

# ROCK COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT ANNUAL REPORT

2020-2021



Public Health



[www.co.rock.wi.us/departments/public-health](http://www.co.rock.wi.us/departments/public-health)

# HELLO

A MESSAGE FROM

**Katrina Harwood**  
Health Officer/Director



It is with great pleasure that we present our Rock County Public Health Department 2020-2021 combined annual report. Throughout this report, we have highlighted some key activities and outcomes.

Within challenges there are opportunities, and the challenge of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the two years captured in this report are no exception. Our workforce became stretched during our COVID-19 response, especially while we continued to carry out many other public health programs and services. Throughout the two years, we also had opportunities to partner and collaborate with many organizations serving Rock County, and we had the opportunity to expand our workforce and welcome many new team members.

### 2020-2021 Key Accomplishments and Activities

- COVID-19 pandemic response through disease investigation, contact tracing, increasing access to testing, vaccinations, communications, business and organizational support, disease surveillance, and data analysis
- Continued operations through the pandemic in Environmental Health programs and non-COVID-19 communicable disease investigation
- Alignment to the Foundational Public Health Services Model through a partial reorganization of the department
- Modernization of the department's operations with additional positions in communications, data, planning, and policy analysis
- Development of a comprehensive Community Health Assessment in partnership with the Health Equity Alliance of Rock County

While 2022 will continue to present some of the same challenges as 2020 and 2021, we will have new opportunities to ensure that we are working to address the barriers to optimal health that exist in Rock County. We know that recovery from the pandemic will also require dedicated resources and focused action.

On a personal note, I am honored to have the opportunity to serve Rock County as Health Officer since March 2021. I am grateful for our dedicated staff and the support and partnership of our Board of Health, the Rock County Board of Supervisors, and our community partners.



# ANNUAL REPORT CONTENT

## 2 A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

### 4-5 PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

### 6-7 PUBLIC HEALTH OVERVIEW

### 8 OPERATIONAL FUNDING SOURCES

### 9-11 COVID-19 RESPONSE & TIMELINE

### 12 COMMUNICABLE DISEASE

### 13-14 CHRONIC DISEASE & INJURY PREVENTION

### 15 MATERNAL, CHILD, & FAMILY HEALTH

### 16-18 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

### 19 FUTURE CHALLENGES AND GOALS

# PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

## A Realignment of Focus Areas

Rock County Public Health Department is a level III health department serving Rock County, Wisconsin. RCPHD provides public health services in accordance with state statutes and Chapter DHS 140. In 2021, the health department went through a partial reorganization to align focus areas with the Foundational Public Health Services Model. Additionally, new positions were added to the health department in the areas of data, policy, planning, and public health strategy to strengthen the department's ability to address public health challenges in the County. (See the charts for details.)

## Rock County Board of Health

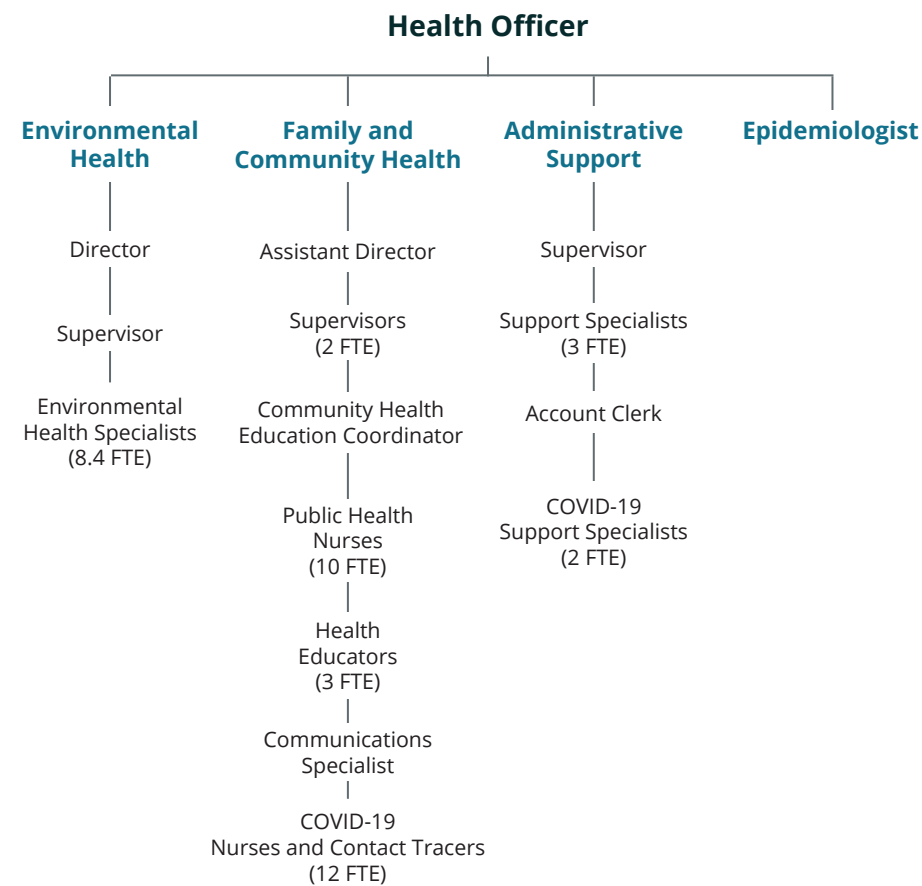
The Board of Health assures that measures are taken to provide an environment in which individuals can be healthy, and advocates for equitable distribution of public health resources.

