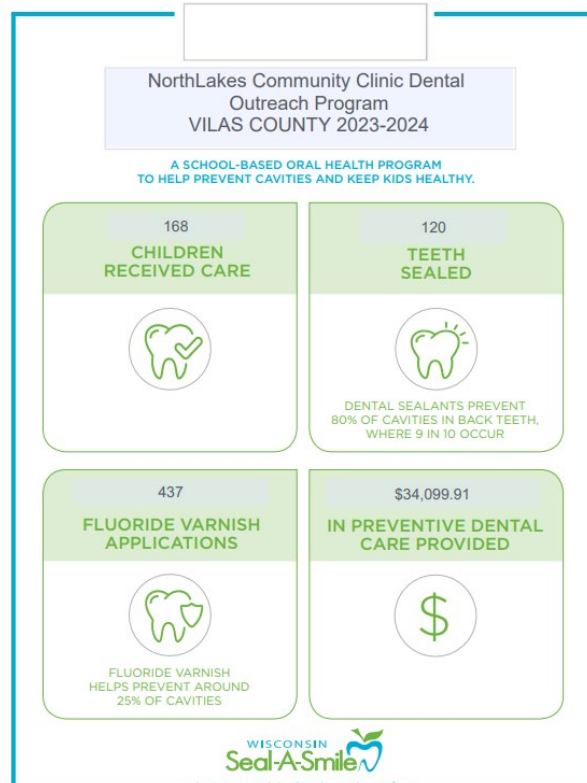
NorthLakes Community Clinic sees students at the following schools:

- Christ Lutheran School
- Lac Du Flambeau Elementary (4K students only)
- North Lakeland Elementary
- Phelps School District

In Vilas County, during the 2023 -2024 school year:

- 168 students received care
- 81 students (48.21%) were covered by Medicaid
- 41 students received sealants; 166 students received fluoride applications
- 36 students (21.43%) have untreated decay/cavities

NorthLakes Community Clinic’s Superior Smiles dental program is funded in part by Wisconsin Seal-A-Smile in collaboration with the Children’s Health Alliance of Wisconsin and the Division of Public Oral Health Program.



Assessment & Surveillance

Data drives what we do at the Health Department. It is how we understand what the health of our community is as a whole, and among different populations that may face barriers to being healthy. We look at census data, county health rankings, performance measures in our performance management plan and the community health improvement plan, review communicable disease data and school syndromic surveillance data, refer to our community health assessment data, and program and service evaluations. This report contains many of those data results throughout each section.

