



Inspiring Better Health for All

FOREST COUNTY

Community Health Improvement Plan

2024-2028



WHAT IS THE COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN (CHIP)?

The Community Health Improvement Plan is mandated by Wisconsin State Statute 251.05. It is a five-year strategic plan developed by the community to address issues that have been identified through the Forest County Community Health Assessment (CHA). It serves as a blueprint for improving overall health and well-being by engaging a wide range of stakeholders, including public health, healthcare organizations, schools, nonprofit organizations, local governments, businesses, and community members.

The CHIP can be utilized by community partners and stakeholders to set priorities, direct the use of resources, and to develop and implement health related projects, programs, and policies. The CHIP does not replace or supersede concurrent action plans or work plans utilized by the Forest County Health Department or any community partners. It is a fluid document that provides an overall framework to address the health priorities in our community. Over the course of the next five years, it is expected to be continually updated.

The Forest County Health Department is the lead organization responsible for coordinating the community health improvement process. The department relies on the community it serves to collaborate and build capacity to address identified health issues. Thanks are extended to staff, community members, partners, and stakeholders who have assisted with the development of this plan.

Forest County CHIP Planning Team

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THE PROCESS

In 2023, Forest County collaborated with Oneida and Vilas Counties to complete the current Community Health Assessment (CHA). In 2024, following the County Health Rankings Take Action Cycle, partners and community assets were identified, measurable goals and objectives were developed, and evidence-based strategies aimed at alleviating health inequities identified. Continuous monitoring and evaluation processes will be built into the CHIP to assess its impact and make necessary adjustments. The following pages describe each stage of the cycle in more detail.

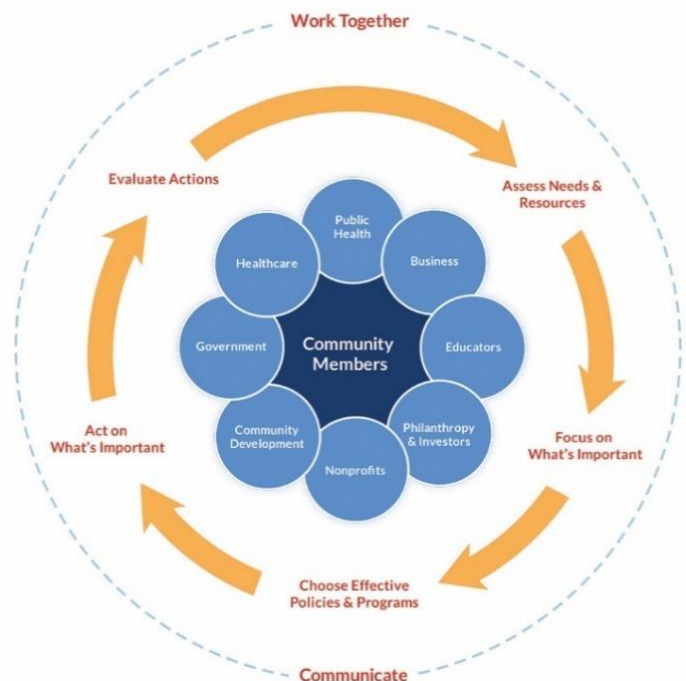


Figure 1. Take Action Cycle from County Health Rankings

WORK TOGETHER

The CHIP process, led by the Forest County Planning Team, sought input from other sectors and local coalitions. Improving community health requires collaboration and a multifaceted approach. There is much work to be done and it cannot be done alone. We must rely on our strong partnerships, coalitions, businesses, schools, and individual community members to leverage resources and expertise.



The **Forest County Partnership Coalition** has over 30 years of experience fostering relationships among the schools, county agencies, tribal agencies and community organizations to support our youth. The coalition is responsible for numerous behavioral health, suicide prevention and life skills trainings, and has successfully developed a teen leadership program within each school district in Forest County. Health Department Staff serve as members of Northwoods COPE, a Tri-county Coalition working to address access to prevention and mental health services.



