2023
FOREST COUNTY COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT

Forest County, WI   Health Department
Public Health
prevent. promote. protect.

Inspiring Better Health for All

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Dear Community Resident:

It is our pleasure to share with you the 2023 Forest County Community Health Needs Assessment. On behalf of the Board of Health, the Health Plan Steering Committee, and the Forest County Health Department, we hope you will find this information useful in planning and responding to the health needs of our community. We would like to personally thank Oneida County Public Health Department, Vilas County Public Health Department, Aspirus Hospital – Rhinelander, and Marshfield Clinic- Minocqua for collaborating on this assessment. The process started in 2020 but was delayed by the COVID pandemic until late 2022 when the Tri-County Assessment team was able to resume meeting regularly again.

We would also like to thank our many partners for their continued support and resources. These community agencies demonstrated a strong commitment to assessing the health needs of Forest County and working collaboratively to make our community healthier. This report can be accessed on our website at Forest County Health Department: http://forestcountypublichealth.org

Following the completion of the Community Health Assessment (CHA), the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) will be developed. This plan will provide a template to assist public health stakeholders with the implementation of evidence-based strategies that address the top three health priorities that have been identified through this assessment process:

- Substance Abuse
- Mental Health
- Chronic Disease Prevention and Management

We hope that you find this document useful and welcome any comments and/or suggestions you may have for improving the health of our county.

Sincerely,

The Staff of the Forest County Health Department
"Inspiring Better Health for All."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Forest County Health Department would like to recognize the following community leaders who assisted the department in completing the assessment.

COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT TRI-COUNTY CORE PLANNING TEAM:

Amy Gatton, Health Officer, Forest County Health Department
Linda Conlon, Health Officer, Oneida County Health Department
Tammi Boers, Health Officer, Vilas County Health Department
Jill Krueger, Public Health Nurse, Forest County Health Department
Cami Buchmann, Community Health Specialist, Oneida County Health Department
Kyla Waksmonski, Community Health, Oneida County Health Department
Rachel Cornelius, Community Health, Vilas County Health Department
Sarah Beversdorf, Community Health, Aspirus
Jordyn Fink, Community Benefits Coordinator, Marshfield Clinic Health System

FOREST COUNTY COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT STEERING COMMITTEE:

Amy Gatton, Forest County Health Department Director
Jill Krueger, Forest County Health Department Public Health Nurse Consultant
Amber Rehberg, UW Extension
Tina Anderson, Forest County Board
Ron Skallerud, Forest County Board of Health
Lynne Black, Forest County Board of Health
Jasee Novak, School District of Crandon Nurse
Jacee Shepard, Forest County Potawatomi Community Health Manager
Crista Tracy, Sokaogon Chippewa Health Clinic Nurse
Laurie Van Grinsven, Retired Physician Assistant, Board of Health member
Ronald Krueger, Business Owner
Kathleen Fohrman, Forest County Office on Aging
Khrystine Lindgren, Medical Advisor, Forest County Board of Health

FOREST COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT CHA PLANNING TEAM:

Michelle Palubicki, Registered Nurse
Kathleen Kautz, Public Health Nurse
Michelle Gobert, UW-Extension
Gayle Webster, Health Information Technician
Lenore Blemke, Public Health Nurse Consultant

FOREST COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS

POPULATION 9,239
1014 SQUARE MILES
9.1 PEOPLE PER SQUARE MILES

ETHNICITY & RACE

6.0% (551) identify as being two or more races

12.4% (1,139) identify as being Native American

2.9% (266) identify as being Hispanic or Latino

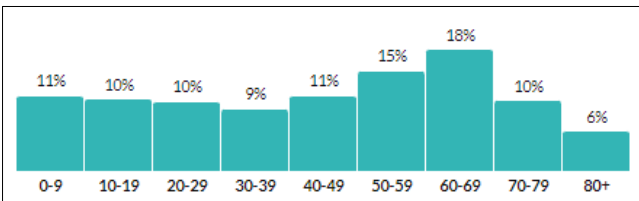0.2% (18) as Non-Hispanic Black

78% (7,163) as Non-Hispanic White

GENDER

50% Male
50% Female

DISABILITY

16.6% are disabled

6.4% have hearing difficulty

2.7% have vision difficulty

6.1% have cognitive difficulty

8.0% have ambulatory difficulty

2.8% have self-care difficulty

6.0% have independent living difficulty

Townships in Forest County
Alvin
Argonne
Armstrong Creek
Blackwell
Caswell
Crandon
Freedom
Hiles
Laona
Lincoln
Nashville
Popple River
Ross
Wabeno

Cities in Forest County
Crandon (County Seat)

Marital Status 54% (a little higher than WI and US)

Persons below the poverty line 13.9% (about 1.3 times the rate in WI 10.7% and about 10 percent higher than the rate in US 12.5%)

Veteran status population is 8.9%(652 individuals) which is about 1.3 times the Wisconsin and United States average of 6.9%. The majority of our current veterans served in Vietnam.

Median Age 48.7 (about 25 percent higher than WI and US)

Population by age range:

U.S. Census Bureau, 2022. American Community Survey 5-year estimates. Census Reporter Profile page for Forest County, WI
https://censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US55041-forest-county-wi/

Education Attainment (Population 25 Years and Older)

- High school or equivalent degree — 44%
- Some college, no degree — 27%
- Associate's degree — 12%
- Graduate or professional degree — 3%
- 14%
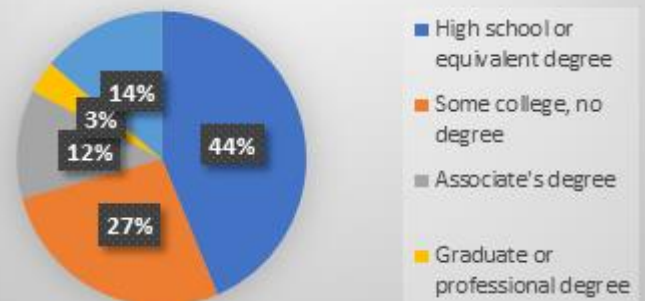
PURPOSE AND TIMELINE

WHAT IS THE COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT?

The Community Health Assessment (CHA) identifies community health concerns, subsequently informs the development of a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). This plan incorporates top health priorities, strategies, and indicators, guiding the implantation of targeted initiatives to enhance the overall health and well-being of the community.

PURPOSE

Local health departments are required by Wis. Stat. ch.251.05 to:

- Regularly and systematically collect, assemble, analyze, and make available information in regard to the health of the community every five years.
- Develop public health policies and procedures for the community.
- Involve key policymakers and the general public in determining and developing a community health improvement plan that includes actions to implement the services and functions specified under state statute.

