

# Forest County Health Department

## ANNUAL REPORT 2021



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



Forest County Health Department Staff

**Forest County –  
Healthy People in Healthy  
Communities**

**Mission:** *To protect and promote health and prevent disease and injury by providing services essential for a healthy community.*

**Values:**

- Respect
- Accountability
- Excellence
- Empowerment
- Flexibility
- Collaboration

**Board of Health Members 2021**

*Chairperson:* Lynne Black

Cheri Collins

Tina Anderson

Larry Berg (July-present)

Rebecca Perry

Candy Dailey

Dr. Susan Moore, Medical Advisor



Jacee Shepard BSN, RN  
Director/Health Officer  
January 2021-March 2021



Holli Denton BSN, RN  
Director/ Health Officer  
April 2021-present  
Public Health Nurse



Kathryn Kincaid, RN  
Registered Staff Nurse



Tiffany Wozniak BSN, RN  
Public Health Nurse



Julie Weber  
Public Health Assistant



Chris Slagowski  
Public Health Clerk



Steffany Weber  
Breastfeeding Peer Counselor  
(part time)

Not pictured: Melissa Denton,  
Jill Krueger  
Sandy Lane  
Amy Gatton  
Pete Meisinger  
(COVID-19 response staff)





These 10 Essential Public Health Services identify the actions necessary to provide the protection and improvement of public health. This image shows how the 10 essential public health services align with the 3 Core Functions of public health, which are assessment, policy development, and assurance.

## Community Health Improvement

Local health departments are required by law to develop a health improvement plan based on a community needs assessment every 5 years.

Forest County Health Department is collaborating with Oneida and Vilas Counties and Ascension/Ministry Health on a 2016-2020 plan that is available on our website at [www.forestcountypublichealth.org](http://www.forestcountypublichealth.org)

### Priority Areas:

- Alcohol and Drug Abuse**
- Mental Health**
- Chronic Disease**



### Top Causes of Death in 2022

- #1 All Other
- #2 Cancer
- #3 Heart Disease
- #4 Accidents
- #5 Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease

\*This data has not been updated since 2017.

FCHD is involved in many coalitions and work groups throughout Forest County and the northern region of Wisconsin to work on improving the priority areas determined in our Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) and overall health and well-being of Forest County residents.

Due to COVID-19 response, FCHD staff was not able to be as involved in coalition work as past years. We look forward to continuing this work into 2022.

### What We Are Doing

Working with the Community Coalition of Forest County and other partners to coordinate prescription drug and safe sharps disposal events. Coordinating a Partnership for Success grant increasing awareness through educational materials and events, sponsoring law enforcement trainings, and working with Drug Endangered Children committee to respond to the need for services for our families who are struggling with addiction.



Working with Forest County Partnership to provide leadership training at all three schools, Brighter Futures Conference for all 11<sup>th</sup> graders, and Red Ribbon Week activities.



Working with Tri-County COPE to improve on access to substance abuse and mental health treatment and raising awareness of mental health concerns. Staff is trained in QPR – Question, Persuade, Refer which is a program to train community members on how to respond to suicidal individuals.

Working with Forest County CAN Coalition to increase opportunities for physical activity and increase access to healthier foods.



The health department supported a community garden that provided fresh produce to the meal sites, traveling food pantry at the libraries, as well as local food pantries. The community garden also had a master gardener present to teach community members of all ages, about gardening so they can be successful when starting their own gardens. This will continue in 2022!



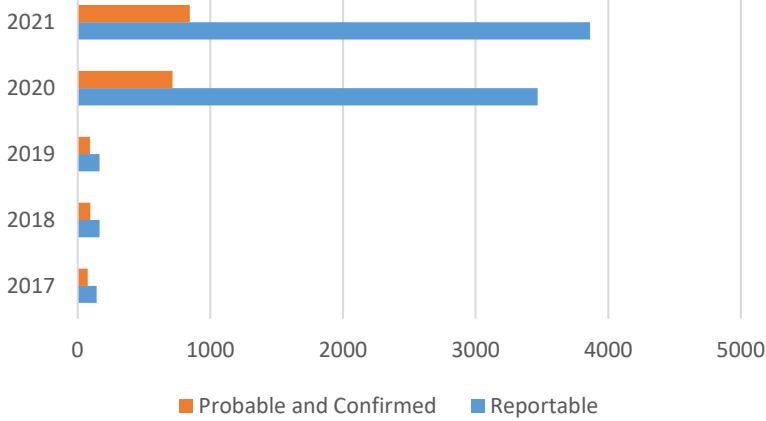
## Communicable Disease

**By law specific diseases must be reported to local health departments. Staff receive these reports through an electronic reporting system called Wisconsin Electronic Disease Surveillance System (WEDSS) and investigate in order to stop the spread**