The **Forest County Coalition for Activity and Nutrition Coalition** was established in 2011 to address the need to improve adequate, appropriate, and safe food and nutrition within Forest County. The group actively supports increasing access to safe and healthy foods through local food pantries, community and school gardens, the Stock Box program, and Farmer's Markets, as well as nutrition education strategies. The coalition has been instrumental in the initiation of many physical activity opportunities such as the evidence-based programs Strong Bodies and Walk with Ease.



Community Coalition of Forest County is a 501 (3) (c) nonprofit established in 2008 as a collaborative effort to improve the health and well-being in the areas of substance abuse and prevention. The coalition engages the community each year with prevention week activities that support alcohol and drug free environments. Throughout the year, coalition members work to increase awareness of substance abuse and prevention issues in our community and available resources. Health Department Staff are also involved in the Northwoods Tobacco Free Coalition which works to promote prevention and treatment programs and compliance checks.



One of the strengths identified throughout the CHA process is our connection to the community through our strong partnerships and coalitions. We will continue to cultivate relationships with new and existing partners.

COMMUNICATE

The goal of this plan is for wide use within the community by individuals, agencies, and coalitions. It will be made available on the health department's website www.forestcountypublichealth.org. A printed copy of the plan may be viewed at the Health Department reception desk upon request. Effective communication is critical throughout the CHIP process to ensure stakeholder engagement and the successful execution of the plan. Regular input from stakeholders and steering committee members is necessary to ensure continued involvement in implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Roles and responsibilities of the action plans must be clearly defined to ensure the plan moves forward in a positive manner.



A multi-faceted approach should be used to keep the stakeholders and the public informed, such as social media, newsletters, local media, and events. Plan successes should be highlighted to celebrate achievements and encourage community involvement.

ASSESS NEEDS AND RESOURCES

The planning team collaborated with local partners and community members to conduct the Community Health Assessment (CHA) which was finalized in May 2024. The full CHA report can be found at www.forestcountypublichealth.org. Both primary and secondary data sources were used along with input from the community survey. Upon compilation, the information was presented to the community and shared with other stakeholders and the steering committee through a Community Data Café. Small group review of the information was conducted and attendees voted on the health concerns to be addressed over the next five years. The following areas were identified:

***Mental Health
Substance Abuse
Chronic Disease***



2023
FOREST COUNTY
COMMUNITY HEALTH
ASSESSMENT



The Community Health Assessment serves as the foundation for developing interventions to address the most pressing community health issues and ensures that interventions are data-driven and community-focused. Data from the CHA can be used to establish a baseline for tracking health outcomes.

FOCUS ON WHAT IS IMPORTANT

A key focus of the national health plan, Healthy People 2030 is **health equity**. Health equity is the attainment of the highest level of health for all people. This involves removing barriers such as poverty, discrimination, and lack of access to good jobs, quality education, housing, and healthcare.

Achieving health equity requires that **social determinants of health (SDOH)** – the conditions which people are born, grow, live, work, and age, be addressed.

Addressing SDOH can lead to better health outcomes in mental health, substance abuse, and chronic disease.

For example, people who do not have access to grocery stores with affordable healthy foods are less likely to have good nutrition. That raises their risk of health conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and obesity and can lower their life expectancy.



HEALTH EQUITY FOCUS AREAS

A key theme throughout the CHA process was **lack of access to services in Forest County**. Lack of access was identified in the community survey, focus group, key informant interviews, and also in the SWOC assessment.

Knowing that we do not have the capacity or resources to address all of the issues, focusing on improving access to healthcare and services will ensure that our resources and efforts have the greatest impact. It will also allow for more targeted collaboration with community partners and stakeholders.

TARGET GROUP FOCUS AREAS

Due to limited capacity and resources, the needs of the entire Forest County population cannot be meaningful addressed, thus target groups for those at higher risk for poor health outcomes due to the SDOH, have been established as follows:

- * **Low-income families** having limited access to healthy food, recreation and/or healthcare.
- * **Youth or adolescents** at higher risk of mental health and/or substance use.
- * **Older adults** with chronic disease and financial limitations.
- * **Indigenous or minority populations** facing systemic inequities and/or cultural barriers.