GUIDING FRAMEWORKS AND PRINCIPLES

Healthy People 2030 is the national health plan. The framework includes five key areas to addressing work needed to improve health and well being for all people; health disparities, health equity, health literacy, well-being, social determinants of health.

Healthiest Wisconsin 2030 is the state health plan. The plan identifies priority health areas, strategies, measures, and indicators to track progress.

Collecting and analyzing data on various indicators, such as health outcomes, social and economic environmental factors, health conditions, and health behaviors; helps identify areas of high importance to residents and potential disparities within the community.

AUGUST 2022
Tri-county CHA committee started meeting.

NOVEMBER – DECEMBER 2022
CHA survey was launched via social media; Paper surveys were distributed to special populations.

JANUARY – MARCH 2023
Focus groups and Key Informant Interviews were conducted.

JUNE 2023
Community Data Café was held.

JULY 2023-AUGUST 2023
Data was analyzed along with steering committee members to identify a set of priority community health issues.

SEPTEMBER 2023-DECEMBER 2023
Identified the Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Challenges (SWOC). Gained insight from local coalitions and the steering committee.
Engaged partners to plan strategies.

JANUARY-APRIL 2024
Finalized the CHA report. Presented the report to the Board of Health.

MAY-JUNE 2024
Published the CHA report and continue working with local coalitions on the CHIP.

The assessment process used is an adaptation from the County Health Rankings and Roadmaps Wisconsin's Guidebook on Improving the Health of Local Communities. The Take Action Cycle illustrates how to create a healthy community.

Community transformation begins with Assessing Needs and Resources and moving through to Evaluation. Communicate and Work Together wrap around the cycle because these activities are essential throughout, no matter what step you are in. At the heart of the Take Action Cycle is people Working Together. We know that when people work together with a shared vision and commitment to improve health, it can yield better results than working alone.
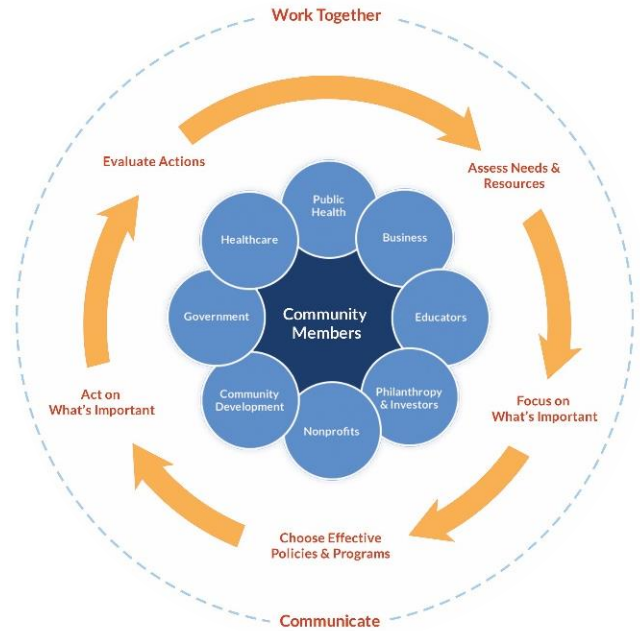
Forest County ranks 71 out of 72 counties.

The lighter shaded counties rank among the healthiest and the darker shaded counties rank among the least healthy counties.

County Health Rankings model © 2014 UWPHI
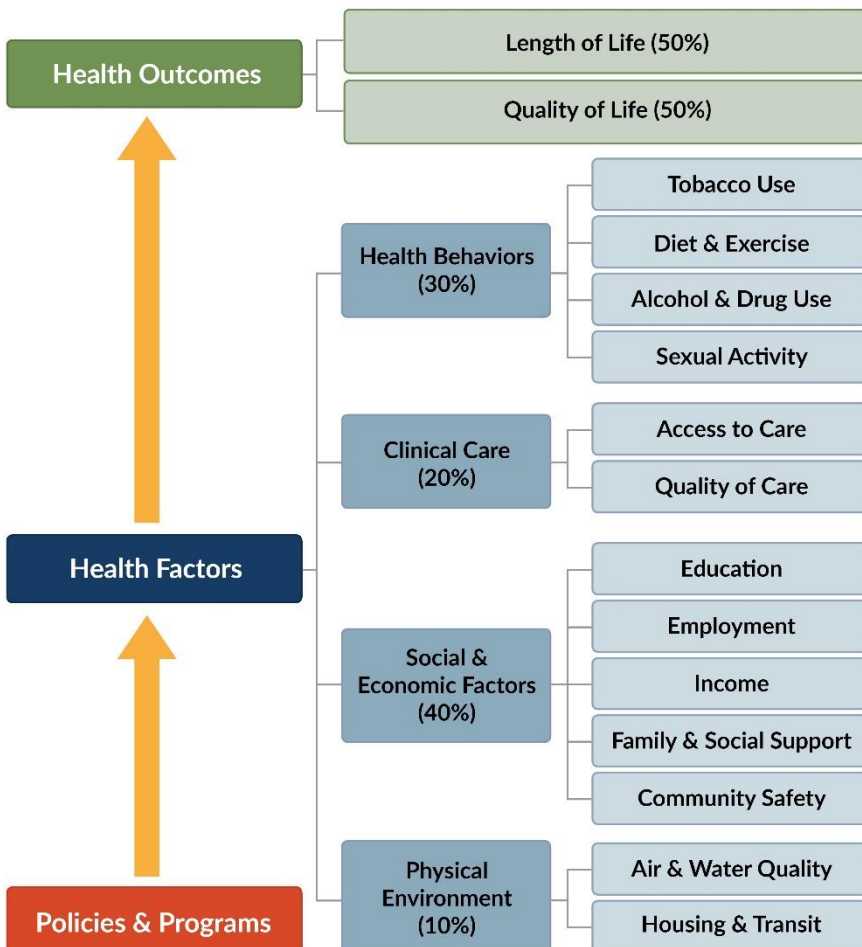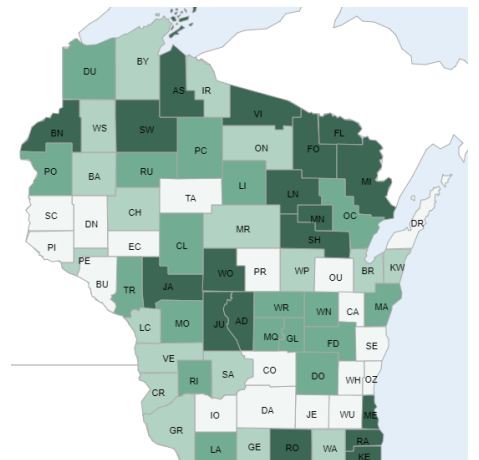
The County Health Rankings and Roadmaps model helps us see all of the factors that impact health and understand where we can take action so everyone can live their best life.