*Wis. Stat. 252.05*

*Any health care provider who knows or has reason to believe a person treated or visited by him or her has a communicable disease is required to report per Administrative Rule DHS 145.04 (1), this includes reporting of a case or suspected case.*

Reportable Communicable Diseases



**Reportable Diseases** include all illnesses consistent with a disease whether or not it is lab confirmed.

**We investigated 3,863 diseases. This is an increase compared to 3,468 investigated diseases in 2021. This is due to COVID-19 pandemic.**

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

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

### Most common diseases:

Coronavirus	862 confirmed
Lyme Disease	21 confirmed
Ehrlichiosis/Anaplasmosis	9 confirmed
Chlamydia Trachomatis	4 confirmed
Campylobacteriosis	3 confirmed

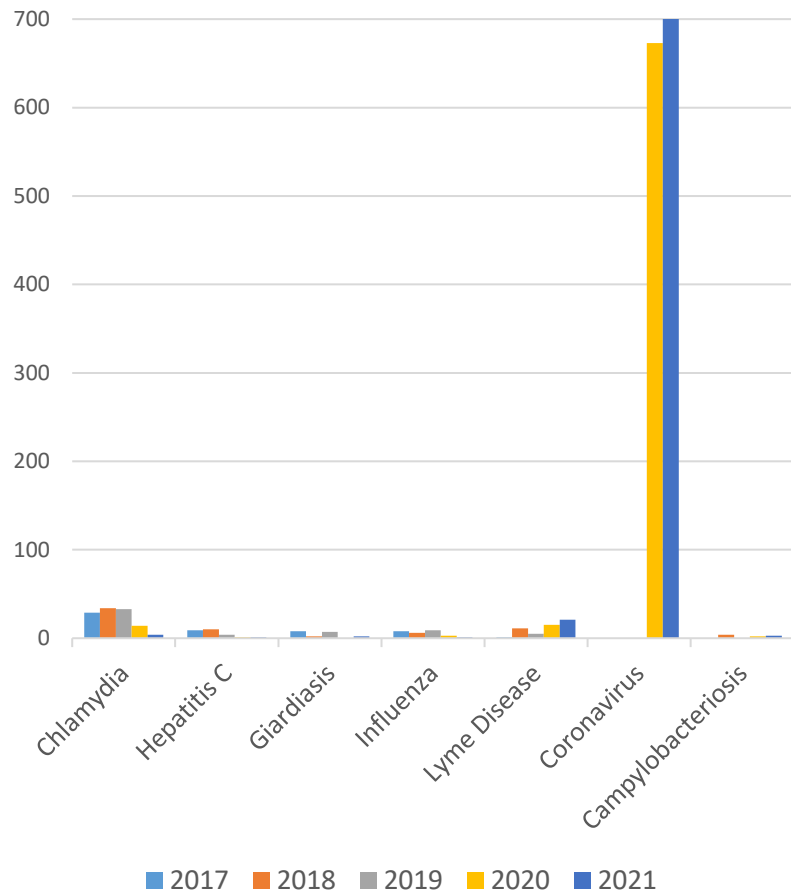
The health department investigates animal bites as part of our **Rabies Prevention Program.**

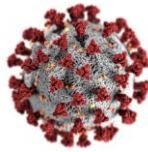
In 2021, we investigated **37** animal bites. 0 animals were sent to the state lab for follow up rabies testing.

FCHD provides Tuberculosis skin tests to screen health care workers and students before they enter the workforce to make sure they do not spread disease.