### 2020-2021 Board Members

- Supervisor Lou Peer (Chair)
- Connie Winter (Vice Chair)
- Supervisor Shirley Williams
- Eric Gresens
- Dr. Kaitlyn Meyers
- Supervisor Danette Rynes
- Dr. Vijaya Somaraju
- Debra Kolste
- Supervisor Doug Wilde (2020)
- Supervisor Tricia Clasen (2021)

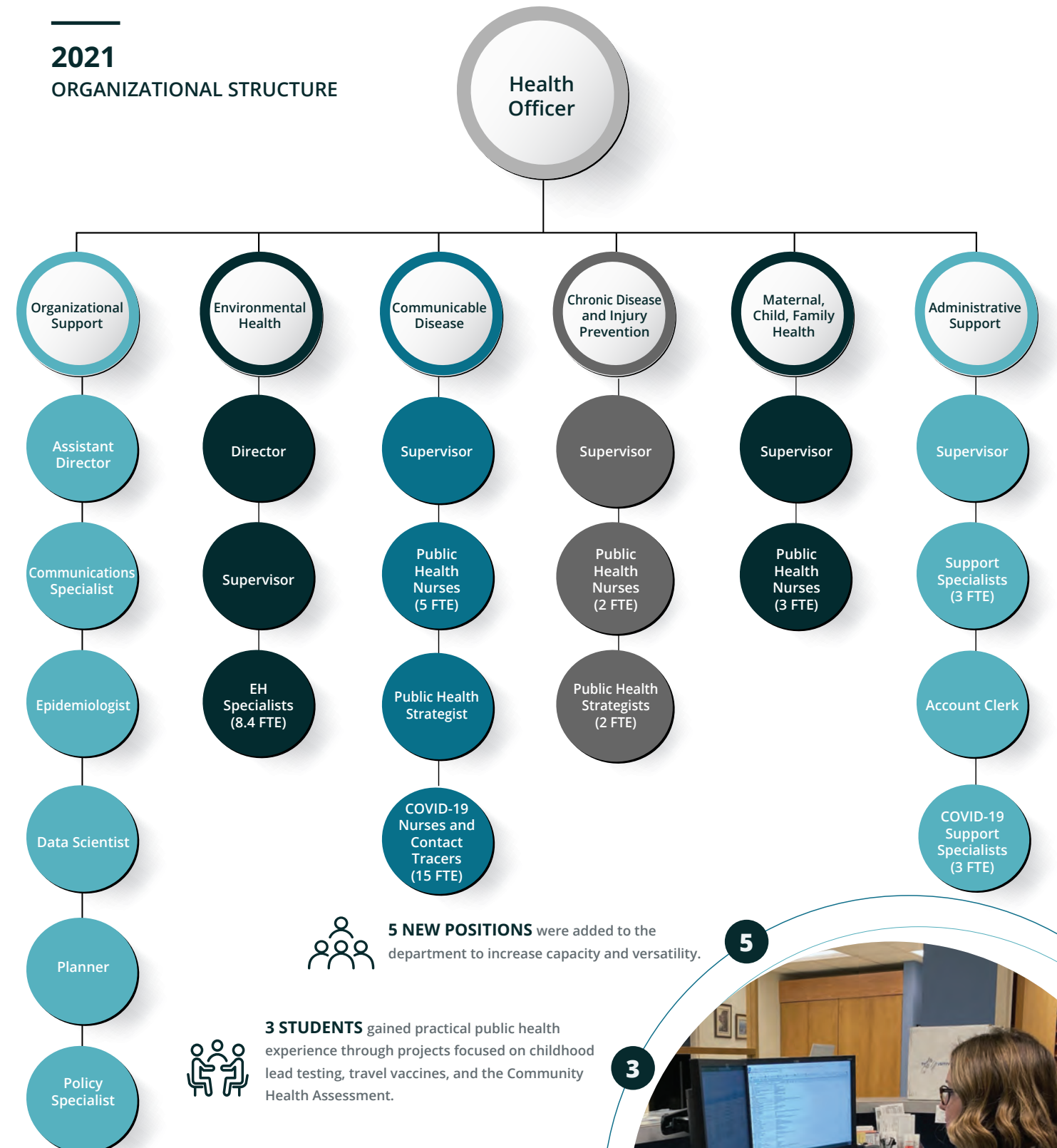
## 2020

### ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



## 2021

### ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



**5 NEW POSITIONS** were added to the department to increase capacity and versatility.

5



**3 STUDENTS** gained practical public health experience through projects focused on childhood lead testing, travel vaccines, and the Community Health Assessment.