The model shows us that policies and programs play an important role in influencing the health factors that in turn, shape the community's health outcomes. That means not only how long we live, but how well we live.

The County Health Rankings and Roadmaps helps communities bring people together to look at the many factors that influence health, select strategies that can improve health for all, and make changes that will have a lasting impact.

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PRIMARY DATA

Primary data is defined as information collected for the first time or directly from main sources by surveys, interviews, etc. The Forest County Health Department collaborated with neighboring health departments in Oneida and Vilas Counties to contract with UW Stout's Applied Research Center to design, distribute, analyze and evaluate the primary data collected from:

> Community Health Survey
> Key-informant Interviews
> Focus Group Interviews

Key findings will be shared in this report and the full report will be included in the reference section of this report.

SECONDARY DATA

Forest County collaborated with Oneida and Vilas Counties to gather data from existing local, state and national sources. A secondary data packet is included in the reference section of this report.

- Wisconsin Department of Health Services- Provides access to numerous reports and databases related to the health of Wisconsin residents.
- Wisconsin WINS - provides data related to the percentage of retail stores selling tobacco products to minors through annual compliance checks.
- WI Interactive Statistics on Health- Provides information about health indicators in Wisconsin using protected databases otherwise not accessible.
- WI Environmental PH Tracking- A comprehensive source that provides environmental health data for all of Wisconsin.
- Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System
- Youth Behavioral Risk Surveillance System
- CDC: At a Glance
- DHS Alcohol Attributable Deaths
- DHS Alcohol Hospitalizations
- Burden of Binge Drinking Report
- DHS: Mental Health County Services Report
- Census Report
- Feeding America
- Metop.io
- Tri-County Medical Examiner Report
- TSC Crash Map
- United for Alice
- Wisconsin County Health Rankings
- WISEdash

Community Health Survey

In order to capture the opinions of the general public, a community survey was conducted that asked participants to share their perceptions on the health of the community and to identity health priority areas. The survey also asked questions about the participants' current health status and barriers to care. The survey was offered to all community members as an online link that was shared widely within the community via email links, social media, newspaper, handouts, posters and direct mailings. Paper surveys were given out at senior meal sites, food pantries, libraries and a grocery store.

In an effort to ensure representation from vulnerable groups, such as low-income, minority and medically underserved populations, paper copies of the survey were distributed to identified community sites that serve these populations. The results of the survey were summarized and presented to the community and used as another data source to analyze the health of the community. In order to ensure the survey was conducted in a manner that produced reliable and valid results, the University of Wisconsin – Stout's Applied Research Center partnered with the steering committee for survey design, distribution, analysis and evaluation. A list of the questions and a summary of the key findings is included in the data section under Community Health Survey and the final report can be found on each health department's website.

381 community members completed the survey.

83.5% Heterosexual
98.3% English speaking
27.9 % Age 26-40, 23.9 % Age 41-55, 18.7 % Age 56-65
63.7 % Married
27.9% Annual household income $26-40,000
23.9 % Annual household income $ 41,000-50,000
18.7% Annual household income $ 56,000-65,000
26.9 % Bachelor's degree, 20.6% Associate's degree, 20.1 % Some college, 15.5 % HS or GED
66.2% Working, 17.7 % Retired, 2.2% Disabled
59.1% Had no people under age of 18 living in their household

Top Five Strengths:

Clean environment (air, water) (66.7%)
Access to community parks and green spaces (48%)
Opportunities to practice spiritual beliefs (42.3%)
Ability to continue living in my home or chosen community as I age (41.5%)
Good schools (25.2%)

Top Five Areas for Improvement:

Access to affordable healthy foods (46.5%)
Access to safe and affordable housing (38.3%)
Access to mental health services (38.1%)
Access to affordable childcare (34.6%)
Access to affordable health care (28.3%)

Key-Informant Interviews

Face to face interviews were conducted in each county with community members that work to improve the health of the community, especially within the vulnerable populations including the low-income and medically underserved.
Interview questions were directed towards identifying the health concerns of the area along with the strengths and challenges experienced working within the community.

Thank you to the following organizations who took time from their busy schedules to participate in the interview process to provide further feedback on the health needs of the community:

School District of Laona	Wasmogishek Food Pantry
Wabeno Area School District	Forest County Sheriff's Department
Blackwell Job Corps	Forest County Office on Aging
Crandon Public Library	Forest County Department of Social Services
Laona Pharmacy	Sokaogon Chippewa Tribe

KEY INFORMANT QUESTIONS AND SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

Interview Questions and Responses:

Question 1. How does your agency contribute to the health and well-being of the community?
Provide a community service (42%)
Provide a healthcare service (42%)
Education/promotion of services (33%)

Question 2. What is working well for the population you serve to help overcome their challenges and barriers?
Providing information and education (42%)
Providing support and encouragement (58%)
Providing a specific service to fill a gap (58%)

Question 3. What do you feel your clients would indicate as their most pressing health concerns?
Mental Health concerns (33%)
AODA concerns (33%)
Access to healthcare and medication (10%)

Question 4. What are the most important challenges and barriers of the population you serve?
Lack of access/transportation issues (42%)
Lack of knowledge regarding health issues (mental health, eating healthy) (33%)
Lack of mental health resources (25%)

Question 5. How has the health of the population you serve changed over the past five years and what do you think are the drivers of that change?
Increased AODA issues (10%)
Increased Mental health issues (10%)
Obesity/Inactivity (15%)

Question 6. What actions need to be taken to address the health issues for the population you serve? Where is there community readiness?
Exercise and food programs (67%)
Education and promotion (50%)
Build on the momentum within coalitions and community partners (33%)

Question 7. In what ways does the population you serve haver unique challenges or barriers to health compared with the general population?
Location/transportation issues
Tribal resources separate from county resources
No hospital

In attempt to address the gaps in the data, focus groups were held in Forest, Oneida, and Vilas counties during a one-week period in late January 2023. Participants were recruited using specialized outreach to a variety of sub populations. The focus group questions assisted in gaining a deeper understanding of the health needs of Forest County. A total of 9 focus groups (81 participants) held, which were equally distributed across each of the three counties. Focus group discussion was recorded for data analysis. Interview questions were directed towards identifying the health concerns of the area along with the strengths and challenges experienced working within the community.

Focus Groups were held with American Legion Post 94, Forest County Courthouse, Forest County Senior Meal Site and were facilitated by UW Stout staff. Thank you to all community members who provided valuable input.

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS AND SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

Question 1: What concerns or issues in your life or the lives of your loved ones make it hard to be healthy or live a healthy life?

