

Rock County Public Health Department

ANNUAL REPORT 2022



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A Message from the Director

It is with great pleasure that we present our 2022 Annual Report. The past year has been one of forward momentum as we have transitioned our focus to services previously paused during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as mosquito and tick surveillance and new initiatives aimed at improving health outcomes for all Rock County residents.

We have strengthened collaboration with other organizations serving Rock County through the Health Equity Alliance of Rock County (HEAR) and the development of Rock County's 2022-2025 Community Health Improvement Plan. We have also built new partnerships to address long-standing public health challenges such as birth outcomes, food access, and substance misuse.

In the past year, we worked to build a stronger health department, recognizing that our ability to effectively serve residents of Rock County is greatly influenced by our internal processes, systems, and infrastructure. To build a stronger department, we created our 2022-2025 Strategic Plan, re-defined our vision and mission, and articulated our values through shared identity statements. In 2022, we also started the process of building our department's first performance management system, where we will regularly monitor objectives, measures, and targets for our work. Within our performance management system our work is categorized under four main goals: prevent disease transmission, prevent premature death, remove barriers to health, and be a highly effective organization. Readers will see outcomes that relate to each of these goals highlighted in this report.

This annual report is intended to capture a snapshot of the department's work over the past year that could not have been accomplished without such a dedicated team working to foster conditions that protect and promote public health. As Rock County's Health Officer, I am grateful for the commitment of our team and for the support we receive from our Board of Health.

Katrina Harwood, Health Officer | Rock County Public Health Department Director

Rock County Public Health Overview

Who We Are and What We Do

We are a Level III Health Department serving Rock County, Wisconsin. Our work is guided by state statutes, state administrative code (Chapter DHS 140), the 10 Essential Public Health Services, the Foundational Public Health Services framework, and national public health department accreditation standards and measures. We work to prevent illness and premature death associated with environmental factors, communicable diseases, and social factors.

We work to address health inequities, or differences in health status that are unfair and preventable. We do this work in partnership with many organizations across Rock County, including schools, businesses, non-profits, healthcare systems, and municipal governments to help create conditions where everyone has the opportunity to reach their full health potential.

Vision Everyone has the opportunity to reach their full health potential

Mission To improve population health outcomes and remove barriers through community partnerships

Shared Identity Inclusive, evidence driven, transparent, accountable, and collaborative

Overarching Goals

1 Prevent Disease Transmission

2 Prevent Premature Death

3 Remove Barriers to Health

4 Be a Highly Effective Organization

Rock County Board of Health

The Board of Health assures that measures are taken to provide an environment in which individuals can be healthy and advocates for equitable distribution of public health resources.

2022 Board Members

- Supervisor Lou Peer (Chair)
- Debra Kolste (Vice Chair)
- Supervisor Tricia Clasen
- Supervisor Kim Schneider
- Eric Gresens

- Dr. Kaitlyn Meyers
- Supervisor Kathy Schulz
- Dr. Daniel Staddler
- Dr. Rachel Bergstrom

Rock County Public Health Overview

We are a team of 43 people. We work across four main areas that include Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention, Communicable Disease, Environmental Health, and Maternal, Child, and Family Health. We are engaged in over 44 different programs and initiatives.

Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention

Diabetes Prevention	Self-Measured Blood Pressure Program
Health Equity Alliance of Rock County Coordination	Stepping On Program
Overdose Fatality Review	Overdose Prevention

Communicable Disease

Disease Investigation & Case Management	Public Health Emergency Preparedness
HIV Partner Services	Tuberculosis Case Management & Support
Immunizations for Children & Adults	Travel Immunizations

Environmental Health

Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention	Radon
Food Safety & Licensed Facility Inspections	Prescription Take Back
Groundwater & Private Wells	Surface Water Testing
Emergency Planning for Hazardous Chemicals	Transient Non-Community Well Sampling
Private Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems	Vector Surveillance
Public Health Nuisance Program	Water Laboratory
Rabies Program	

Maternal Child and Family Health

Better Birth Outcomes	Food Access Promotion
Breastfeeding Promotion	Nutrition Collaborative of Rock County Coordination
Child Death Review	Rock County Breastfeeding Coalition Coordination
Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention	School-Age Nutrition, Physical Activity and Wellness
Fetal Infant Mortality Review	School Health Collaborative Coordination



Prevent Disease Transmission

We work to prevent disease transmission by reducing opportunities for exposure and by increasing the level of protection from disease transmission in the community.

Communicable Disease Investigation

Confirmed cases of reportable conditions in Rock County, not including COVID-19, decreased by 18% from 2021-2022. Our Communicable Disease Team investigated more than 4,500 cases of illness, helping to prevent further transmission of the disease and connecting individuals with the information they may need.