3



**15 CONTACT TRACERS** were added to the team in 2020-2021 to support COVID-19 response efforts.

15



# WHAT IS PUBLIC HEALTH?

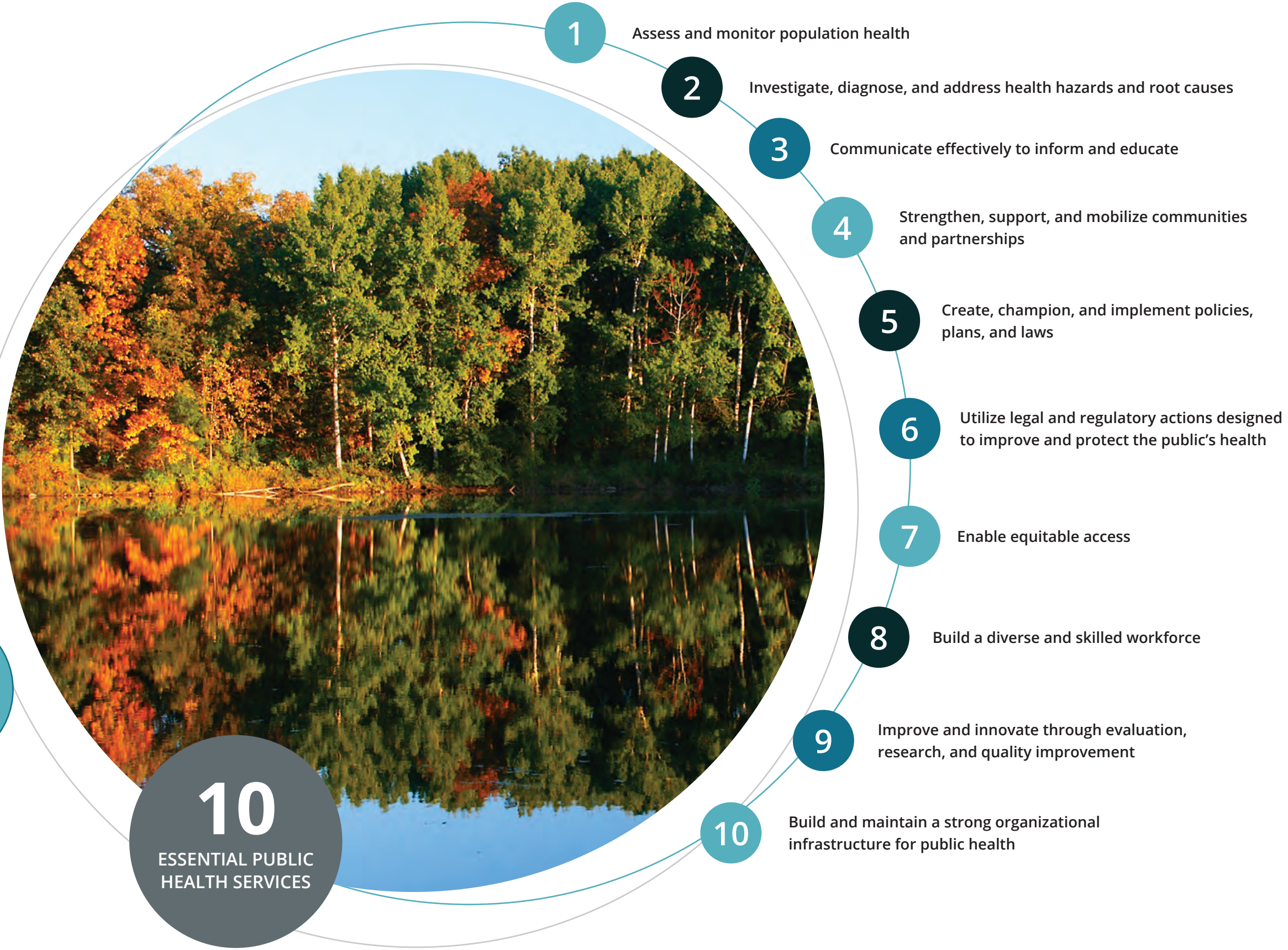
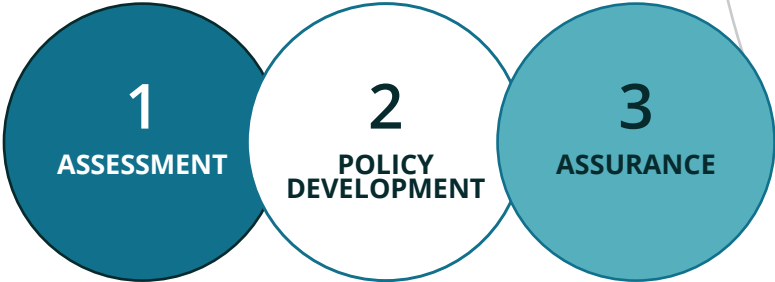
## An Overview

Public Health aims to prevent illness and premature death associated with environmental factors, communicable diseases, and social factors. Public Health practice is guided by the 10 Essential Public Health Services, and includes the core functions of assessment, policy development, and assurance.

Public Health aims to improve the health status of all residents, with a specific focus on populations that may experience health disparities (or differences in health status) due to underlying contributing factors, such as social or environmental factors.

Public Health focuses on health equity, which is the extent to which all individuals and groups have an opportunity to reach their full health potential.

### THREE CORE FUNCTIONS OF PUBLIC HEALTH

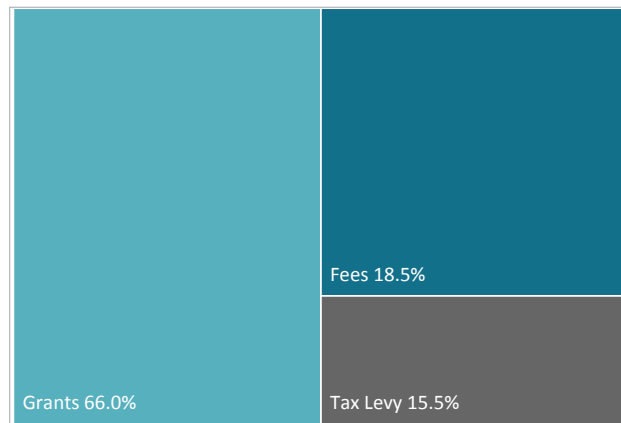


# OPERATIONAL FUNDING SOURCES

Operations of Rock County Public Health Department are supported by three main sources, which include permits and other fees, federal and state grants, and local tax support. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, RCPHD received several new grant funding sources to support the department's COVID-19 response in 2020 and in 2021. The portion of health department operations funded through tax levy in 2021 is more consistent with years prior to 2020.

## 2020 FISCAL REPORT

### Funding Sources



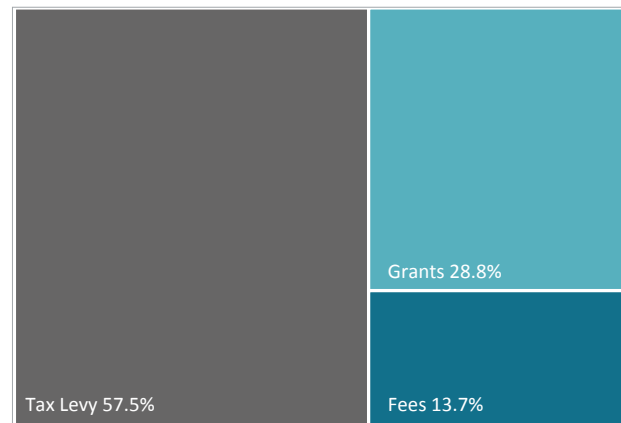
**Total Expenses \$3,692,116**

Largest expenses:

Personnel	87.2%
Information Technology	6.8%
Facilities	3.6%

## 2021 FISCAL REPORT

### Funding Sources











**Total Expenses \$4,618,437**

Largest expenses:

Personnel	89.0%
Information Technology	5.5%
Facilities	3.1%

*\*Subject to change based on timing of expenses and grant funding.*

# COVID-19 RESPONSE AT A GLANCE

- 
**27**  
 Vaccine clinics administered by RCPHD
- 
**8,400+**  
 Disease investigations completed
- 
**160+**  
 Virtual meetings with school administrators and superintendents
- 
**900+**  
 Guidance documents sent to licensed facilities
- 
**10**  
 Data dashboards created and regularly updated
- 
**165**  
 Press releases and media advisories distributed
- 
**2,560**  
 Social media posts created
- 
**37**  
 Media briefings hosted



# COVID-19 RESPONSE TIMELINE

2020

## JANUARY - MAY

- Jan 21** First case confirmed in US
- Feb 5** First case confirmed in Wisconsin
- Mar 11** WHO declares COVID-19 a pandemic
- Mar 13** First case confirmed in Rock County
- Mar 15** RCPHD's COVID-19 data dashboard goes live
- Mar 31** First COVID-19 death reported in Rock County
- Apr 15** RCPHD begins hiring contact tracers to provide surge support
- May 13** RCPHD's Safer at Home Order is issued
- May 21** Safer at Home is replaced by phased guidance reopening plan

**ROCK COUNTY SURPASSED 12,000 CONFIRMED CASES BY THE END OF 2020**



## JUNE - DECEMBER

- Jun 10** RCPHD transitions from Phase 1 to Phase 2 of reopening plan
- Jun 10** US hits 2 million cases
- Jul 7** US surpasses 3 million cases
- Jul 10** Rock County surpasses 1,000 confirmed cases
- Aug 28** First known reinfection case reported in U.S.
- Sep 13** Rock County surpasses 2,000 confirmed cases
- Oct 19** Global cases reach 40 million
- Oct 21** Testing site established at Blackhawk Technical College (BTC) through partnership with Wisconsin National Guard (WING) and Rock County
- Nov 16** Rock County returns to Phase 1 of reopening plan amid high case activity
- Dec 11** FDA issues emergency use authorization (EUA) for Pfizer vaccine
- Dec 18** FDA issues EUA for Moderna vaccine

2021

## JANUARY - APRIL

- Jan 26** RCPHD, in partnership with WING, starts vaccination pilot site at BTC
- Feb 4** RCPHD hosts first media briefing
- Feb 4** RCPHD issues mask order
- Feb 16** AMI, through a partnership with the State of Wisconsin and RCPHD begins regular vaccinations at BTC
- Feb 26** 50 million vaccine doses administered in US
- Feb 26** FDA issues EUA for Johnson & Johnson vaccine
- Mar 2** RCPHD transitions back to Phase 2 of reopening plan
- Mar 19** 100 million vaccine doses administered in US
- Mar 25** First Alpha (B.1.1.7) variant case confirmed in Rock County
- Apr 1** RockCountyShot.com, a local resource for COVID-19 vaccines, lead by United Way Blackhawk Region, goes live
- Apr 5** Wisconsin vaccine eligibility expands to everyone age 16 and older
- Apr 29** RCPHD extends mask order until June 30, 2021



2021

## MAY - JULY

- May 2** RCPHD begins non-school-based mobile vaccine clinic campaign
- May 10** Pfizer EUA expands to ages 12-15
- May 13** CDC updates guidelines for fully vaccinated
- May 14** RCPHD lifts mask order
- May 18** RCPHD begins school-based mobile vaccine clinic campaign
- Jun 8** Amid improvements in case activity, RCPHD discontinues its reopening plan
- Jul 7** RCPHD continues school-based mobile vaccine clinic campaign
- Jul 10** RCPHD continues non-school-based mobile vaccine clinic campaign
- Jul 22** WING concludes testing operations at BTC
- Jul 23** First Delta (B.1.617.2) variant case confirmed in Rock County
- Jul 27** CDC updates safety recommendations for fully vaccinated

## AUGUST - OCTOBER

- Aug 3** 70% of US has at least 1 dose of a vaccine
- Aug 23** FDA fully approves vaccine, Pfizer, for ages 16 and older
- Sep 22** FDA issues EUA for first vaccine booster dose
- Oct 5** RCPHD begins combined flu vaccine and COVID-19 vaccine mobile clinic campaign and moves operations of the community-based vaccine clinic with AMI to 1900 Center Avenue, Janesville
- Oct 29** FDA issues EUA for pediatric Pfizer vaccine

**RCPHD ADMINISTERED 347 COVID-19 VACCINE DOSES AT 2021 IN-HOUSE CLINICS**

## NOVEMBER - DECEMBER

- Nov 5** CDC recommends pediatric vaccine for ages 5-11
- Nov 8** RCPHD partners with Summit Clinical Laboratories to open a testing site at RCPHD's Beloit Office
- Nov 17** RCPHD begins vaccine campaign at North Office, Janesville
- Nov 23** RCPHD concludes 2021 mobile vaccine campaigns
- Nov 26** WHO designates Omicron as a variant of concern
- Nov 26** CDC recommends booster dose for ages 18 and older
- Dec 1** First confirmed case of Omicron variant identified in US
- Dec 4** First confirmed case of Omicron variant identified in Wisconsin
- Dec 22** FDA issues EUA for first oral, antiviral treatment
- Dec 27** CDC updates/shortens recommended isolation and quarantine period
- Dec 29** RCPHD hosts final vaccine clinic for the year



STAY HOME

# COMMUNICABLE DISEASE

The Communicable Disease Team works to control the spread of diseases in our community. RCPHD continually collects and reviews disease exposure data, monitors outbreaks when they occur, and follows up with residents who are sick, or may have been exposed, to ensure they receive care they need and do not spread their illness to others. Confirmed cases of reportable conditions in Rock County—not including COVID-19—increased by 2% from 2019-2020, and decreased by 4% from 2020 to 2021.