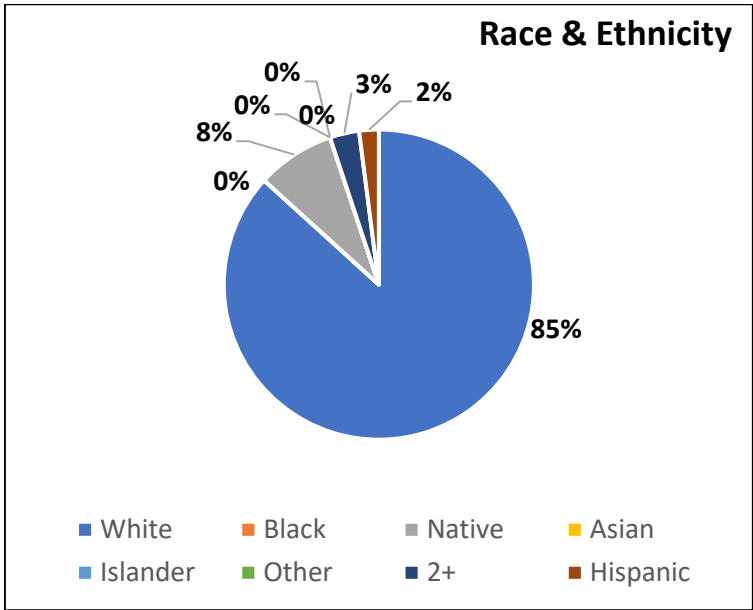
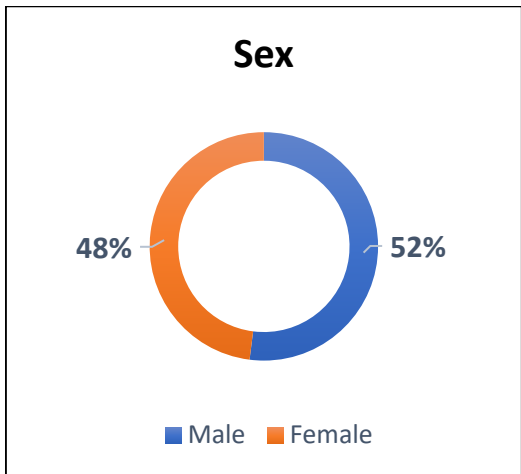
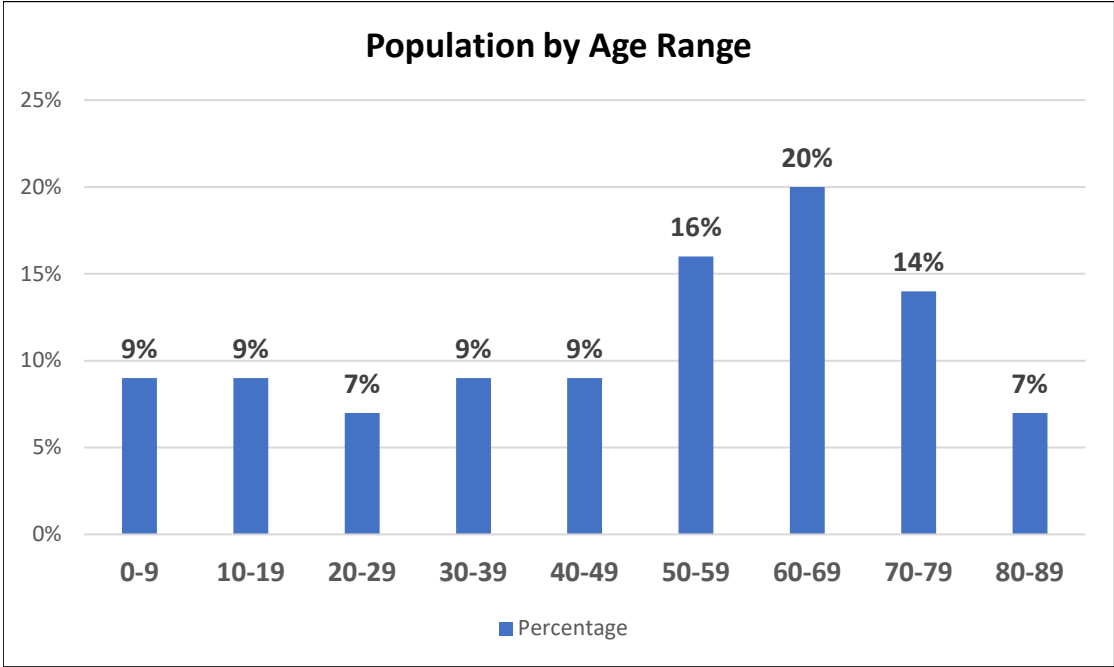
Census Data

Vilas County has a population of 23,410 that covers 857.7 square miles. That breaks down to 27.3 people per square mile. The median age in the county is 55.5 years.

65 & over...

→ More than 1.5 times the rate in Wisconsin (18%)

→ Nearly double the rate in the US (17%)