**We provided 17 skin tests in 2021.**

Communicable Disease Trends





**Background**

Covid-19 is a viral respiratory illness caused by a new coronavirus. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common in people and many different species of animals, including camels, cattle, cats, and bats (CDC). The US saw its first COVID-19 case on January 21, 2020. Forest County saw its first positive cases starting in May of 2020. Governor Evers declared a State of Emergency on March 12, 2020 in Wisconsin, and the Forest County Board of Supervisors declared a local state of Emergency in Forest County on March 24, 2020. Unfortunately, COVID-19 continued to be a focus of our Public Health work in 2021. By the end of 2021 Forest County had experienced 1,885, confirmed and probable cases, 36 confirmed and 4 probable deaths.

**Public Information and Education**

Public Health plays an important role in providing updated information and education to the community during emergencies. Our staff responded to thousands of phone calls and emails regarding COVID-19. We sent over 125 press releases to our local newspapers regarding COVID-19 and posted to our website and Facebook page daily. We continued to inform the public on the number of tests completed, number of positive and negative results, number of hospitalized patients, recovered cases and deaths.

**Partner Collaboration and Communication**



We continued frequent communication with schools, nursing homes, bus enforcement, emergency management and clinics with virtual meetings. We worked with Emergency management to order PPE and have it delivered to area providers.

**Guidance and Resource Sharing**

We provided continued guidance and recommendations for local businesses, schools, health care facilities, nursing home, community members, other county departments, and various community organizations on infection control and best practices.

**Disease Investigation and Contact Tracing**

We hired additional part time staff to assist with disease investigation and contact tracing. The staff continued to work 7 days a week, contacting positive cases, suspect cases, contacts, and reviewing isolation and quarantine procedures in addition to fielding hundreds of calls from community members. Public health was the lead agency to provide consultation and guidance to our local clinics, schools, tribes and nursing home.

**Testing**

Testing was available in the community from area clinics, and throughout the northern region with help from the National Guard. Public Health was a resource to connect people to testing sites and provided this information to the public.

**Vaccine**

2021 was spent encouraging community members to get vaccinated and working with our healthcare providers to hold vaccine clinics throughout the county at community sites. In late 2021 the CDC approved vaccine for everyone ages 5 and up. Boosters became available to Wisconsin residents in fall 2021, the health department started doing booster clinics in November 2021. Current completed COVID-19 vaccination rate is 50.3%.

**Looking at 2022**

We anticipate declining rates of Covid-19 due to social distancing, masks, handwashing and sanitation practices and increase in vaccination administration.



## Emergency Preparedness

The department receives grant funding through the Department of Health Services and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to support public health preparedness activities. Each year we focus on two of the CDC Public Health Emergency Capabilities.



### Our Local Partners:

Emergency Management, Emergency Medical Services, Hospitals and Clinics, Tribal Agencies, Fire Departments, Law Enforcement, American Red Cross, Schools and Volunteer groups. We work to make sure local plans are in place and reviewed on a regular basis and participate in the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC). We are also working to improve communication with our partners and the public when an emergency happens. We continue to work on our plans for mass vaccination of the public if the need arises and participate in annual trainings to improve our skills.



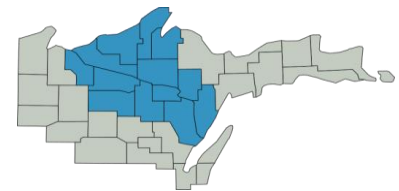
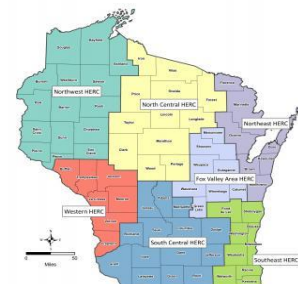
### Our Regional Partners:

We are part of a Health Care Coalition that includes Region 2 local public health, hospitals, clinics and tribes. Each year we work with the coalition to complete a table-top exercise to improve our planning and test our capabilities. We also meet with our bordering counties in Michigan on a regular basis to prepare and plan.

### Mutual Aid

The health department has several mutual aid agreements in place to assist us when needed. Northern Regional Local Public Health Departments, Wisconsin Disaster Medical Reserve Corps, Wisconsin/Michigan Border County. We also have MOUs in place with local agencies, Forest County Potawatomi and Sokaogon Chippewa tribes to assist with response and recovery.