According to the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 40% of the factors that influence health are social and economic. Strategies to improve the SDOH can have a greater impact on health than strategies that target individual behaviors.

CHOOSE EFFECTIVE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

Promoting healthy choices only, will not lead to a healthy life. Rather, a collective effort of partners from various sectors will be needed to improve environmental conditions. Wisconsin's State Health Improvement Plan 2023-2027 utilizes the **Policy, Systems, and Environmental (PSE) Change** approach as an effective means to advance health equity and create sustainable, community-wide health improvements. This approach focuses on making broad, lasting changes by addressing the root causes of health inequities and modifying the systems that shape health behaviors and to yield positive outcomes. The PSE framework will guide the CHIP strategy choices, which will also include preventative strategies at the Individual level.

WHY ARE PSE CHANGES IMPORTANT?

- *Root causes of many health, social, and environmental problems can be addressed.
- *Policy changes can help prevent health issues from occurring.
- *Focuses on population health outcomes rather than individual behavior change.
- *Promotes health equity by addressing the underlying social determinants of health.
- *Changes often occur over time and result in positive shift in health and well-being outcomes culture that are more sustainable than one-time programs.

I

Individual efforts will focus on health promotion and education.

P

Policy change refers to developing or modifying formal laws, regulations, rules, or ordinances to support healthier environments and equitable access.

S

Systems change involves altering the processes, procedures, or rules within organizations or systems to improve the way they operate.

E

Environmental change focuses on changing the physical or social environment to make healthy choices easier and more accessible.

IDENTIFYING ROOT CAUSES

Root causes are the underlying systemic, environmental, and/or social factors that contribute to poor health. Identifying root causes is essential to develop effective and sustainable solutions. Steps that may be taken to address a root cause may include:

- 1-Clearly define the problem to be addressed.
- 2-Gather data: How long has it been an issue and what is the impact?
- 3-Identify potential causes: What led to the problem and what conditions allow it to occur?
- 4-Identify the root cause/s: Why is something happening and what can be controlled or influenced?
- 5-Choose a solution to put into place.

Continue asking "Why?" to find the systemic cause of a problem. Example: High diabetes rates > Why? Poor diet > Why? Limited access to healthy foods > Why? No grocery stores nearby > Why? Lack of investment in underserved areas.



Local coalitions working on the priority areas of Mental Health, Substance Abuse, and Chronic Disease will focus on creating policy, systems and environmental changes to close the gaps in access to healthy opportunities. It is important to engage target groups and learn about the barriers faced such as housing, transportation, stigma, and/or discrimination.

ACT ON WHAT IS IMPORTANT

Acting on what is important within the CHIP requires a clear, structured approach. Attempting to address too many issues can be overwhelming and make it difficult to engage partners. Therefore, the planning team has identified a broad goal along with specific objectives, and strategies for each of the three priority areas. More guidance regarding goal, objective and strategy selection is provided in the Resource section of the plan.

GOALS

Goals are designed to be broad, overarching outcomes, and are generally long term. The goals of this plan are aligned with the Healthy Wisconsin State Health Plan and the leading health indicators found in Healthy People 2030 (see chart below). In addition to assessing state and federal health priorities, the priorities chosen by local tribal communities and local hospital systems and tribal clinics will be assessed to improve understanding and allow alignment of efforts as appropriate.

Alignment With Other Plans			
Health Priority	Forest County CHIP	WI 2030 Health Plan	Healthy People 2030
Mental Health	Decrease suicide rate Decrease youth anxiety, depression, suicide attempts	Improve mental and emotional health and wellbeing, social connectedness	Reduce the suicide rate
Substance Abuse	Decrease drug overdose deaths Decrease youth substance abuse	Person and community-centered health care	Reduce overdose deaths
Chronic Disease	Decrease food insecurity rates	Improve social and community conditions	Reduce household food insecurity and hunger

OBJECTIVES

Objectives are the steps taken to achieve a goal. They are usually short to medium term. Selecting SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) objectives will provide clear direction and accountability.