## Immunization Program

The RCPHD Communicable Disease Team provides and assures access to vaccinations that prevent communicable diseases from occurring.

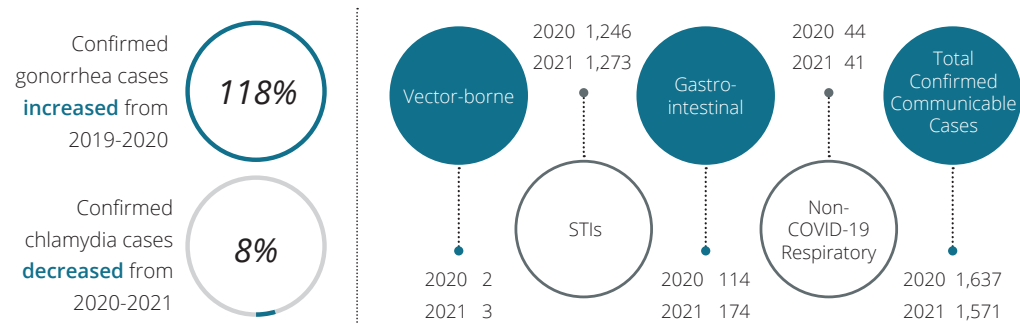
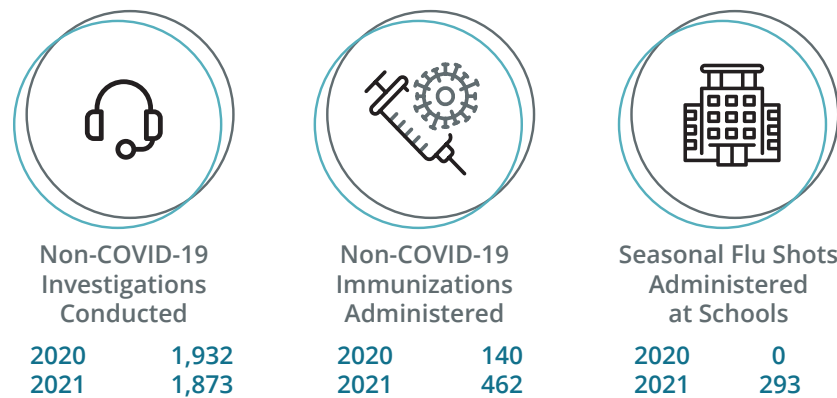
- **Vaccine for Children (VFC)/Vaccine for Adults (VFA) Programs** Due to COVID-19 response work, RCPHD VFC/VFA clinics were limited. In 2021, RCPHD resumed to a pre-pandemic frequency of clinic opportunities.
- **Travel** Over 2020 and 2021, RCPHD saw a decrease in the number of travel vaccination clients visiting the health department; likely due to travel restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Mass Flu Clinics** In 2021, RCPHD partnered with local school districts for on-site influenza vaccination clinics for anyone under the age of 19. Across 7 clinic dates and locations, RCPHD vaccinated 293 individuals.

## Public Health Emergency Preparedness

RCPHD routinely plans and prepares for a variety of public health emergencies that can occur. In 2021, RCPHD updated standard operating procedures, both internal and community response oriented, with the goal of mitigating the impact of ongoing and future emergencies.

## COMMUNICABLE DISEASE BY THE NUMBERS

Confirmed cases by reportable condition category



# CHRONIC DISEASE AND INJURY PREVENTION

The Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention (CDIP) Team works to promote health and quality of life throughout Rock County by working with the community to prevent and control chronic diseases and injury. Through coordinated efforts with partners across the community and with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, RCPHD works to increase prevention efforts and improve access to care, among other initiatives. The CDIP Team addresses environments, systems, and health behaviors associated with key chronic diseases and precursors.



## RCPHD Health Equity Alliance of Rock County

RCPHD facilitates the Health Equity Alliance of Rock County (HEAR), a multi-sector coalition comprised of health systems, community-based organizations, government agencies, and community residents working to improve the health of Rock County.

These diverse members gather to collectively identify and implement strategies to help

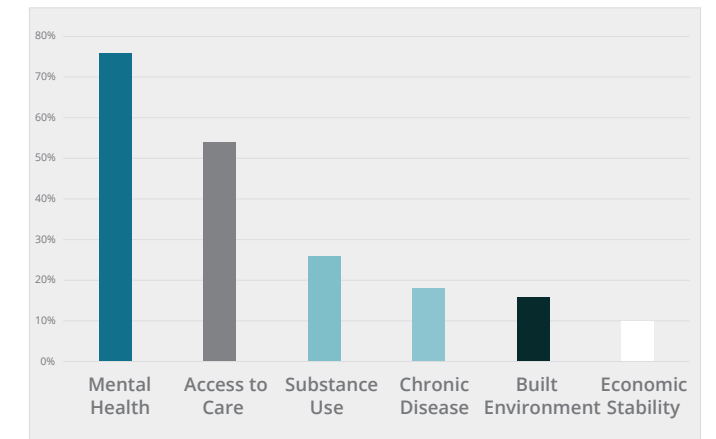
Rock County reach its full health potential through a Community Health Assessment (CHA) and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP).

HEAR's top two focus areas are access to care and mental health. The 2021 Community Health Assessment is available at <https://rebrand.ly/RockCHA>.



## Top Strengths in Rock County

CHA survey participants ranked these five categories as the top strengths.