Accessibility / availability of health care and housing (36%)
Accessibility / availability of activities (28%)
Location / transportation (28%)
Affordability / options of healthy food (25%)

Question 2: Has there been a change in the health of people close to you in the last three to five years? If so, please explain/describe.

Physical / mental health (53%)
AODA / Increase in drug and vaping use (40%)
Other: Gangs in the schools and technological advances in medicine (13%)

Question 3: What are the top three things that need to be improved in our community?

Community Support/Resources – Better communication about resources (31%)
Better / more services (26%)
Mental Health – Need for more mental health providers (24%)
More community engagement (19%)

Question 4: What are the top three strengths in our community?

Resources / services (48%)
Community (24%)
Health care (21%)
Things to do outside (14%)

Question 5: Looking ahead 10 or 20 years…if you had a magic wand, what would your community look to make it easier for you to live a healthy life?

Accessibility / Affordability of housing (19%)
Keep young families here and get them more involved in community (17%)
Communicate / market programs, resources & services (14%)
More / cheaper stores & restaurants (14%)

COMMUNITY DATA CAFÉ

The Forest County Community Data Café was held on June 23, 2023 and was facilitated by the director of the Forest County UW Extension Office. The purpose of the café was to review primary and secondary, national, state and local data that aligns with Healthy People 2030.   This included:

- Demographics
- Health Behaviors
- Health Conditions
- Social Determinants of Health
- Leading Indicators of Health

Posters summarizing data from all listed sources were shared with participants and the group was asked to share their thoughts, experiences and knowledge. After reviewing the data, the group competed a SWOC analysis to identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Constraints and were then given an opportunity to vote on the top health priorities to be addressed over the next five years. (See Appendix C. for SWOC)

COMMUNITY DATA CAFÉ SUMMARY

What were the most alarming or biggest concerns?

#1 Mental health concerns, especially in youth
#2 Accessibility to all types of healthcare- dental, mental health and specialties
#3 Substance Abuse AODA
#4 Lack of Communication regarding resources

What is the most relevant to me and my community?

Mental health root causes
Social connections
Working together to make a greater impact

Top Five Strengths/Opportunities

1 Counselors available at all three schools
2 Free breakfast and lunch at all three schools
3 Coalitions and partnerships are strong in Forest County
4 Libraries are a great resource but underutilized
5 Resources need to be communicated to the public

Top Five Weaknesses/Constraints

1 Transportation needs to be addressed as well as alternative methods of healthcare delivery
2 Funding and lack of providers is always an issue in the Northwoods
3 Internet connections still not good in some places
4 Low income and education levels and lower wages in this area
5 Lack of childcare

Thank you to Amber Rehberg, UW Extension for facilitating and to the attendees:

Mary Thornton
Lynne Black
Tina Anderson
RT Krueger
Crista Tracy
Kathy Fohrman
Ron Skallerud
Madyson Dachelet
Jasee Novak
Dilya St Louis
Jacee Shepard
Jodie Harris
Cindy Gretzinger
Annabelle Cleereman
Amy Gatton
Gayle Webster
Jill Krueger
Michelle Gobert
Michelle Palubicki
Kathy Kautz
Julie Weber
Chris Slagowski
Sydney Rhody

The Health Department CHA Team and Steering Committee reviewed the top issues identified by the Community Health Survey, Focus Groups, Key Informant Interviews, and the results of the Community Data Café to determine the Forest County health priorities for the next five years. The criteria used to select the priorities included:

*Scope-how many people are affected? How severe is the illness?
*Disparity and Equity – What populations are disproportionately affected by the health issue?
*Community momentum – What health issues are community members ready to address or have a high interest and willingness to commit resources to?
*Alignment with others – What other organizations are working on the issue?
*Feasibility of interventions – Are there community-facing, evidence-based interventions that are sustainable, cost-effective and practical to implement?

FOCUS AREA	PRIORITY IDENTIFIED	RATIONALE	COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP IDENTIFIED
Health Behaviors	Substance Abuse	Substance abuse was identified as a priority with the focus groups, key informant interviews, community data café, and health department CHA team.	The Forest County Community Coalition is a well-established group working on strategies that align with the CHA/CHIP.
Health Conditions	Mental Health	Mental health was identified as a priority with the focus groups, key informant interviews, community data café, and health department CHA team. The youth mental health data was noted as some of the most alarming data.	The Forest County Partnership is a county wide coalition that is working on suicide prevention and other prevention activities specific to youth.
Health Conditions	Chronic Disease	While chronic disease was not a top priority identified with the community groups, the secondary data showed that there are significant areas of improvement needed, particularly in the conditions that are preventable.	The Forest County Coalition for Activity and Nutrition is a well-established group working to increase access to healthier foods and physical activity.
Social Determinants of Health	Access to Healthcare	Access to healthcare was identified as a priority across all of the data groups, especially the community survey and will be addressed within the context of substance abuse and mental health.	Addressing the social determinants of health will be an overall goal as we know that optimal health cannot be achieved until these important issues are addressed. According to the county health rankings model, social determinants of health are the most heavily weighted factor that affects the health of our population.
	Access to nutritious Foods	Access to nutritious foods was identified throughout the community survey and focus groups and will be addressed within the context of chronic disease prevention.	
	Education and Communication	Education and communication will be a top strategy used to address the health priorities chosen.	
	Access to affordable housing (not chosen)	Affordable housing was identified as a high need among the community survey and focus groups but was not chosen due to lack of adequate partnerships and resources to address the issue.	

Substance Abuse: Alcohol

WHY IS ALCOHOL USE RELEVANT?

Excessive drinking increases the risk of various health problems such as liver disease, cardiovascular illness, mental health disorders, and accidents. It also contributes to social issues like family conflict, violence, and economic burdens through healthcare costs and lost productivity.

COMPARISON DATA						
MEASURE	**YEARS OF DATA**	**FOREST COUNTY**	**ONEIDA COUNTY**	**VILAS COUNTY**	**WI**	**US**
Percentage of adults reporting binge or heavy drinking	2020	26%	28%	26%	26%	19%
Number of deaths attributable to alcohol per 100,000 population	2019-2021	87.7	68.6	89.0	51.0	--
Chronic alcohol hospitalizations per 100,000 (Emergency Room)	2019-2021	1014.9	683.4	920.3	608.4	--
Chronic alcohol hospitalizations per 100,000 (inpatient)	2019-2021	770.6	754.5	955.7	579.7	--

FOREST COUNTY DATA

56%
of motor vehicle accidents involved alcohol in 2020.

There are **3.9 alcohol licenses for every 500 people** in Forest County.

There were **6** alcohol related deaths in Forest County in 2022.