EVIDENCE-BASED STRATEGIES

Using evidence-based strategies within a policy, systems, and environmental change approach ensures that interventions implemented are proven to be effective and result in measurable improvements. Search for interventions with demonstrated success in addressing the health issues. Start small to test the feasibility of the strategy in the community before scaling up.

WORK PLAN

A workplan template has been developed with the guidance from the CHIP planning team, agency partners, and coalition members. The work plans should define specific interventions with clear roles and responsibilities, realistic timelines, resources needed, and expected outcomes. Action Teams or coalitions may use the workplan as a living document to track progress and make adjustments as needed. (See template attached).



In the following sections, each priority area has highlighted goals, objectives and potential strategies to provide action teams and coalitions with a starting point, but not meant to replace or supersede current plans.

EVALUATE ACTIONS

The CHIP Steering Committee will provide oversight for the plan evaluation. Short- and long-term indicators will be used to help measure progress toward achieving goals. Strategies will be adjusted based on evaluation findings. Successful strategies can be scaled up and resources can be reallocated if appropriate. An annual progress report will be shared with stakeholders and the community.

Short term indicators	Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Tied to the SMART objectives-Measure immediate outcomes or progress resulting from an intervention, focus on changes in knowledge, attitudes, skills, or participation-Reviewed annually by the action teams/coalitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Increase in awareness/outreach efforts-Increase number of people trained-Increased number of providers-Increase peer support programs-Increase healthy food outlets-Increase summer food programs
Long term Indicators	Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Tied to the overall goal-Compared against baseline data, state, and national data-Reviewed annually by the steering committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Decrease in anxiety, depression, suicide-Increase in use of services-Decrease in # of unhealthy days-Decrease in youth substance abuse-Decrease in food insecurity rates



Evaluation of the plan will involve assessing if the resources are sufficient and being used efficiently, if the strategies are meeting their intended goals, if there is progress toward improving health in the target populations, if the short- and long-term indicators are improving. Goals, objectives and strategies may be adjusted as needed in order to make progress toward improving the health of the community.

PRIORITY AREA MENTAL HEALTH

Forest County Snapshot

<p>One mental health provider per 620 people registered in Forest County. (County Health Rankings 2023)</p> <p>22% of Forest County adults suffer from depression (County Health Rankings 2023)</p> <p>65.7% of survey respondents stated that they had access to a mental healthcare provider, of those who did not have access, 13.4% state the reason to be too long of a wait list. (Forest County Community Survey 2023)</p>	<p>61% of Forest County middle-high schoolers reported being bullied (Youth Behavior Risk Survey 2021)</p> <p>50% reported significant problems due to anxiety (Youth Behavior Risk Survey 2021)</p> <p>38% self-reported depression (Youth Behavior Risk Survey 2021)</p> <p>7% MS students reported attempting suicide (Youth Behavior Risk Survey 2021)</p>
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Goal: Promote mental health and well-being and prevent suicide in Forest County.

Health Equity Focus Areas: Access to care, Youth prevention

Objectives:

1. Increase knowledge of services and communication of services.
2. Increase the number of treatment options available/reduce barriers to treatment.
3. Increase the number of youth-based prevention services/strengthen current services.