## Community Health Priorities

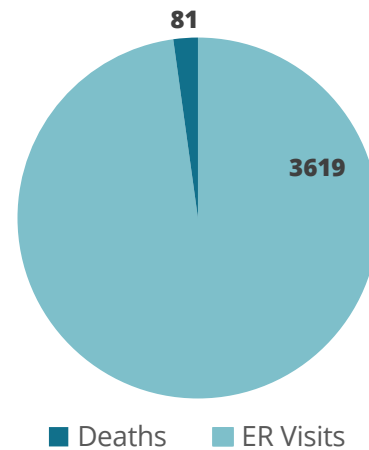
CHA survey participants ranked these six categories as priorities, with mental health being their number one concern.

## Fall Prevention

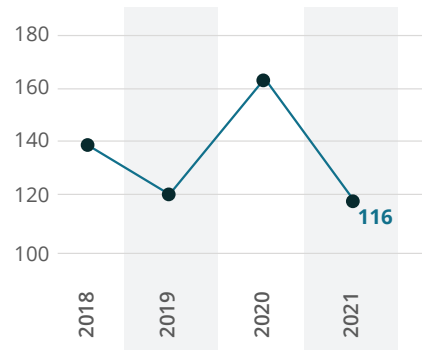
### One-third of people over the age of 65 will fall every year.

Wisconsin has one of the highest rates of death from unintentional falls in the nation. RCPHD is part of a larger network that partners with SSM Health and the Council on Aging to offer fall prevention programs with the goal of reducing falls and fall-related injuries or death. During 2020, the "Stepping On" program was put on pause due to COVID-19. In 2021, RCPHD held one 7-week "Stepping On" course for 14 individuals totaling 160 hours of education.

Fall-related Deaths and Emergency Room Visits in Rock County in 2020



## OPIOID OVERDOSE RATE (ESTIMATED PER 100,000)



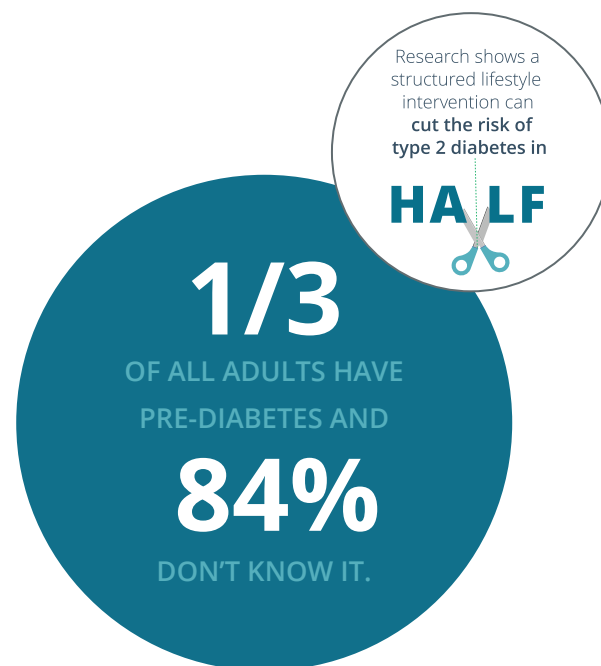
## Overdose Fatality Review

In 2021, the RCPHD partnered with the Rock County Human Services Department to plan for implementation of an Overdose Fatality Review Team. This multidisciplinary team will address overdose fatalities through analysis and a prevention framework.

## Diabetes Prevention

RCPHD received funding from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services to prevent and manage diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. RCPHD is implementing and evaluating evidence-based strategies to manage diabetes and prevent or delay onset of type 2 diabetes in high-burden populations and communities.

In 2020 and 2021, RCPHD started self-measured blood pressure (SMBP) loaner programs at Creekside Place-Evansville, Stateline YMCA-Beloit, YMCA of Northern Rock County-Janesville, and YMCA of Northern Rock County-Milton.