COVID-19 Response

In 2022, we continued our COVID-19 response by supporting the containment of outbreaks in long-term care facilities and other high-risk settings. We also distributed more than 7,300 free antigen tests to Rock County residents through partnerships with local non-profits and food pantries. To increase access to COVID-19 testing, we partnered with Summit Clinical Labs. We continued to provide COVID-19 vaccines through walk-in clinics at our Janesville Office and provided 1,280 doses of the vaccine.

In order to improve responses to future public health emergencies, we engaged representatives from healthcare systems, non-profits, schools, governmental agencies, and the media in the development of an After-Action Report (AAR).

Monkeypox (Mpox) Response

We had an active and responsive role during the declared 2022 Mpox national public health emergency. The internal incident response team was activated and stayed informed of the status of the emergency, planned Mpox related communications, updated partners, and coordinated local vaccination efforts. We responded to the national Mpox public health emergency by providing 63 doses of Mpox vaccine from August through December through on-site clinics and community events.

School-Based Mass Vaccination Clinics

In 2022, we partnered with five local school districts to provide on-site vaccination clinics for anyone under the age of 19. These clinics helped protect the community from preventable diseases and increased access to vaccines required for school and daycare attendance.



18%↓

Reduction in confirmed cases of reportable conditions*

*excluding COVID-19



4,500+

Case investigations conducted by the Communicable Disease Team



7,300+

COVID-19 antigen test kits distributed to local organizations & community members



1,280

COVID-19 vaccines administered at weekly walk-in clinics



25

Partners engaged in evaluating RCPHD's COVID-19 efforts



293

School-based vaccinations given

Licensed Facilities

We license and inspect over 1,100 facilities to reduce the occurrence of illness and injury associated with food, lodging, and recreational establishments within Rock County.

Our Environmental Health Team conducted over 1,300 permit release, routine, follow-up, complaint, and training inspections at these public businesses. Electronic newsletters and advisories were sent to operators throughout the year to keep them informed of code updates and trends.

Animal Bites & Rabies

Our rabies program strives to prevent the spread of rabies to humans and pets through education, testing, and quarantine orders. In collaboration with law enforcement and veterinarians, our Environmental Health Team followed-up on over 400 potential exposures in 2022 to ensure transmission could be ruled out or that residents received the necessary post-exposure medical treatment. In addition, 52 animals were submitted for laboratory analysis. One bat tested positive rabies and four had inconclusive results.

Immunization – Travel

In 2022, we continued to serve residents with travel-related immunization needs and provided education related to prevention of disease while abroad.

Immunization – Vaccines for Children and Adults

In 2022, our Vaccines for Children (VFC) and Vaccines for Adults (VFA) programs helped those without health insurance receive the vaccines they need to protect themselves and others from disease.



1,100+
Licensed facility permits maintained



1,366
Facility inspections conducted



400+
Potential exposures to rabies investigated



52
Animals submitted for lab analysis



Prevent Premature Death

We work to prevent premature death by reducing chronic disease and by reducing accidental injury and death through assessment, intervention, and education.

Diabetes Prevention

Eighty percent of people with prediabetes don't know it. In 2022, our Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention (CDIP) Team raised awareness about prediabetes through a coffee sleeve campaign. Almost 5,000 coffee sleeves promoting the Diabetes Risk Test via a QR code on the coffee sleeve were distributed to Rock County businesses. The prediabetes campaign website received over 100 visits the month after the coffee sleeves were distributed.

Prescription Drug (Rx) Collection

In 2022, we continued our efforts to ensure the safe disposal of unused prescription drugs to help protect local water resources and reduce the risk of injury or death from misuse through the Prescription Drug (Rx) Collection program.



4,388

**Pounds of medication
collected at 6
collection locations**

Through partnerships with law enforcement, pharmacists, and local organizations, over two tons of unused prescription drugs were collected. In addition, several community events were held to increase resident awareness. Since the inception of the program, over 57,000 pounds of unused medications have been removed from the community.

Falls Prevention

Stepping On has been researched and proven to reduce falls by 31%. In 2022, we supported the Aging and Disability Resource Center of Rock County's (ADRC) Stepping On program through 14 classes and reached 21 participants.

Heart Disease Prevention

We distributed Heart Health Kits to all seven public libraries in Rock County. These kits contain a blood pressure monitor, informational sheets about blood pressure, and a heart healthy cookbook. These kits were checked out from the libraries over 20 times.



Surface Water and Beaches

We monitored 25 beaches and waterbody areas that are used for recreation to reduce the risk of illness caused by contaminated water. Our team conducted 167 site assessments, which included water sampling for pathogen testing, visual evaluations for Harmful Algal Blooms, and other indicators of unsafe conditions. A total of 22 water quality advisories were posted onsite and on our website throughout the year.