Individual, Policy, Systems, Environmental Approach Example Strategies:

INDIVIDUAL	<p>Create a comprehensive community resource guide.</p> <p>Promote services and decrease stigma utilizing community campaigns.</p>
POLICY	<p>Workplace mental health policies</p> <p>School- anti-bullying policies, trauma informed approaches, mental health curriculum, peer to peer support</p> <p>Advocate for community outreach funding directed toward at-risk populations</p>
SYSTEM	<p>Develop a system to maintain and update and promote local resources</p> <p>Integrate mental health services with primary care</p> <p>Implement telehealth to expand access</p> <p>Establish school-based counseling centers</p> <p>Develop clear protocols for responding to mental health crisis</p> <p>Develop centralized systems for mental health referrals</p> <p>Establish 24/7 mental health crisis support and intervention</p>
ENVIRONMENTAL	<p>Community physical spaces that offer wellness activities, therapy, peer support</p> <p>Outdoor spaces to encourage mental well-being – parks and walking trails</p> <p>Calming spaces, sensory rooms schools</p> <p>Support and expand peer support groups to reduce social isolation and increase community connectiveness</p>

Measuring Success	
Short term Indicators	Long term Indicators
<p>Resource guide created, maintained and promoted</p> <p>Number of treatment options increased</p> <p>Number of barriers to treatment addressed</p> <p>Number of youth prevention resources improved</p>	<p>Adults with depression improved</p> <p>Youth with anxiety and depression improved</p> <p>Adult and youth suicide improved</p> <p>Increase in number of people surveyed reporting access to services</p>

PRIORITY AREA SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Forest County Snapshot

<p>27 % adults reported binge drinking (County Health Rankings 2023)</p> <p>56% of motor vehicle accidents involved alcohol (County Health Rankings 2023)</p> <p>40 drug overdose deaths per 100,000 people occurred in Forest County from 2016-2020 (County Health Rankings 2023)</p>	<p>13 % students report tobacco, vaping, alcohol, marijuana, illicit drugs or prescription drug use (Youth Risk Behavior Survey 2021)</p> <p>28.5% of residents worried about their drug, tobacco and alcohol use. (Forest County Community Survey 2023)</p>
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Goal: Decrease alcohol and drug abuse and overdose deaths in Forest County.

Health Equity Focus Areas: Access to care, Youth prevention

Objectives:

1. Increase knowledge of services and communication of services.
2. Increase the number of treatment options available/reduce barriers to treatment.
3. Increase the number of youth-based prevention services/strengthen current services.

Individual, Policy, Systems, Environmental Approach Example Strategies:

INDIVIDUAL	Create a comprehensive community resource guide. Parent education on early warning signs and risks and how to get help.
POLICY	Implement school-based policy re: evidence-based programs such as Botvin life skills Consider restorative justice programs Restrict vape shops near schools, parks and youth centers Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (pharmacies) Implement harm reduction policies such as needle exchange programs
SYSTEM	SBIRT screenings in schools, counseling in schools, telehealth options Staff training to recognize early signs of substance abuse and refer students to appropriate resources Integrate substance abuse treatment with existing healthcare and social services (comprehensive care) Law enforcement, first responder training on crisis intervention Coordinate Narcan training and distribution Coordinate prevention initiative through local coalitions
ENVIRONMENTAL	Encourage and promote alcohol free events, drug-free events and public spaces Increase safe disposal sites for prescription drug boxes Take back programs, lock boxes, Deterra bags, Narcan dispensaries

Measuring Success	
Short term Indicators	Long term Indicators
<p>Resource guide created, maintained and promoted</p> <p>Number of treatment options increased</p> <p>Number of barriers to treatment addressed</p> <p>Number of youth prevention resources improved</p>	<p>Decrease in overdose deaths</p> <p>Decrease in adult binge drinking</p> <p>Decrease in students reporting substance abuse</p> <p>Decrease in number of people surveyed who worry about their substance use</p>

PRIORITY AREA CHRONIC DISEASE

Forest County Snapshot

<p>37% of adult residents are considered obese (County health rankings 2023)</p> <p>31% adults have high blood pressure (PLACES data)</p> <p>28.6% have high cholesterol (PLACES data)</p>	<p>22.9% children in Forest County are food insecure (Feeding America)</p> <p>19% adults felt healthier, more affordable food options in grocery stores and restaurants would make our community healthier. 30% stated their main health concern is physical activity and 30% stated it was consuming nutritious foods. (Forest County Community Survey Data 2023)</p>
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Goal: Decrease food insecurity in Forest County.