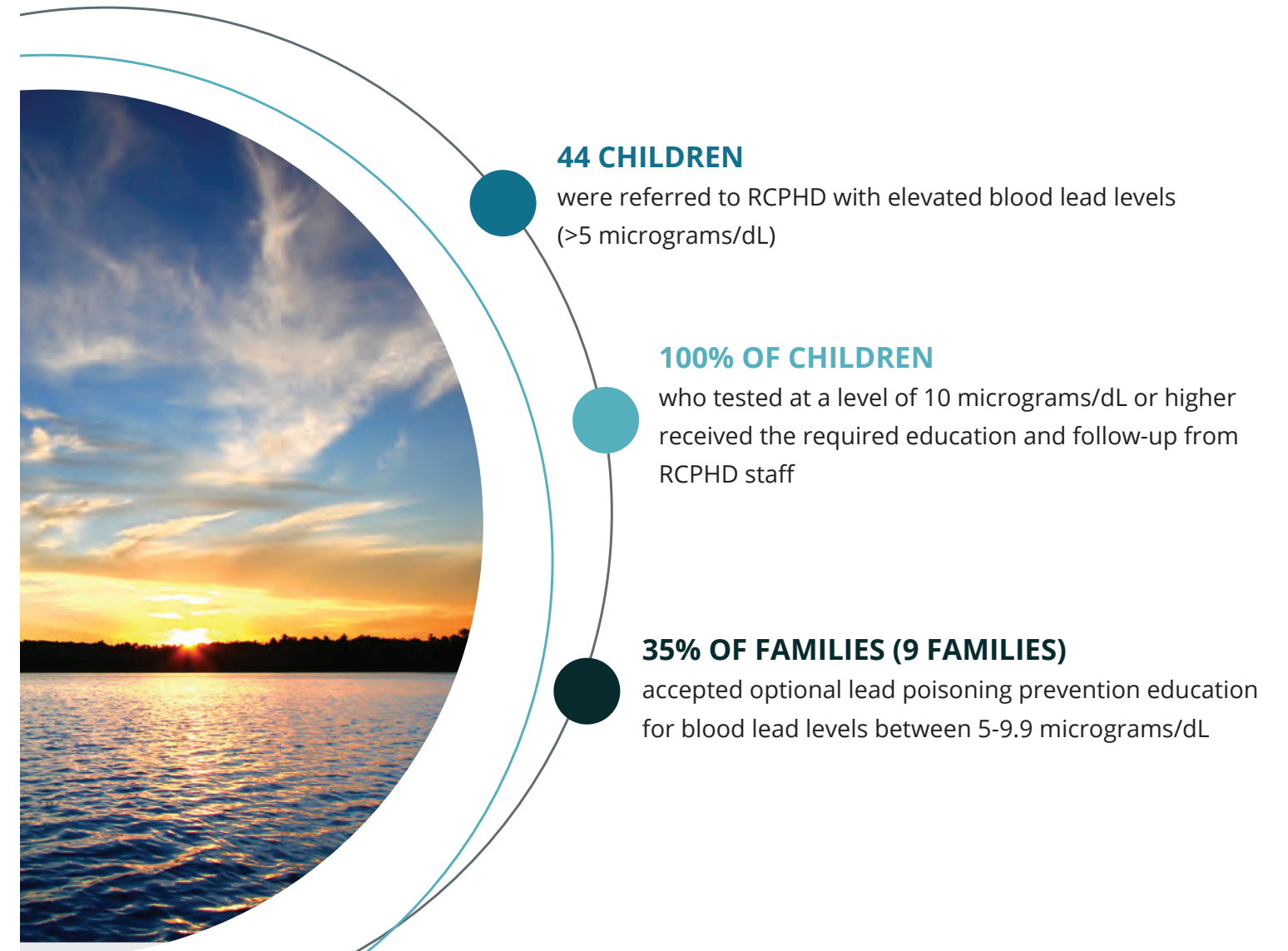


# MATERNAL, CHILD, & FAMILY HEALTH

As the workload for COVID-19 response wanes, RCPHD's Maternal, Child, and Family Health Team will become established to assess community needs and to support and promote health and well-being for all women, infants, children and families in Rock County.

Maternal, Child, and Family Health activities such as breastfeeding, better birth outcomes, and safe sleep initiatives were paused in 2020 and 2021 to conduct COVID-19 disease investigation and contact tracing. During this time, public health nurses continued to work on lead screening and case investigations, even though the pandemic affected lead testing and referrals.

Locally, the pandemic resulted in a pivot to virtual medical and well-child visits, halting lead testing and severely reducing medical clinic lead testing referrals. Furthermore, a national recall of a commonly used lead testing kit meant increased reductions in lead poisoning screening. In 2020, 19% of children receiving Medicaid were tested at 12 and 24 months of age in Rock County, while only 13% were tested in 2021.





# ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Environmental Health is the branch of public health that focuses on the relationship between people and their natural and built environments in order to prevent injury and illness and foster healthy communities.

RCPHD's Environmental Health Team administers a variety of programs and policies that aim to prevent the public's exposure to hazardous conditions in the air, water, soil, food, and other environmental settings that may negatively impact health. This is accomplished through a combination of public facility regulation, identification and investigation of hazards, education, and implementation of prevention strategies.



## Prescription Drug (Rx) Collection

**UNUSED Rx DRUGS COLLECTED IN 2020-2021 WEIGHED NEARLY 8,000 LBS**

Improper disposal of unused prescription drugs is a threat to Rock County's rivers, lakes, streams, and groundwater. They also present a risk of injury or death to those who misuse them.

RCPHD continued its partnership with local law enforcement, pharmacists, and community leaders to promote safe disposal through education, permanent drop boxes, and collection events. RCPHD participated in community events to create awareness, such as the 2020 Friends of Noah "Arctic" Art event.

Over 26 tons of unused prescription drugs have been collected since RCPHD implemented the program.

## Surface Water and Beaches

Recreational use of Rock County waterways and beaches is a popular activity for residents and visitors. Contaminated water may potentially cause a variety of illnesses in people or their pets. RCPHD monitors and conducts water quality testing at over two dozen commonly used waterways every year to help people make informed decisions.

In 2020 and 2021, there were increased efforts to notify residents of poor water quality conditions to help reduce the incidence of illnesses and infections. These efforts included providing results online, posting signage, and sending out press releases.

In 2020 and 2021, RCPHD also continued to partner with the Friends of Badfish Creek in an effort to assess and improve the conditions of this frequently used waterway.



The environment and various environmental hazards can negatively affect health. Limiting exposure to these environmental hazards plays a key role in the health and well-being of individuals, and fosters healthy communities where people can thrive.

## Ground Water and Private Wells

Groundwater is an important resource in Rock County. This is especially true for residents obtaining their drinking water through one of the 12,000 private wells in the County that don't benefit from a municipal treatment system.

Contaminated groundwater can have negative impacts on health, such as illnesses from bacteria, or "blue baby syndrome" in infants from elevated nitrate levels.

In 2020 and 2021, RCPHD continued its efforts to protect and improve this valuable resource, including:

- Participation in the Rock County Groundwater Nitrate Work Group. Activities included managing monitoring wells at the Rock County farm to evaluate nitrate friendly agricultural practices, working with a farmer-led nitrate coalition, and initiating a local grant program to assist private

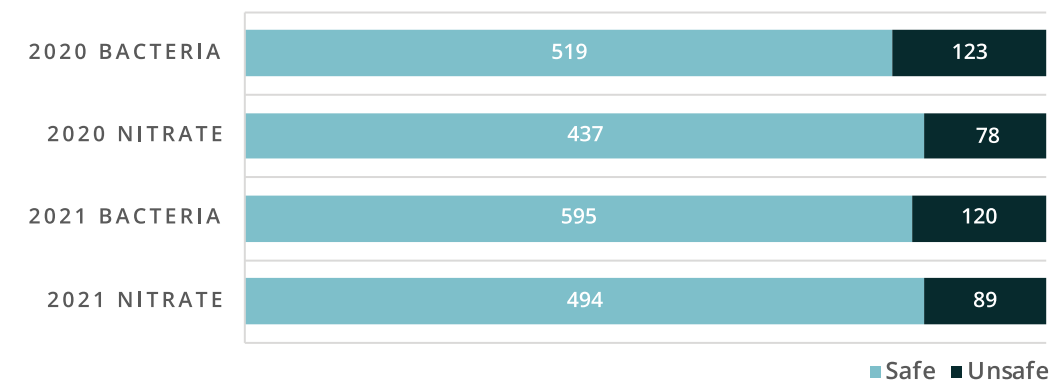
well owners in identifying and addressing high nitrate levels.