Wisconsin Healthcare Emergency Readiness Coalitions (HERC)



### Northwood's Syndromic Surveillance

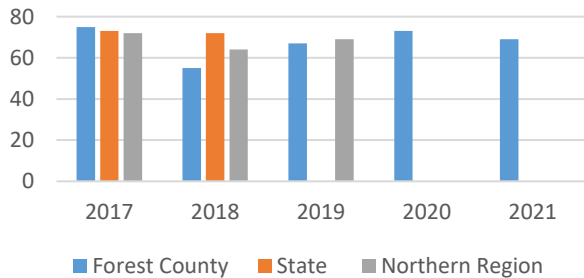
*Forest County Health Department is a member of this group of Northern Wisconsin health care providers who work to ensure that agencies are kept up to date with timely information and guidelines on communicable disease events.*

**Having these preparedness plans, partnerships and mutual aid in place were critical pieces in our response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.**



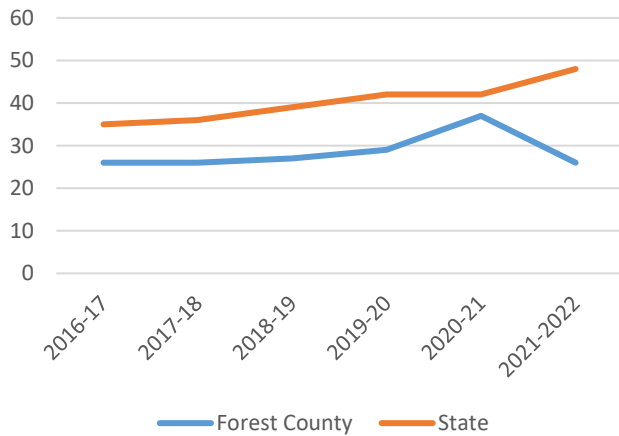
# Immunizations

24 month old up to date with all recommended vaccines

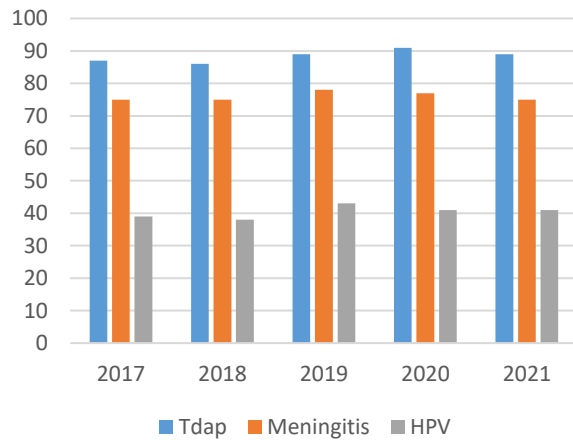


*Schools and Day Care Providers are required by law (Wis. Stat. 252.04) to report child immunization status to the Health Department. We work with the schools and daycares to ensure the reporting forms are completed timely.*

Adult Flu Immunization Rates



13 to 18 Year Old Vaccination Rates



***The Health Department is part of the Northwood’s Immunization Coalition which focuses on improving vaccination rates, increasing access to care, vaccine education, and being prepared for mass vaccination.***

The Health Department has taken part in a school mass vaccination clinic to offer students flu vaccine free of charge while testing our capability to provide mass clinic vaccines off-site.

**School Influenza Mass Clinic Numbers**

- 2018: 202 doses for an increase of 18%
- 2019: 280 doses for an increase of 39%
- 2020: 243 doses for a decrease of 13%
- 2021: 198 doses for a decrease of 19%



**3839 vaccinations were given by the health department in 2021. 200 were given free to children under the Vaccine for Children Program. 3639 were administered to adults and of those, 384 were flu shots.**

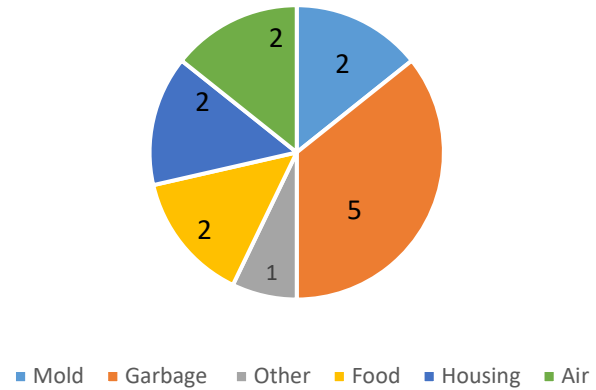


## Environmental Programs

### Health Hazards

A wide variety of Human Health Hazards from water, air, housing, garbage, and a variety of other issues are investigated through a process that typically starts as a complaint. If property owners do not comply with removal of the hazard, a citation may be issued. We investigated **14** health hazard complaints in 2021.