Health Equity Focus Areas: Access to healthy foods/Low income and children

Objectives:

1. Increase knowledge of services and communication of services.
2. Increase the number of venues where healthy food options are available.
3. Reduce barriers to access healthier foods for low-income residents and children.

Individual, Policy, Systems, Environmental Approach Example Strategies:

INDIVIDUAL	<p>Create food resource guide.</p> <p>Campaigns to promote chronic disease prevention, food security, healthier foods.</p>
POLICY	<p>Advocate for improved food access at local, state and federal level</p> <p>Offer workplace food assistance programs</p> <p>Local ordinance to provide space for healthy food vendors</p>
SYSTEM	<p>Establish mobile food pantries</p> <p>Collaborate with farmers, businesses, schools to create farm to table</p> <p>HCP screen patients for food insecurity and refer to local resources</p> <p>Expand Snap, WIC, farmer market programs</p> <p>Offer EBT at farmer markets</p> <p>Collaborate with food pantries to increase accessibility to pantries and explore food procurement options</p>
ENVIRONMENTAL	<p>Establish food hubs, community and school gardens and orchards</p> <p>Repurpose surplus food for community distribution, create food-sharing platforms</p> <p>Improve transportation to grocery stores and markets</p> <p>Explore food delivery for food-insecure households (pantries and Stockbox)</p> <p>Pop-up grocery stores or mobile vendors, community fridges in high need areas</p> <p>Grocery store prompts and tours</p>

Measuring Success	
Short term Indicators	Long term Indicators
<p>Resource guide created, maintained and promoted</p> <p>Number of healthy food venues increased</p> <p>Number of barriers to food access addressed</p>	<p>Decrease in food insecurity- adults</p> <p>Decrease in food security- children</p> <p>Decrease in students reporting substance abuse</p> <p>Decrease in number of people surveyed who worry about their substance use</p>

CHIP TIMELINE

2024	2025	2025-2028	2028
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop the plan• Seek input from coalitions and partners• Finalize the plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Present to BOH and Steering Committee• Publish the plan• Promote to community and local coalitions• Establish regular meetings with steering committee• Develop action plans for each priority area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implement action plans• Annual evaluation and progress report	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Begin data collection for next community health assessment

HOW YOU CAN HELP

If you are interested in joining a coalition or would like more information on how you can help, please visit our website at www.forestcountypublichealth.org or stop by the office at the Forest County Courthouse, 200 East Madison Street, Crandon, WI 54520.

Thank you for your commitment to improving the health of Forest County.

RESOURCES

Healthy Equity

[WI Department of Health Services](#)

Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change

[Community Commons](#)

[USDA Snap-Ed Toolkit](#)

Root Cause Analysis

[MN Dept. of Health](#)

Evidence-based Strategies

- [CDC Community Planning Resources](#)
- [County Health rankings and Roadmaps Resources](#)
- [The Community Guide](#)
- [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration \(SAMHSA\) Evidence-Based Resources](#)
- [What Works for Health Wisconsin](#)
- [WI Department of Health Services Chronic Disease Prevention](#)
- [WI Department of Health Services Substance Abuse](#)
- [WI Department of Health Services Mental Health](#)

[Wisconsin State Health Plan](#)

[Healthy People 2030](#)

[Forest County Community Health Assessment \(CHA\) and Community Health Improvement Plan \(CHIP\)](#)

FOREST COUNTY CHIP ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE

GOAL:

OBJECTIVE:

Individual Strategy:

ACTIVITY	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE	TARGET DATE	MET YES OR NO	NOTES

System Strategy:

ACTIVITY	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE	TARGET DATE	MET YES OR NO	NOTES

Environmental Strategy:

ACTIVITY	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE	TARGET DATE	MET YES OR NO	NOTES

Policy Strategy:

ACTIVITY	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE	TARGET DATE	MET YES OR NO	NOTES