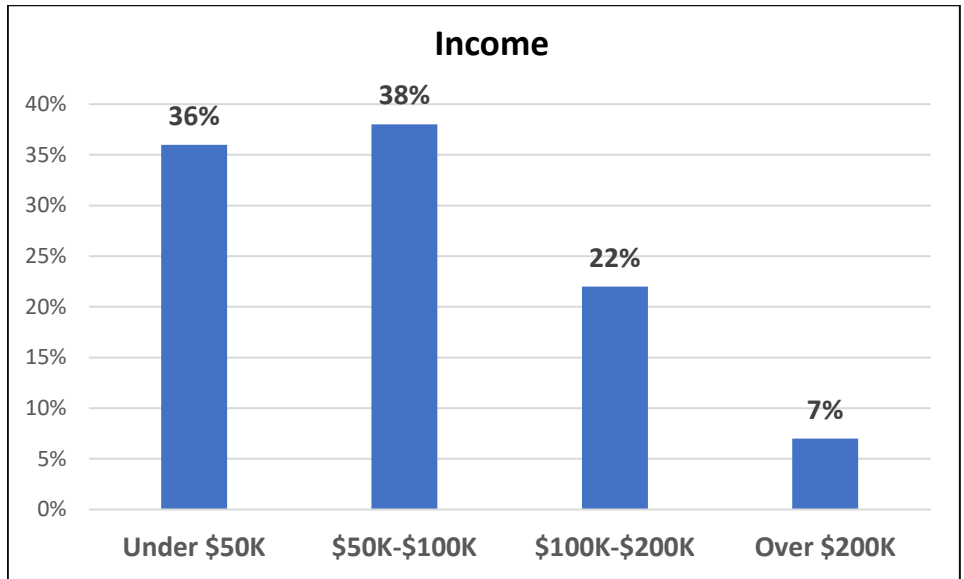




→ **\$67,132 Median household income**

→ **10.9% live below the Poverty Line**

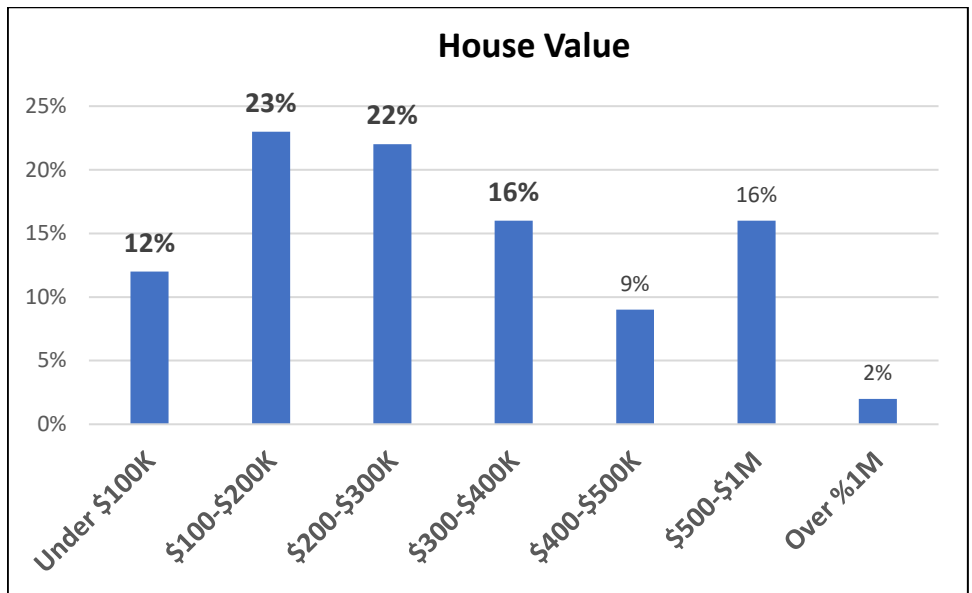
→ **19% of children (under the age of 18) live in Poverty.** This is about 1.4 times higher than the rate in the State (13%)



Note: Margin of error is at least 10 percent of the total value.



→ **\$270,700 Median value of owner-occupied houses.** This is 10% higher than the State (\$247,700)



Note: Margin of error is at least 10 percent of the total value.

Other Key Notes:

- 9.7% of our population has veteran status. Veterans who served by wartimes – the majority were in the Vietnam War
- 58% of our population is married
- There are 10,873 households in Vilas County; 2.1 persons per household; and 63% are married couples living in the households. It is not known how many families per household
- Education: 96.1% have a high school diploma or higher; 30.5 have a bachelor's degree or higher

Source: <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US55125-vilas-county-wi/>

Community Partnership Development

Vilas County Public Health Department works collaboratively with community partners to coordinate and implement prevention programs. This is completed through numerous coalitions throughout the county.