### Health Hazard Complaints 2021



**Radon:** 11 radon tests were sold to Forest County residents in 2021. 2 of the results were above the recommended level and required either re-testing or remediation.



### Prevent Childhood Lead Poisoning

Exposure to lead can seriously harm a child's health.



Damage to the brain and nervous system



Slowed growth and development



Learning and behavior problems



Hearing and speech problems

**Lead:** 54 children were screened for lead in Forest County in 2021 and none were found to have lead poisoning. Parents are given educational information on the environmental risk factors and the symptoms of increased lead in the blood.



**Water Testing:** The health department offers free water test kits to Forest County residents who have well water with pregnant women or small children in the home. We assist families with information and referrals to other agencies if water is found to be unsafe. In 2021, well water test kits were available; however, testing was not requested by any community members. Transient non-community water supplies are tested and inspected by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources ensuring safe and dependable water to the public.

**Licensing and Inspections:** Our department relies on the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection to inspect Forest County food operations, lodging establishments, restaurants, pools, and campgrounds. Inspection reports can be found at <http://healthspace.com/Clients/WI/State/web.nsf/home.xsp>



## Maternal Child Health Programs

### Oral Health:

The Forest County Health Department provides fluoride supplements to children 6 months to 16 years old with non-fluoridated water supply. Unfortunately, in 2021, we did not provide any supplements and most of our in-person services were completed virtually.



### Northwood's Dental Project:

We partner with the project to provide FREE fluoride varnish to children 6 months to 5 years and FREE dental sealants to all 2<sup>nd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders at all of our schools by a mobile dental clinic. The program includes oral health education, oral health exams and referrals for dental care. This program is offered FREE due to a Wisconsin Seal A Smile Grant. Unfortunately, the program was suspended during 2021-2022 school year due to COVID-19 pandemic. This program is in the works to be restarted in the 2022-2023 school year!



### Child Passenger Safety:

The Health Department has a Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician and we are able to provide education and assistance to parents on how to choose the correct seat and check that it is installed safely. We are able to give away a limited number of car seats to low income families. In 2021, 18 parents received free car seats and education from the health department. All parents increased their knowledge of how to correctly install a seat.



### Child Death Review:

Forest County Health Department is the lead agency for a community wide child death review team. Members come together to review child death information and collaborate on ways to prevent injury. Three Life jacket loaner stations were established in 2017 - two on Lake Metonga in Crandon and one on Silver Lake in Laona. These continued to be utilized by community members and visitors in 2021. FCHD is working on adding two more life jacket stations throughout the county in 2022.

## Programs

### First Breath:

First Breath is a smoking cessation program for pregnant woman. The program offers nonjudgmental support and counseling and incentives. There were no women referred during 2021 due to COVID-19 response and staff capacity. The health department will continue to work with other providers in our community to provide the First Breath Cessation program in 2022.

FIRST BREATH

### Prenatal Care Coordination:

High risk pregnant women who are on Medicaid can enroll in our PNCC program to receive education and case management with a goal of having a healthy baby. There were no women enrolled in 2021 due to COVID-19 response.



There were  
88 Births in  
Forest  
County in  
2021

### School Health:

Health department nurses provide consultation to school districts and Head Starts related to school illness and communicable disease, school wellness policy, emergency services, and more. We provide education on a wide variety of topics at the schools' request, participate in wellness events, and offer wellness challenges and taste testing. Medication administration review and training is provided to Wabeno School District and Laona School District. No taste tests or health fairs were done this year due to COVID-19. The Forest County Health Department has also supported a school garden at the Crandon School District, this garden provided fresh produce for students and their families free of cost, and left-over produce was donated to the local food pantries for other community members to enjoy!