Ground Water and Private Wells

We continued our work to protect groundwater and ensure a safe water supply for Rock County residents who obtain their water from over 12,000 private wells throughout the county.

- Our water laboratory tested over 1,100 private well water samples for bacterial contamination and nitrate levels.
- Our Private Onsite Wastewater Treatment System (POWTS) program approved 142 septic system designs and conducted 131 soil evaluations to help ensure wastewater is properly treated before reaching the groundwater aquifers.
- We continued to participate in the Groundwater Nitrate Work Group to help identify solutions to high nitrates found in many local wells and worked with the group to initiate the Rock County Nitrate Well Testing and Mitigation Program in 2022 to ensure residents have access to water treatment systems.

Radon Exposure

All Rock County homes are at risk for unsafe levels of radon gas exposure. This naturally occurring, radioactive gas seeps into homes through cracks and holes in foundations. Long-term radon exposure is the leading cause of lung cancer for non-smokers.

We continued to bring awareness to this risk through social media and by providing low-cost test kits to eighty-four residences in 2022.



167

**Recreational water
site assessments**



22

**Water quality
advisories posted**



617

**Private drinking
water sources tested
for bacteria**



545

**Nitrate tests
conducted**



84

**Radon test kits
distributed**

Remove Barriers to Health

We work to remove barriers to health by collaborating with partners to address underlying factors that influence population health. We advocate for policies and system changes that advance health and address health disparities, and we connect individuals to programs and services.

Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention

In 2022, nearly 1,500 Rock County children under six years of age were screened for blood lead poisoning. Our team received 77 referrals for elevated blood lead. We completed home visits and developmental assessments for nine children with blood lead levels greater than or equal to 10 micrograms per deciliter.

We provided education on lead poisoning prevention and offered a home visit for 57 at-risk households with a child having a blood lead level of less than 10 micrograms per deciliter, but greater than or equal to five micrograms per deciliter.

Additionally, we assessed 14 homes for lead hazards to determine sources of exposure and property owners were provided hazard control assistance.

Food Access and Insecurity

In 2022, we launched the Nutrition Collaborative of Rock County bringing 11 Rock County agencies to the table to discuss food insecurity and access to healthy, nutritious food for all Rock County residents.

This collaborative of subject matter experts surveyed 252 county residents on food access and assessed food options at 20 local retail outlets.

Child and Infant Mortality Prevention

We re-established a group of 11 service providers and first responders to review accidental and preventable deaths of Rock County children. We also received \$50,000 in new funding to establish a Fetal Infant Mortality Review Team and implement strategies to reduce fetal and infant death.

Tuberculosis Case Management

Our Communicable Disease Team utilized the Tuberculosis (TB) Dispensary Program to help residents without health insurance get the services and treatment they needed.



77

Referrals made to the department for lead poisoning follow-up



75%

Increase in lead referrals from 2021



14

Homes assessed for lead



20

Retail food outlets assessed for access to healthy foods

Health Equity Alliance of Rock County (HEAR)

We convened over 120 representatives from health systems, community organizations, non-profit organizations, and local government agencies to address health disparities and health inequities through the Health Equity Alliance of Rock County (HEAR). In 2022, HEAR members worked to implement the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) that focuses on building strategies to address access to care and mental health. We received \$100,000 in new grant funding in 2022 to support this work.

Mental Health

In 2022, we partnered with 13 representatives of HEAR through a Mental Health subcommittee. The subcommittee works to reduce barriers to mental wellness and improve social connectedness within the community. Through the subcommittee we supported mental health first aid training for 21 human resource professionals.

Access to Care

In 2022, we also partnered with 12 representatives of HEAR through an Access to Care subcommittee. The subcommittee works to address health literacy, navigation of the healthcare system, translation services, access to telehealth, cultural competency, and to improve health outcomes in Rock County.

Overdose Prevention

We secured over \$200,000 in new funding through the Medical College of Wisconsin and the National Association of County and City Health Officials to address overdose prevention. We convened partners from other Rock County departments to develop a report of recommendations for how Rock County can use opioid settlement funding to address harms of the opioid epidemic.

Better Birth Outcomes

We continued our efforts to improve birth outcomes by increasing access to doulas for at-risk, low-income residents. Through grant funding received from the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Partnership Program, we facilitated doula meet and greets and promoted doula services at 15 partner sites and community events, coordinated networking with seven other doulas working within Rock County, and supported nine Rock County families with doula services.

In 2022, we relaunched the Rock County Breastfeeding Coalition with 32 members dedicated to creating environments that support and encourage breast/chestfeeding.



11
Subject matter experts on Child Death Review Team



21
People trained on mental health first aid



2
Libraries trained to provide technical assistance on telehealth



15
Doula promotion events facilitated



32
Breastfeeding Coalition members recruited

Highly Effective Organization

We work to maintain a highly effective organization by developing and retaining a qualified and engaged public health workforce, effectively managing resources for efficient operations, and implementing systems to ensure effective communications internally and externally.