Forest, Vilas and Oneida County
Top 5 most common substances used in 2022 per behavioral health services:

Alcohol 203

Marijuana 90

Meth 64

Other opiates/synthetics 16

Heroin 10

17% *of community health survey respondents felt that reducing substance abuse and more alcohol-free events would make our community healthier!*

FOREST COUNTY YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR DATA 2021

10%

High school students attended school under the influence of alcohol or other illegal drugs one or more times during the last twelve months.

WI State Average is 8.7%

Among students reporting drinking, **38% of them reported having their first drink before age 13.**

WI average is 16.5%.

30%

High school students reported drinking during the 30 days before the survey.

Other Substance Abuse

WHY IS SUBSTANCE ABUSE RELEVANT?

Drug use can lead to increased risk of chronic illness, heart disease, HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C, and mental illness. The rising number of people who use drugs or illegal substances has led to an increase in issues surrounding drug-related crimes and violence, legal system capacity strain, decreased workforce productivity, increased healthcare needs, and increased social service needs.

COMPARISON DATA						
MEASURE	**YEARS OF DATA**	**FOREST COUNTY**	**ONEIDA COUNTY**	**VILAS COUNTY**	**WI**	**US**
Percentage of adults who are current smokers	2020	23%	17%	19%	16%	16%
Percentage of pregnant women reporting smoking	2022	27%	19%	28%	8%	--
Number of drug poisoning deaths per 100,000 population	2018-2020	48	10	23	22	23
Number of deaths due to opioids per 100,000 residents	2019-2021	40	8.3	16.7	20.5	--
Number of opioid related hospital discharges per 100,000 population	2019-2020	207.7	124.9	179.9	153.8	--

FOREST COUNTY DATA

2022 WI Department of Justice Drug Crimes in Forest County

162 total arrests
143 drug possessions
19 drug sales

Did you know Forest County has a Drug Drop Box that is available 24/7 at the Forest County Sheriff's Department?

AODA issues and increased use of drugs and vaping was mentioned in 40% of the Focus Group responses.

"Drugs in our youth are bad and there's an increase in vaping too."
(Key Informant Interview Response)

FOREST COUNTY YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR DATA 2021

42%
High school students reported that they have tried vaping. (WI 32.4%)

22%
Reported that they used a vaping product in the last 30 days. (WI 14.7%)

5% middle school & 17% high school
students reported using marijuana in the past 30 days.

30%
High school youth reported that they tried marijuana in their lifetime. (WI 24.8%)
****Among the 30% who have used, 34% started before the age of 13****

12% high school
students used cigarettes, chew, cigars, or cigarellos (past 30 Days)

7% middle school
11% high school
students reported that they have used prescription pain killers unauthorized.

County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, 2023
Medical College of Wisconsin

Forest County Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance, 2021
Wisconsin Department of Health Services

Wisconsin Department of Justice
211 Wisconsin

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Injury Prevention

Why is Injury Mortality relevant?

Causes of injury and length of life inform us of our community's health and whether people live long, healthy lives. Forest County is ranked 71 out of 72 counties for health outcomes. 1 being the best and 72 being the worst.

COMPARISON DATA

MEASURE	YEARS OF DATA	FOREST COUNTY	ONEIDA COUNTY	VILAS COUNTY	WI	US
Premature Death Rate: Years of life lost to deaths of people under age 75, per 100,000 people	2019-2021	12,900	6,400	9,500	7,100	8,000
Average Life Expectancy: Average number of years a person can expect to live.	2018-2020	74.4	78.7	77.3	78.9	78.5
Injury Deaths: Number of deaths due to injury per 100,000 population	2019-2021	140	99	141	89	76
Child Mortality Rate: Number of deaths among children under age 18 per 100,000 population	2017-2020	140	60	Not available	50	50
Child abuse and neglect reports per 1000 children	2020	39.6	41.3	31.7	27.0	---
Number of motor vehicle crash deaths per 100,000 population	2014-2020	21	10	20	10	12

FOREST COUNTY DATA

TOP REASONS FOR EMERGENCY ROOM VISITS IN 2021

- Fall
- Struck by or against object or person
- Motor vehicle
- Cutting or piercing objects
- Natural or environmental factors
- Overexertion
- Nontraffic transportation
- Poisoning
- Fire, heat, chemical burns, hot object, scalding
- Machinery
- Firearm

As of 2019, 28% of injury-related emergency room visits were for fall injuries.

"We have a good ambulance service – the crews are on the ball. If you need an ambulance, you can get one really quick."

(Community health survey respondent)

There were 108 births in Forest County in 2020.

14% of births in Forest County in 2020 were premature (WI 10%)

10% of the premature births were low birth weight (WI 5.5%)

12% of all births were low birth weight (WI 7.7%)

Physical Activity & Nutrition

Why is it important?

The CDC recommends that adults get 150 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity and two days of muscle strengthening each week. Youth should get at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity daily. Physical activity reduces the risk of obesity, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, depression, dementia, and cancer. Consuming the proper amount of protein, fruits, vegetables, and grains all contribute to numerous health benefits, including lower risk of chronic disease.

COMPARISON DATA

MEASURE	YEARS OF DATA	FOREST COUNTY	ONEIDA COUNTY	VILAS COUNTY	WI	US
Adult Obesity: Percentage of adult population (age 20 and older) that report a body mass index (BMI) greater than or equal to 30 kg/m2	2020	37%	31%	36%	33%	32%
Physical Inactivity: Percentage of adults age 18 and older reporting no leisure-time physical activity	2020	24%	18%	19%	20%	22%
Access to exercise: Percentage of population with adequate access to locations for physical activity	2020 & 2022	53%	71%	88%	84%	84%
Insufficient Sleep: Percentage of adults that report getting fewer than 7 hours of sleep per night on average	2020	33%	32%	31%	31%	33%

FOREST COUNTY DATA

19% of community health survey respondents felt healthier, more affordable food options in grocery stores & restaurants would make our community healthier.

50% stated the top barrier to eating healthier is that it is expensive.

67% of key informant respondents stated exercise and food programs are needed and there is community momentum around it.

30.7% *of survey respondents participate in daily physical activity*

30.1% *reported consuming healthy, nutritious foods*

FOREST COUNTY YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR DATA 2021

97% Middle Schoolers & 87% High Schoolers reported participating in at least an hour or more of physical activity in the past week.

74% Middle Schoolers & 66% High Schoolers reported engaging in an hour or more of physical activity for four or more days per week.

31% High Schoolers ate fruit every day (past 7 days)

32% High Schoolers ate vegetables every day (past 7 days)

Mental Health

Why is Mental Health Important?

Mental health can influence one's ability to cope with stress, interact with others, and affect choices they make in regard to health. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood. Depression increases the risk for diabetes, heart disease and stroke.