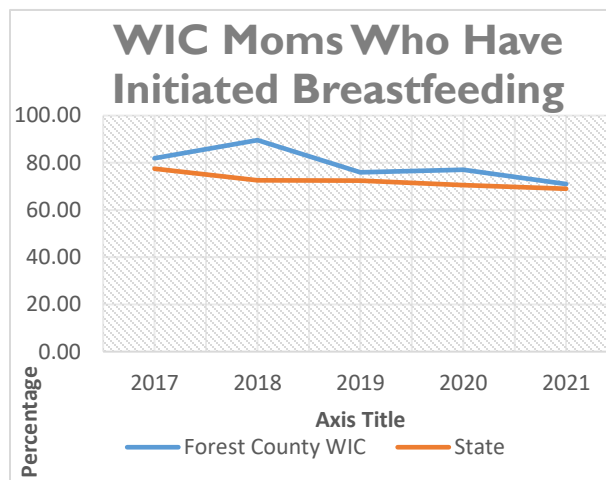
The **Forest County WIC program** helps income eligible pregnant and breastfeeding women, women who recently had a baby, infants and children up to age 5 who are at a health risk due to nutrition.



Participants receive nutrition counseling, education, learn about other services and receive WIC approved foods. We averaged 172 clients per month in 2021. This was an increase of 13% from 2020.

\$ 77,383.89 of WIC approved food was redeemed at our WIC approved grocery store in Forest County.  
\$774 of farmer market coupons were redeemed at WIC approved farm stands.

WIC Peer Breastfeeding Counselor assists our WIC mothers with education and resources needed to be successful at breastfeeding. 71% of our WIC moms initiated breastfeeding and that continues to be above the state average for 2021.



*Northwood's Breastfeeding Coalition is working to promote breastfeeding as the natural nourishment for infants and working to improve rates.*



**Fit Families:** Fit Families is 13-month nutrition education program serving families of 2–4-year-old children enrolled in the WIC program. Fit families strives to prevent child obesity by empowering families to adopt healthy eating and physical activity behaviors through in person and phone/text coaching. Due to COVID-19 in person restrictions in 2021, enrollment is down. **8 Forest County** children were actively enrolled in the program in 2021.



Eat healthy • Be active • Your kids are watching

**FIT FAMILIES CORE MESSAGES**

- MAKE EVERY BITE COUNT: MORE FRUITS AND VEGETABLES
- MAKE EVERY SIP COUNT: MORE HEALTHY BEVERAGES
- MOVE MORE, WATCH LESS: MORE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, LESS SCREEN TIME
- YOUR KIDS ARE WATCHING: MODEL HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY.



## Other

**Lifeline Services:** The health department coordinates a county wide Life Line Program with Langlade Aspirus Hospital. We had **35** people on the program, when it was transferred to Phillips Lifeline in November 2021.

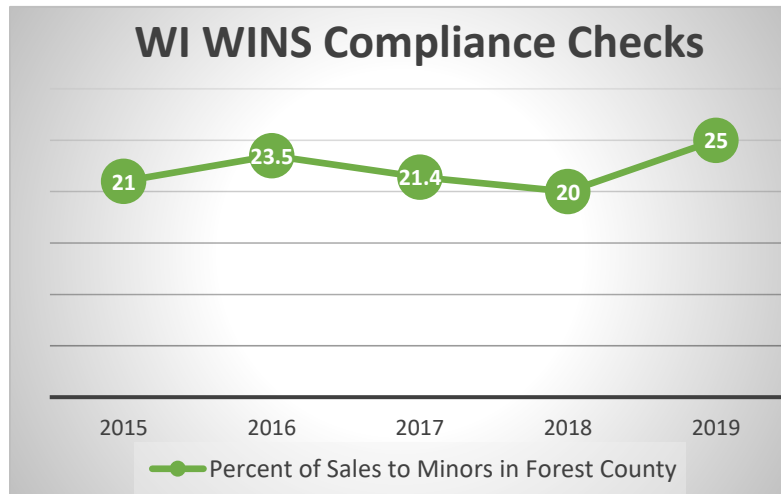


**Blood Pressure Screenings:** We provide blood pressure screenings in the community at meal sites, community events, worksites or at the office. Due to COVID-19 pandemic, we did not provide any screenings in the community in 2021.

**Tobacco Prevention:** WI WINS Program is designed to monitor the sales of tobacco to minors at our tobacco retailers. Education and information is offered to businesses each year.