Public Health as a Career

We promoted public health as a career choice by hosting four interns who supported communications, surface water sampling, mosquito/tick surveillance, and community building. In addition, we provided information to over 90 students about Public Health careers.



90
Students reached through meetings & presentations

We utilized grant funding to support the placement of seven college interns through the South-Central Wisconsin Area Health Education Center (AHEC) with organizations serving residents of Rock County who have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The interns supported projects at Community Action, GIFTS Men's Shelter, YWCA, Community Health Systems of Beloit, Head Start, and Family Promise of Greater Beloit.



7
Grant funded college interns through the South Central Wisconsin Area Health Education Center (AHEC)

GovAccess and GovDelivery

In 2022, we reorganized our RCPHD webpage to help ensure easy access to information about our programs and services.

We also implemented the govDelivery (govD) system to distribute electronic communications both internally and externally. In 2022, 12 press releases were sent using this system.



12
Press releases sent through govD

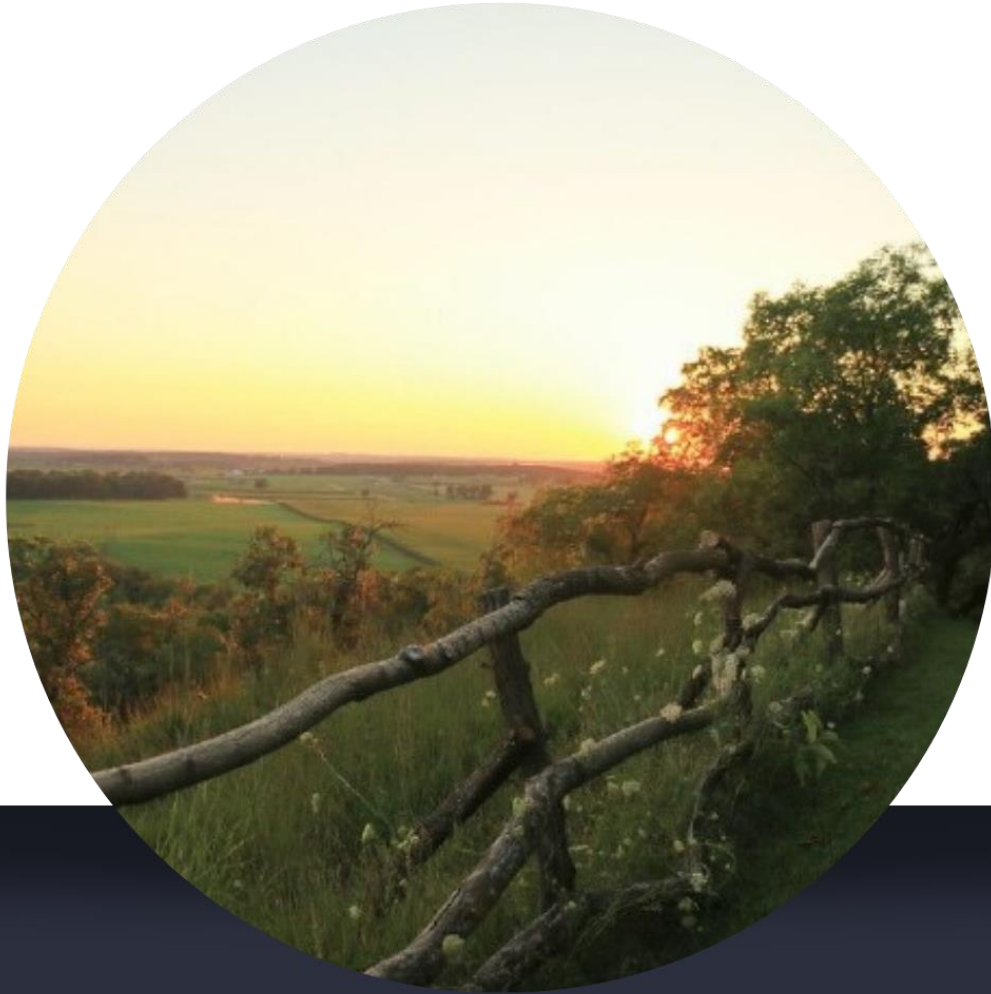
Process Improvements

As part of an agency wide data modernization effort, we applied data science for data cleaning, processing large datasets, and we worked to automate data collection and processing tasks. This streamlined process flows and created time saving efficiencies for staff.

In 2022, we also implemented the use of a project workbook to guide the development of new initiatives to improve health outcomes and strengthen our programs and services. The project workbook includes a focus on the application of data methods, policy considerations, communication needs, and health equity.

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