Vilas County Youth Coalition (VCYC)

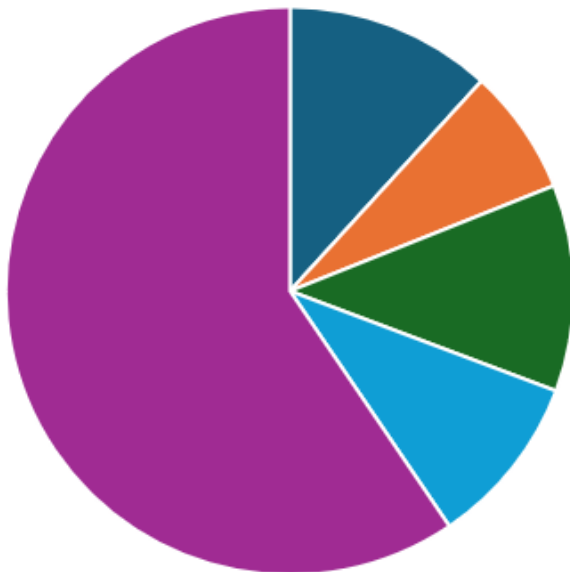
VCYC's focus is to strengthen and support youth by providing intergenerational partnerships, positive opportunities, and community activities by encouraging respect, inclusivity, individuality, and active healthy citizenship. The coalition is made up of healthcare systems, law enforcement, school districts, community garden members, the health department, and many others. In 2024, the following was achieved:

6th Grade Positive Alternative Conference

The Vilas County Public Health Department (VCPHD) helped organize and implement the Positive Alternative Conference for Vilas County 6th graders. Sessions consisted of team building activities, outdoor learning, cultural appreciation, and an expo hall with a variety of activities for students to try/learn (i.e., Trees for Tomorrow, Eagle River Fire Department, etc.). A total of 280 6th graders attended this conference. VCPHD educated students on healthy food and drink choices and how to identify the amount of sugar in everyday snacks and drinks (5/2/24 & 5/3/24).



Session Favorites



■ Dance ■ Survival ■ Team Building ■ Stress Management ■ Expo Hall

Top 3 Sessions that Students Enjoyed were:

Expo Hall: Interactive activities & experiences offered in our area, i.e., Taekwondo, gardening, & crafts. This also allowed students to meet students from other school.

Team Building: Activity to use critical thinking & problem-solving skills to achieve a team-goal. Students from different schools worked together as a team, creating social connections.

Stress Management: Activity that focused on coping with emotions, stress, anxiety, & peer pressure in a healthy way. Students identified strategies & created individual plans of healthy ways they can address things they may be facing in school or at home.

Dose of Reality: Drug Take Back

VCPHD, Vilas County Sheriff's Office, and the VCYC hosted the biannual Drug Take Back event. Residents can safely dispose of expired, unused, and battery free vapes using the permanent drop box located in the Sheriff's Office. Free lock boxes, lock bags, and medication deactivation pouches were also provided to the public, along with handouts and other resources for information. **Events took place on 4/27/24 and on 10/28/24; a total of 360.5 pounds of unwanted medications were collected.**