*Northwood's Tobacco Free Coalition is a seven county coalition working to address tobacco related health concerns in our communities. A few of the focus areas include:*

- *Outreach to local & state leaders*
- *Addressing the dangers of other tobacco products like E-cigarettes*
- *WI WINS Compliance Checks*



**Due to COVID-19 pandemic, compliance checks were not completed in 2021.**

**Health Education:** The health department was able to participate in several community educational events throughout 2021. These events focused on prevention, maternal child health as well as nutrition and physical activity education sessions with community members.

We submitted over 100 different public awareness articles either in newspapers, social media, or newsletters. 75 of these press releases were related to COVID-19.

We send a postpartum newsletter and educational information to all new mothers in Forest County.

Our website [forestcountypublichealth.org](http://forestcountypublichealth.org) provides information on our programs and services and community events and resources. You can also find us on Facebook where we post and share health information and events.

## Finance and Management

**Workforce Development:** In order to provide the highest quality public health service, the Forest County Health Department strives to ensure that staff possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to perform their jobs effectively and efficiently. Typically, staff complete the Public Health Core Competencies each year to determine training needs and also attend trainings and conferences to keep abreast of emerging public health issues but due to COVID-19 these competencies were not completed in 2021.

**Professional Memberships:**



NACCHO National Association of County and City Health Officials

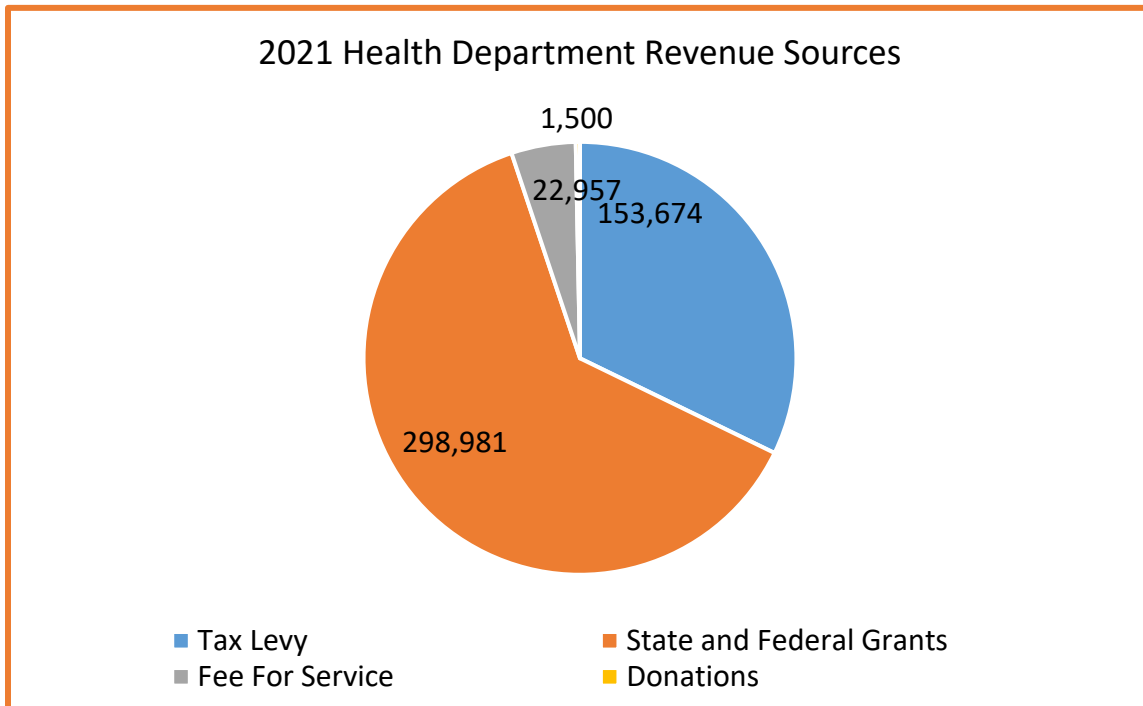
Wisconsin WIC Association (Women, Infants and Children)

WPHA Wisconsin Public Health Association



WALDHAB Wisconsin Association of Local Health Departments & Boards

**Performance Management:** Each year we establish benchmarks for specific programs and monitor the progress towards meeting the targets throughout the year. Typically staff collectively choose a Quality Improvement project each year. Due to COVID-19 in 2021, we were not able to complete a Quality Improvement project.



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