COMPARISON DATA

MEASURE	YEARS OF DATA	FOREST COUNTY	ONEIDA COUNTY	VILAS COUNTY	WI	US
Poor Mental Health Days: Average number of mentally unhealthy days reported in the last 30 days	2020	4.7	4.2	4.6	4.4	4.4
Frequent Mental Distress: Percentage of adults reporting 14 or more days of poor mental health per month	2020	16%	14%	14%	13%	14%
Percentage of adults with a prevalence of depression	2020	22%	20%	20%	20%	--
Suicides: Number of deaths due to suicide per 100,000 population	2016-2020	Not available	15	26	15	14
Social Associations: Number of membership associations per 10,000 population	2020	10	15.4	19.7	11.2	9.1

FOREST COUNTY DATA

HIGH NEED → **572** Tri-County residents needed Mental Health Crisis Services in 2021

LOW ACCESS → In 2022 there was only **ONE mental health provider per 620 people** in Forest County.

65.7% of survey respondents stated that they had access to a mental healthcare provider, of those who did not have access, 13.4% stated the reason to be too long of a waiting list.

6.5% of respondents seriously considered suicide.

33% of Key-informant respondents stated mental health is their clients' most pressing health concern.

FOREST COUNTY YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR DATA 2021

In 2021, **ONE in FOUR** students (29% middle school and 25% high school) reported engaging in self-harming practices at least once in the past twelve months.

In 2021, **ONE in FIVE** Forest County youth (22% middle school and 21% high school students seriously considered suicide.

7% middle school and 8% high school students reported that they attempted suicide within the past twelve months.

38% high school students felt so sad or hopeless for two or more weeks in the last 12 months that they stopped doing some activities. (WI 33.7%)

51% high school students in the last 12 months, experienced significant anxiety. (WI 52.2%)

Chronic Disease

Why are chronic diseases relevant?

Chronic diseases are the leading cause of death and disability in the United States and are the number one cost to the health care system. They are long lasting conditions that reduce one's daily activities or requires ongoing medical attention. Many chronic diseases can be avoided by reducing or eliminating health behaviors such as; smoking, poor diet, physical inactivity, and excessive drinking. The presence of chronic conditions can also increase the risk for mental illness. According to the CDC, 1 in 3 Americans has prediabetes and 80% of them do not know.

COMPARISON DATA

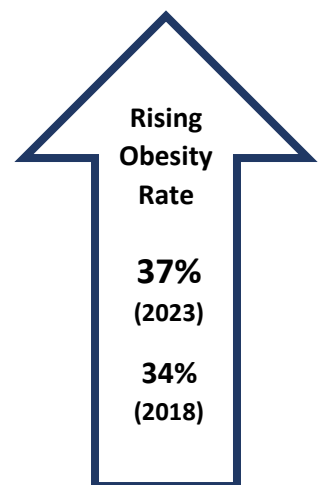| MEASURE	YEARS OF DATA	FOREST COUNTY	ONEIDA COUNTY	VILAS COUNTY	WI	US
Percentage of adults 18 and older who report ever having been told by a health professional that they have high blood pressure.	2021	31%	28.5%	28.8%	28.3%	--
Percentage of adults 18 and older who report ever having been told by a health professional that they have had angina or coronary artery disease	2021	6.3%	5.2%	5.2%	5%	
Percentage of adults aged 18 and older who report ever having been told by a health professional that they have diabetes	2021	9.5%	7.7%	8%	8%	9%
Percentage of adults who reported ever having been told by a doctor that they have COPD, emphysema, or chronic bronchitis	2020	7%	5.4%	5.6%	5.3%	--
Diabetes Mortality Rate: Rate of death due to diabetes	2016-2020	32.8	20	20	20.3	--
Percentage of population with diagnosed stroke	2021	3.1%	2.5%	2.6%	2.61%	--
Percentage of the adult population age 18 and older that reports a body mass index (BMI) greater than or equal to 30kg/m2	2023	37%	31%	36%	33%	32%

FOREST COUNTY DATA

"There's a lot of cancer and diabetes up here in the Northwoods." (Focus Group Respondent)

LEADING CAUSES OF DEATH UNDER AGE 75 IN FOREST COUNTY (2018-2020)	# DEATHS	RATE PER 100,000
Malignant neoplasms	44	97
Disease of heart	24	52.1
Accidents	18	Unreliable
Chronic lower respiratory diseases	10	unreliable

Rising Obesity Rate

37% (2023)

34% (2018)

6% of Community Health Survey Respondents reported they have cancer.

9% of Forest County residents are diabetic and **7.8%-9.5%** have prediabetes
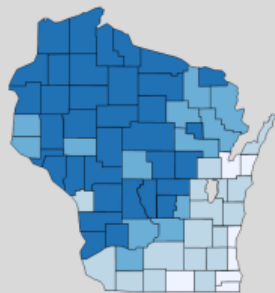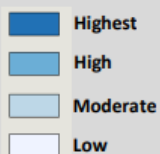
Communicable Disease

Why are communicable disease relevant?

While most communicable disease infections are mild, some can lead to severe disease, disability, or death. Reporting and surveillance of infectious diseases mitigates widespread outbreaks and protects the public's health. According to the CDC- 1 in 5 children globally do not have access to immunizations. The measles vaccine can save 14 million lives worldwide. The hepatitis vaccine can save 15 million lives.

FOREST COUNTY DATA

Average incidence of confirmed and probable Lyme disease, anaplasmosis, and babesiosis cases by county of residence.
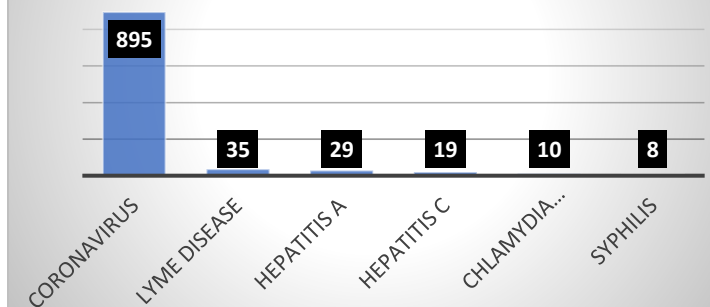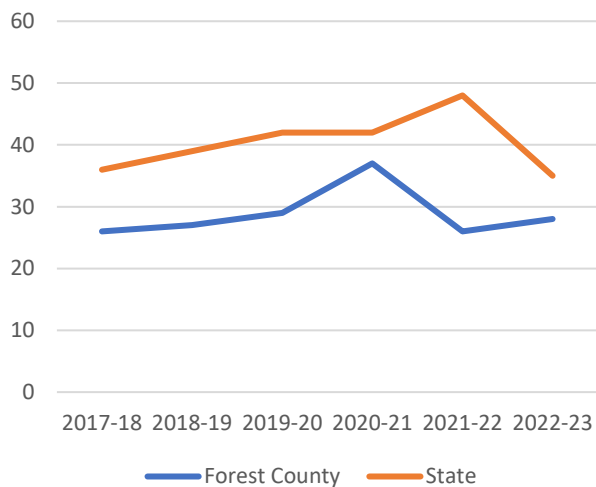
Risk Level

- Highest
- High
- Moderate
- Low

Lyme disease, anaplasmosis, and babesiosis account for the majority of tickborne disease cases in Wisconsin.