Community Outreach Prevention Education (COPE) Coalition

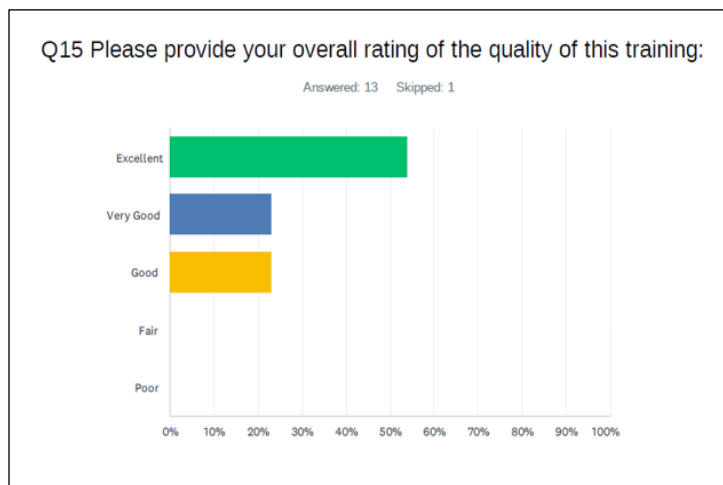
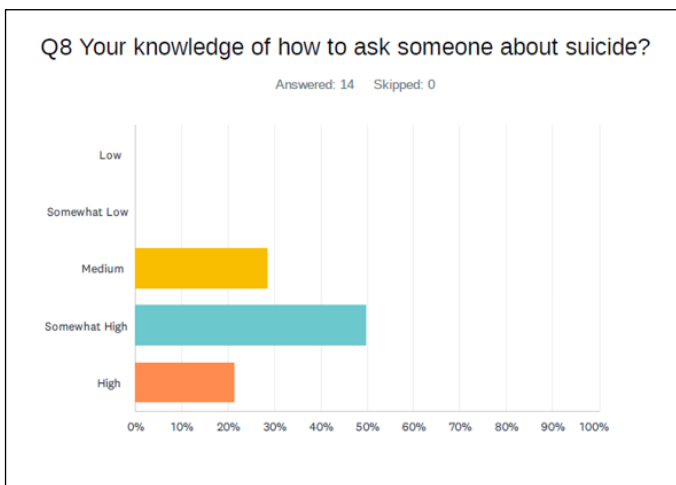
The COPE Coalition is comprised of members and local agencies from Forest, Oneida, and Vilas Counties. This group focuses on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention efforts. Through partnerships and collaboration, the Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Subgroup achieved the following:

Presentation at SOAR High School – Northland Pines School District

Partnered with Northland Pines School District and provided education to SOAR students on mental health and suicide prevention (988 Crisis Line). Of the students who completed the evaluation, 50% said they had someone in their life they trust to talk to and 100% of students were happy to learn about or already knew about the 988 Crisis Line resource. **There were 20+ students (1/4/24).**

Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) Suicide Prevention Training

Provided QPR Training to Vilas County Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC) Staff on 4/25/24. There were 15 participants. 100% of participants stated they would recommend this training to others.



Heads Up Guys Coaster Campaign

Coasters were distributed in Vilas County in the month of October. Over 24,000 coasters were distributed to tavern league bars and restaurants in Forest, Oneida, and Vilas counties. 10,800 of the 24,000 coasters were distributed throughout Vilas County. The coalition worked with two agencies, 988 and Heads Up Guys.

Data for this campaign is currently being looked at and will be presented in Spring 2025. However, Vilas and Oneida Tavern League Presidents revealed that their establishments “reused very few coasters, meaning folks took them with and either used them themselves or gave the resources to someone they know.”

988 Sticker Campaign

In 2024, the 988 sticker campaign continued; the campaign originated in 2022. 10 rolls (1,000 stickers per roll) were given to local coffee shops and juice bars. COPE Coalition members created a sticker with a logo to raise awareness of the 988 service (launched in July 2022). Stickers were given to coffee shops and juice bars in the tri-county area to spread the word that there is help for those who struggle with mental health.

Recent data revealed that from 2022 to 2023 repeat caller frequency increased 70% by Vilas County residents, and 99.8% of call calls are resolved through providing support and other resources (Source: Crisis Services: 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline Data Dashboard | Wisconsin Department of Health Services).



Northwoods Immunizations Coalition

VCPHD is a member of the Northwoods Immunization Coalition (NIC). The coalition consists of local health departments, public and private health care providers, and local school districts in Florence, Forest, Oneida, and Vilas Counties. The mission of the NIC is to collaborate to decrease vaccine preventable disease by providing community-wide initiatives to improve immunization rates, educate the public and offer training to health care providers.

2024 Completed Strategies:

- Created an Immunization Education Toolkit
- Northern Region Immunization Symposium – Training held for health care providers on the most current recommendations and best practices for immunizations & local data (6/4/24)



Child Death Review Team

The Vilas County Child Death Review Team is made up of a variety of partners whose purpose is to review deaths of infants and children, ages 0 to 18, which are reportable to the medical examiner. The goal of the review is to determine possible prevention strategies. Our team meets four times a year to review deaths of children, as well as all suicides.

In 2024, the team reviewed six deaths by suicide. The team shares prevention ideas with the Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Subgroup. Ideas this year included providing resources to local convenience stores that provide 988 or 2-1-1 access to mental health resources.