- The private sewage program focuses on septic system design and operation to ensure that wastewater is properly treated before reaching groundwater aquifers.

**2020 and 2021 were the busiest years over the last decade for sanitary permits at 184 and 170, respectively, which represents about a 30% increase in permits compared to the previous 10-year average.**

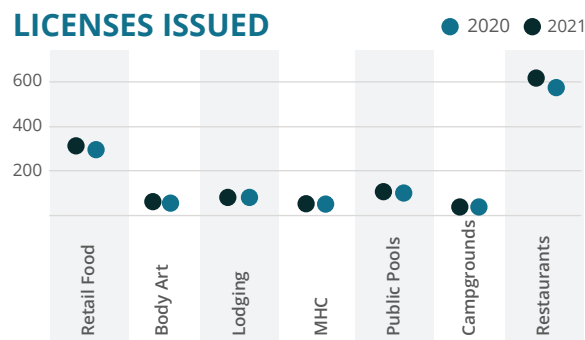
- The private well program offers laboratory testing, educates homeowners, and provides guidance about addressing identified issues. The laboratory continued to analyze samples throughout the pandemic.

### WATER LAB TESTING



## Licensed Facilities

### LICENSES ISSUED



RCPHD aims to reduce the occurrence of illness and injury in Rock County's food and recreational facilities by ensuring operators provide a safe environment for customers and employees.

In 2020 and 2021, over 1,000 establishments were licensed and inspected. During the two-year span, inspectors had to break from their traditional regulatory activities to help establishments adjust their operations to comply with COVID-19 related safety protocols and provide safe services.

Several mass communications with the most current information about operating safely during the pandemic were targeted at establishment operators.

In 2021, the food program was awarded an FDA grant to purchase electronic inspection tablets. These will be rolled out in 2022 with the goal of improving efficiency with field inspections and improving communication with operators.

## Animal Bites and Rabies

Rabies is a deadly viral disease that can be transferred to humans through bites or scratches of infected animals. Through a collaborative effort with local law enforcement and veterinarians, RCPHD follows up on potential exposures to help prevent the spread of the virus to residents. This includes ensuring quarantine orders are completed and suspected wild animals are tested.

In 2020 and 2021, there was one confirmed case of rabies in a bat, and several wild animals had inconclusive tests. Post-exposure treatment guidance was provided for all residents when rabies exposure could not be ruled out. 2020 and 2021 saw continued efforts to promote vaccination rates through targeted public outreach and community partnerships.



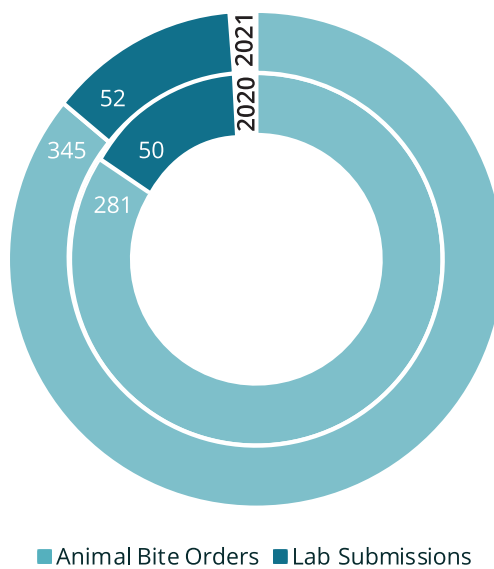
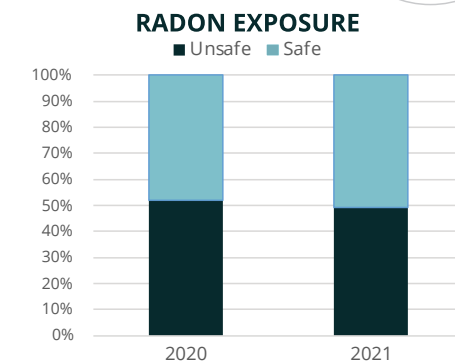
## Radon Exposure

Radon is a naturally-occurring, radioactive gas that seeps into homes from the ground through cracks and holes in foundations. Long-term exposure to radon is the leading cause of lung cancer in people who don't smoke.

Low-cost radon test kits are available to homeowners, with 111 kits being distributed 2020 and 120 kits in 2021.

RCPHD continued to promote awareness in 2020 and 2021 through both press releases and social media.

**231**  
RADON KITS  
DISTRIBUTED  
IN 2020-2021



# RCPHD FUTURE GOALS

At the time this report was developed, a new stage of the COVID-19 pandemic seems to be emerging. RCPHD will continue responding to the pandemic while working towards recovery. For the Health Department, recovery will include:

- ✓ Re-engaging in programs and services that were paused during the pandemic
- ✓ Incorporating lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic into public health preparedness planning
- ✓ Working with community partners to address public health challenges that have been exacerbated by the pandemic

In 2022 and beyond, RCPHD will work to continue modernizing public health locally to create conditions where Rock County residents have the opportunity to reach their full health potential. RCPHD will work to modernize and improve operations through:

- ✓ Development of a 2022-2025 strategic plan
- ✓ Development of a performance management system and quality improvement plan
- ✓ Convening partners and representatives from the community to collectively develop population-based strategies for improving health, reducing health disparities, and addressing health inequities
- ✓ Continuing to build the capacity of the workforce through hosting students and interns and investing in training and development opportunities



Public Health

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# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2020-2021