Forest County is at a **High-Risk** level.

2023 Most Common Communicable Diseases

Disease	Cases
CORONAVIRUS	895
LYME DISEASE	35
HEPATITIS A	29
HEPATITIS C	19
CHLAMYDIA...	10
SYPHILIS	8

Adult Flu Immunization Rates

Forest County — State

Only 56% of forest county two-year-old's have received their scheduled vaccines on time.

15% of Forest County Residents were up to date on their vaccinations including flu, tetanus, diphtheria, & whooping cough as of 2021 - CDC

17% community health survey respondents stated the distance required to travel to appointments as an issue that makes it hard to be healthy or live a healthy lifestyle.

Physical Environment

Why is our physical environment important?

Safe and walkable neighborhoods enhance social interactions and community well-being. Poor environmental conditions, such as air pollution or lack of recreational spaces, contribute to respiratory issues, cardiovascular diseases, and mental health problems. Accessible and well-designed environments encourage physical activity, reducing the risk of obesity and related conditions.

COMPARISON DATA

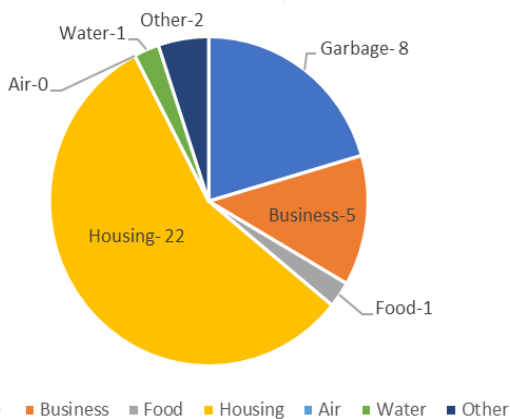| MEASURE	YEARS OF DATA	FOREST COUNTY	ONEIDA COUNTY	VILAS COUNTY	WI	US
Walkability Index	2022	5.78	6.39	6.69	8.68	--
Percentage of households with broadband internet connection	2023	81%	85%	82%	86%	--

FOREST COUNTY DATA

In 2021-2023 no community water systems in Forest County reported a health-based drinking water violation.

Average daily density of fine particular matter in micrograms per cubic meter (2023)   **Forest 5.4 (WI 7.8)**

In 2021 **72%** of people lived within ½-1 mile of a park.

3% of children age 5-17 years old lived within ½-1 mile of a public school.

Health Hazard Complaints 2023

- Garbage
- Business
- Food
- Housing
- Air
- Water
- Other

Other-2, Water-1, Air-0, Garbage-8, Business-5, Food-1, Housing-22

Clean Environment (air, water) and Access to community parks and green spaces were the top two strengths from the Forest County community health survey respondents.

"We need more nature walks and a way to make it easier to walk in winter, accessible trails, marked crosswalks and a bike lane." (Key Informant Response)

Lead: 149 children were screened for lead in 2023 and 3 of them had elevated lead results requiring follow up education and retesting.

Radon: There were 4 elevated radon tests in Forest County in 2023.

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

Education/Income

Why is Education and Income Important?

Education teaches important skills and knowledge, which aid people in making informed choices about personal and family health. Jobs accompanied with health insurance, paid sick leave, retirement and other benefits are proven to positively impact health; however, these opportunities are typically limited to higher wage jobs.

COMPARISON DATA

MEASURE	YEARS OF DATA	FOREST COUNTY	ONEIDA COUNTY	VILAS COUNTY	WI	US
Percentage of adults age 25 and older with a high school diploma or equivalent	2017-2021	90%	94%	95%	93%	89%
Percentage of adults ages 25-44 with some post-secondary education	2017-2021	55%	68%	60%	70%	67%
Percentage of the population ages 16 and older unemployed but seeking work	2022	4.4%	2.2%	4.6%	3.4%	8.1%
Children in Poverty: Percentage of people under age 18 in poverty	2017-2021	22%	13%	20%	14%	17%
Median Household Income: The income where half of households in a county earn more and half earn less	2021	$51,959	$62,660	$56,837	$67,080	$75,149

FOREST COUNTY DATA

In 2022   **1257** people were living in poverty   **19.5%** of children under 18 were living in poverty

9% of people age 65 and older were living in poverty

In 2022 in Forest County, workers would need an hourly wage of $42.52 to cover basic household expenses for a household of one adult and two children.

↑ *Unemployment*

Percentage of poverty

↓ *Graduation and Post-secondary education*

Income

"Our Library is an underutilized resource in our community." (Community Health Survey response)

"We need to find a way to keep young families here, better paying jobs." (Focus Group Participant response)

Housing/Childcare

Why is it important?
Lack of quality housing and childcare can put stress on individuals and families and increase their chances for poor health outcomes. Location of housing can make it difficult to access healthy foods, exercise, obtain medical care, education and childcare.

COMPARISON DATA

MEASURE	YEARS OF DATA	FOREST COUNTY	ONEIDA COUNTY	VILAS COUNTY	WI	US
Percentage of owner-occupied housing units	2017-2021	80%	85%	82%	67%	65%
Severe Housing Burden: Percentage of households that spend 50% or more of their income on housing	2023	10%	9%	10%	11%	14%
Severe Housing Problem: Percentage of households with at least one: overcrowding, high cost, lack of kitchen facilities, lack of plumbing facilities	2015-2019	11%	9%	12%	13%	17%
Percentage of children that live in a household headed by a single parent	2016-2020	27%	13%	28%	23%	25%
Child care costs for a household with two children as a percent of median household income	2020-2021	30%	26%	27%	26%	25%
Number of child care centers per 1,000 population under 5 years old	2021	6	11	9	6	6

FOREST COUNTY DATA

Top Requested Referrals for Forest County 2022 (211 Call Center)

Housing and Shelter (35) ■ Utilities (22) ■ Mental Health & Addictions (23) ■ Food (10) ■ Healthcare (6)