From 2020 -2024 of those that died from suicide:

- The average age is 59 years
- 88% were male
- 95% were Caucasian
- The top 2 methods were gunshot and hanging



If you or anyone you know needs someone to talk to or is having thoughts about suicide, here are resources:

- 911 if it is a crisis
- Crisis Text Line: text "HOME" to 741741.
- Forest, Oneida, and Vilas County 24/7 Crisis Hotline: Call 1-888-299-1188 if you're experiencing a mental health crisis.
- Suicide Prevention Lifeline - CALL, TEXT, CHAT 988

Organizational Competencies

Workforce Development

The Health Department strives to ensure staff possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to perform their jobs effectively and efficiently. Annually, staff complete training specific to their roles and responsibilities. They complete additional training to build infrastructure.

Staff continued training based on the Public Health Core Competencies completed in 2023. This is completed every two years and is used to determine training needs to keep abreast of best practices and emerging public health issues. The following areas continued to be focused on in 2024:

- Policy Development & Program Planning Skills
- Communications Skills

Staff also completed mandatory county safety training. This consisted of 21 total trainings that included first aid, bloodborne pathogens, sexual harassment, and general safety.



Policy Development & Support

The Vilas County Board of Health or Committee serves as an advisory board for VCPHD. They are an essential part of policy development, approval, and advocacy.

2024 Board of Health Highlights:

- Approved increase to TB skin testing fees to cover costs
- Approved increase to tetanus vaccine fees to cover costs
- Participated in the 140 Review
- Reviewed Humane Officer contract
- Approved revisions to contract with UW-Oshkosh for DATCP Agent Program

Vilas County Public Health Department ensures quality and consistency in program delivery and practices by maintaining updated policies and procedures.

- ✓ 4 new policy, procedure, or plan was created.
- ✓ 18 Policy, procedures, or plans were reviewed and updated.
- ✓ 1 policy was retired.



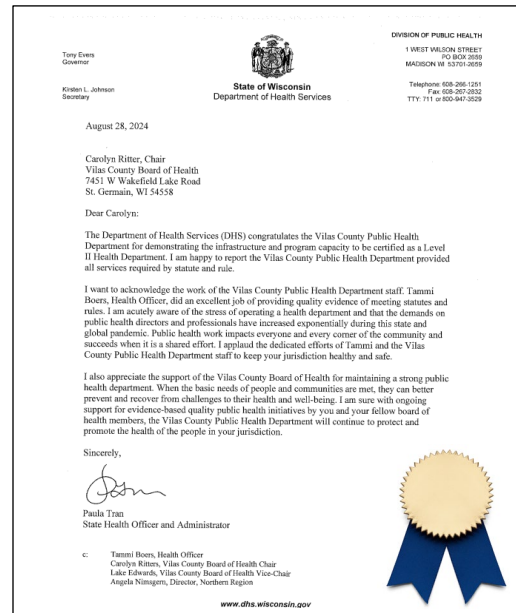
Accountability & Performance Management

Meeting 140 Review Requirements

Local public health departments complete a WI Department of Health Services Chapter 140 Review by the Wisconsin Division of Public Health every 5 years. This review is an audit of Level 2 programs and services as defined by the administrative code. On August 28, 2024, VCPHD successfully completed this review process.

Key Evaluation Points:

- Staff are engaged in performance management and quality improvement work in all areas and QI projects are built into employee development.
- VCPHD has robust planning for emergency management and partners with a variety of agencies, both local and regional.
- VCPHD builds health for all into their processes. VCPHD adjusts their services, communication, and outreach depending on their target audience and implements evidence-based strategies to meet their goals and improve the health of the community.
- VCPHD staff focus on teamwork. Staff are cross trained and support each other and recognized accomplishments.



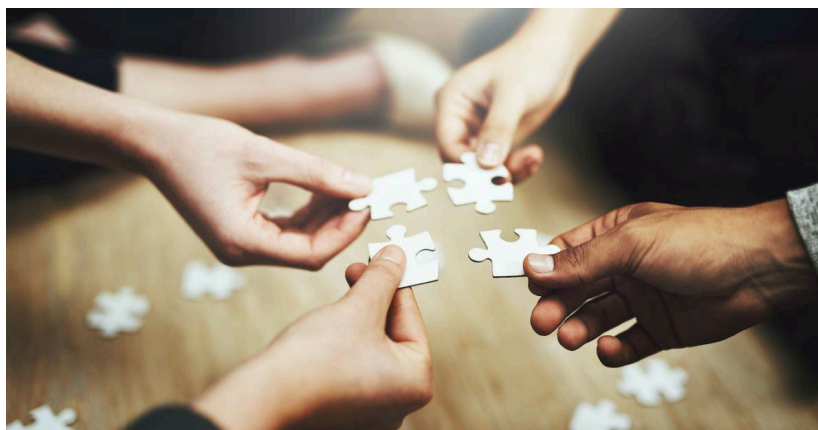
To review WI DHS Chapter 140: visit https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin_code/dhs/110/140/

Performance Management Plan

The Performance Management Plan was reviewed and updated in 2024. Measures were identified that incorporated our Strategic Plan, Community Health Improvement Plan, and grant deliverables that are more difficult to achieve.

Highlighted Results:

- Parent education was provided within 1 large school district by attending open houses & providing immunization resources and answering questions.
- 1 new strategy was implemented by the Mental Health – Suicide Prevention Subgroup, spearheaded by VCPHD.
- 6 new strategies were implemented by the Coalition on Activity and Nutrition to support healthy living.



Quality Improvement Plan

The Health Department continues to work on their Quality Improvement Plan. The purpose of the plan is to maximize our work efforts, staff efficiency and effectiveness, as well as to build a culture of quality improvement within the organization.

Quality Improvement Processes worked on in 2024 are the following:

- ✓ Increase response from schools for syndromic surveillance.
- ✓ Decrease overlapping appointment times and create a safe private immunization room for patients.
- ✓ Associate copy and printing costs with programs.
- ✓ Increase sharps pick up to within one year.

Emergency Preparedness & Response

The Vilas County Public Health Department works in collaboration with Vilas County Emergency Management (VCEM), and other community partners to plan and train to respond to public health emergencies. Funding from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) is received to support emergency planning, training, and exercises.

Exercising and Implementing Public Health Emergency Plans

Northwoods Healthcare Emergency Readiness Coalition (NW HERC) Chemical Hazmat Tabletop Exercise (2/24)

- Wisconsin Emergency Assistance Volunteer Registry (WEAVR) drill; 41% responded by the requested time (3/24)
- Medical Countermeasures Tabletop Exercise, Ho-Chuck Nation (9/24)
- NCW Quarterly HERC RAVE Alerting Drill; 100% response rate inside of 10 minutes (12/24)

Plan Updates:

- Disaster Reception Center (Sheltering Response) Plan

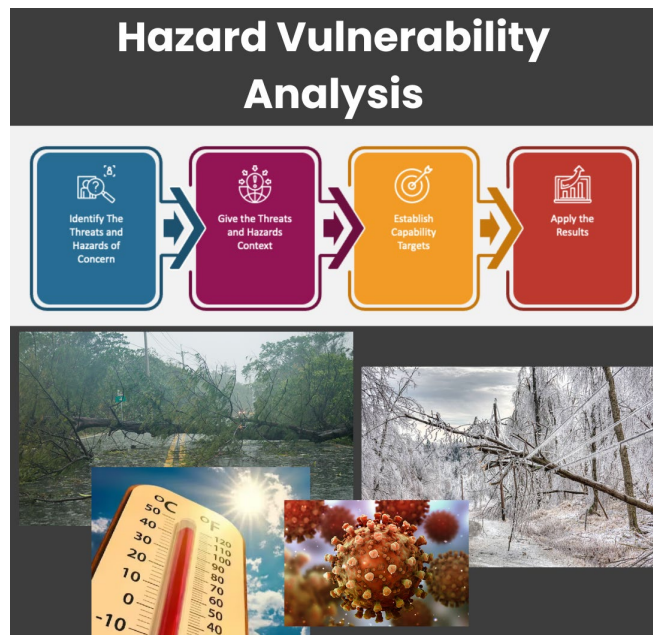
Hazard Vulnerability Assessment (HVA)

Every year, VPHD works with their healthcare partners and VCEM to assess risk mitigation to:

- Identify threats and hazards
- Identify vulnerabilities
- Estimate probability of occurrence
- Determine severity of impact
- Establish priority actions

2024 Top Risks Identified for Vilas County:

- Blizzard
- Extreme Cold
- Ice Storm
- Severe Thunderstorm
- Snowfall (accumulation)
- Seasonal Influenza
- Cyber Attack
- Tornado
- Active Shooter



Training

Staff completed the specific training for their roles and responsibilities in a public health emergency event.