Housing and Shelter (35) | Mental Health & Addictions (23) | Utilities (22) | Food (10) | Healthcare (6)
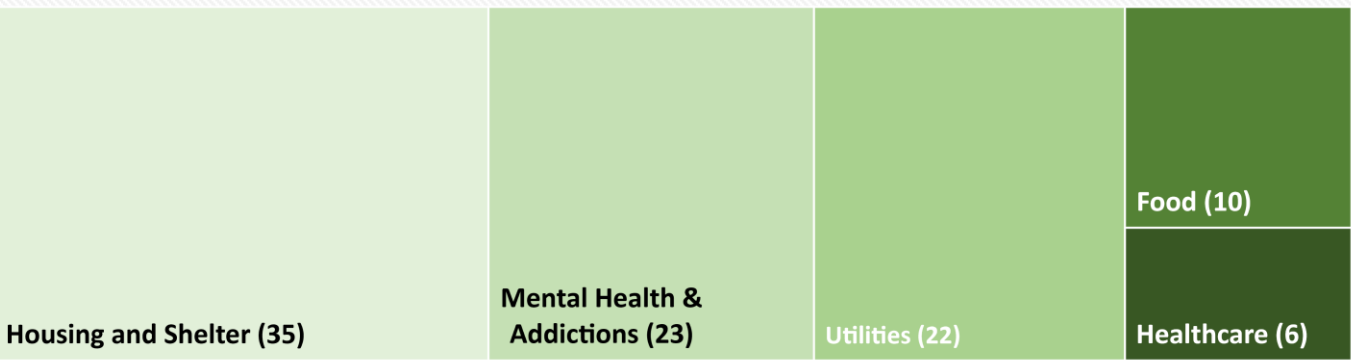
The median value of owner-occupied housing unit is $160,100 which is about two-thirds of the amount in WI $231,400

Top response to community health survey question: "What do you think our community could provide to help solve housing related issues?"

More Affordable housing
More housing in general

"Childcare isn't available in our community like it should be." (Key Informant Interview response)

Access to Care

Why is Health Care access important?

Access to health care, especially affordable and available services, is a valuable asset in a healthy community. Financial resources including health insurance, Medicaid, BadgerCare Plus, and programs for the uninsured are all opportunities for individuals to receive aid while accessing care.

COMPARISON DATA

DESCRIPTION	YEARS OF DATA	FOREST COUNTY	ONEIDA COUNTY	VILAS COUNTY	WI	US
Percentage of population under age 65 without health insurance	2020	13%	6%	10%	7%	10%
Percentage of children under age 19 without health insurance	2020	10%	5%	8%	4%	5%
Percentage of Medicaid members who received preventive oral care (all ages)	2021	23.8%	18.7%	19.6%	21%	--
Percentage of female Medicare enrollees ages 65-74 that received an annual mammogram screening	2020	47%	47%	50%	43%	37%
Percentage of pregnant women who receive early and adequate prenatal care	2020	77.8%	82.6%	76.6%	76.7%	--
Percentage of females who get screened for breast cancer	2020	72.8%	76%	69.9%	--	--

FOREST COUNTY DATA

RATIO OF PEOPLE TO PROVIDERS	FOREST COUNTY	WISCONSIN
Primary Care Provider	9000:1	1240:1
Other Healthcare Provider	1490:1	750:1
Dental Provider	1790:1	1380:1
Mental Health Provider	600:1	420:1

NO Hospital

ONE Skilled Nursing Facility

THREE Health Clinics (2 Tribal)

DENTAL VISITS

- 69% high school students saw a dentist in the past 12 months.

- 61% age 18 and older visited a dentist in the past year.

"We have to travel too far for appointments, need better transportation system."

(Focus Group response)

Access to Food

Why is food access important?

Lack of regular access to affordable healthy food can lead to increased incidences of obesity, diabetes, heart disease and other health conditions. Those facing food insecurity often face additional issues such as poor housing and lack of health insurance.

COMPARISON DATA

MEASURE	YEARS OF DATA	FOREST COUNTY	ONEIDA COUNTY	VILAS COUNTY	WI	US
Food Insecurity: Percentage of population who lack adequate access to food	2022	13.2%	9%	11%	10.5%	11%
Food Insecurity in Children: Percentage of population under age 18 who lack adequate access to food	2022	20%	13.7	17.4	12.6	--
Limited access to healthy foods: Percentage of the population who are low income and do not live close to a grocery store	2019	12%	2%	3%	5%	6%
Food Environment Index: Index of factors that contribute to a healthy food environment, from 0(worst)to 10 (best)	2019 & 2020	7.0	8.9	8.4	8.7	7.8

FOREST COUNTY DATA

188 clients per month are seen through the Forest County Health Department WIC program

487 households receive SNAP benefits (food stamps) in 2022

1220 food insecure individuals

45% of our population is eligible for Free and reduced lunch all students receive free breakfast and lunch in Forest County

ONE grocery store in all of Forest County

"Grocery prices are high and that makes it hard for people to buy nutritious and healthy foods." (Focus Group response)

24% high school and **36%** middle school students experienced hunger due to lack of food at home (past 30 Days).

$91,159.12 of WIC approved food was redeemed at our WIC approved grocery stores in Forest County.

$1,002.00 of Farmer Market Coupons were redeemed at WIC approved farm stands.

Money needed to cover the food budget shortfall annually in 2022 (Feeding America)

In Forest County $912,000   In WI $453,996,000

The assessment process used is an adaptation from the Wisconsin State Health Assessment Plan to get to the root causes of community health challenges such as the social determinants of health, access to care and the priorities we've chosen to focus on in this report.

The data from this report will be used to create a five-year Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The CHIP will allow us to:

- Develop goals, measurable objectives, and implementation strategies to address the top health priorities.
- Incorporate health-plan goals and strategies into day-to-day activities of community partners.
- Annually review progress on goals, objectives, and strategies.

The CHIP will be assembled and carried out with the input of coalition action teams, coalition members, and community partners committed to address the health priorities and choose effective policies and programs that fit the needs of Forest County.

We could not have completed this community health assessment process without our dedicated staff and strong community partnerships. We look forward to continuing to share our expertise, align our goals, and pool our resources to make Forest County healthier.

HEALTH PRIORITY AREA	FOCUS AREAS	FOREST COUNTY COALITION
Substance Abuse	Prevention Access to Treatment	Community Coalition of Forest County
Mental Health	Prevention Access to Treatment	Forest County Partnership
Chronic Disease	Food/Nutrition Security Access to Healthier Foods	Forest County CAN Coalition

This plan can be accessed on our website:

www.forestcountypublichealth.org

If you are interested in learning how to get involved with the Community Health Improvement Process, contact us at
FCHealth@co.forest.wi.us

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APPENDICES

A. STOUT CHA Report

B. STOUT Comparison Report

C. CHA Health Priority Summary Table

D. SWOC Analysis