These included the following:

- ✓ Incident Command System (ICS) 300 Training (10/24)
- ✓ ICS 100 Training (7/24)
- ✓ EMTrack & EMResource Training (2/24)
- ✓ NACCHO Preparedness Conference in Cleveland OH (3/24)
- ✓ Healthcare Facility Extreme Weather Resilience and Mitigation Training (6/24)
- ✓ Functional Needs Assessment Training (FAST) Training (12/24)

VCPHD used their ARPA Grant Funding to partner with VCEM and Vilas County Sheriff's Office (VCSO) to purchase a mobile response vehicle that will be used for immunization clinics and for an emergency operations center. The remaining funds were used to help support the construction of a building to house the mobile unit.

The unit was used to travel to off-site flu clinics provided by the Health Department as well as by the VCEM and VCSO responses.



“By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.”

- Benjamin Franklin

Communications

Presentations and Health Fairs

Vilas County Public Health Department (VCPHD) promotes health, informs the public on health concerns, provides resources and tips through presentations and health fair participation. 2024 events include the following:



Lac du Flambeau Minobimaadiziwin Community Expo

Participated at the Lac du Flambeau Community Expo put on by Peter Christiansen Health Center, HCAT, and Lac du Flambeau Business Development. County residents were provided with information on ways to manage stress and other ways to stay healthy mentally. **There were over 100 attendees (4/17/24).**

Eagle River Head Start

VPCHD held several Parent Training sessions throughout the year for families participating in the Head Start Program. Training sessions included Oral Health (9/18/24), and Emergency Preparedness and Basic First Aid (11/19/24).

Fight the Bite – Tickborne Illness Prevention Presentations

VCPHD provided education to the public by working with community partners. Phelps (5/10/24) and Eagle River (5/21/24) Elementary School parents – 25 total, Land O Lakes Library (6/18/24) – 50 people total, County Board members (6/25/24) – 25 people total, Plum Lake Library (7/2/24) – 50 people total, Trees for Tomorrow Forrest Fest (7/17/24) – 15 children, Trees for Tomorrow Forrest Fest (7/27/24) – 250+ people total, Presque Isle Library (7/30/24) – 20 total people.

Evaluation Results:

- 67% thought the Fight the Bite kits were helpful.
- 57% thought the Fight the Bite kits were useful.

“These kits are very convenient to keep in my vehicle or backpack.”

“The information and resources in the tick kits.”
(Tick guide and HYMC Tick Clinic & provider contact information)

Media

Vilas County Public Health promotes health, informs health concerns, provides resources and tips, and promotes events using different forms of media. We try to reach all county residents on these public health topics, so we use an all-media approach; this includes radio, newspaper, website, and Facebook posts.

2024 public health outreach using press releases (25), radio interviews (7), and TV interviews (4) included:

- Alcohol and Other Drug Use (AODA)
- Animal Bites/Rabies
- Breastfeeding
- Emergency Planning
- Flu Clinics
- Immunizations
- Mental Health
- Respiratory Illnesses
- Suicide Prevention
- Summer Health
- Tickborne Illnesses
- Tobacco
- Whooping Cough
- VCPHD Events



VCPHD's Facebook page and website are used to get information and resources out to our residents on a timely basis. Facebook has daily posts during the work week and the VCPHD website is updated monthly. Visit our website at <https://health.vilascountywv.gov> and friend us on Facebook.

Visit our website at

<https://health.vilascountywi.gov>



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Information Sources: National Association of County and City Health Officials, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, WI Department of Health Services, University of WI Population Health Institute, US Census