

# Forest County Health Department

## ANNUAL REPORT 2022



**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 2022**

*Chairperson:* Lynne Black

Scott Goode

Tina Anderson

Larry Berg

Rebecca Perry- Resigned September 2022

Candy Dailey- Resigned August 2022

Dr. Khrystyne Lindgren, Medical Advisor



**Forest County Health Department Staff**



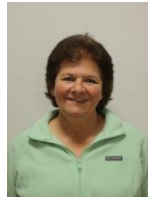
Amy Gatton MSN, RN  
Director/Health Officer  
December 2022-Present



Kathryn Kincaid, RN  
Registered Staff Nurse  
December 2019- August 2022



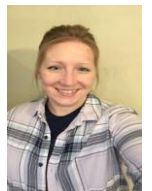
Tiffany Wozniak BSN, RN  
Public Health Nurse



Julie Weber  
Public Health Assistant



Chris Slagowski  
Public Health Clerk



Steffany Weber  
Breastfeeding Peer Counselor  
(Part-Time)



Jessica Wilson  
COVID Coordinator/PH Assistant

**Not pictured:**

Jill Krueger (Workforce Trainer)

Pete Meisinger (Contact Tracer)

Holli Denton BSN, RN  
Director/ Health Officer  
April 2021- March 2022

Samantha Hoffman BSN, RN  
Director/ Health Officer  
April 2022- June 2022

Annette Seibold MSN, RN  
Interim Health Officer  
July 2022- December 2022



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 is collaborating with Oneida County, Vilas County, and Ascension/Ministry Health on a 2022-2027 plan that will be available on our website in the near future at [www.forestcountypublichealth.org](http://www.forestcountypublichealth.org)

## Priority Areas:

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



Creating a Path to Better Health



Forest County | Oneida County | Vilas County

## Top Causes of Death

- #1. Heart Disease
- #2. Cancer
- #3. Unintentional Injuries
- #4. Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease
- #5. Stroke

*\*This data has not been updated since 2017.*

FCHD is involved in many coalitions 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.



## What We Are Doing?

We work with the Community Coalition of Forest County and other partners to coordinate prescription drug and safe sharps disposal events. We increase awareness through educational materials, events, sponsoring law enforcement trainings, and working with the Drug Endangered Children committee to assist with the need for services for families struggling with addiction.



Community Coalition of Forest County  
working together to identify and address community goals

We work with the Forest County Partnership to provide leadership training at all three schools, Red Ribbon Week activities, and sponsor mental health speakers.



We work with Tri-County COPE to improve on access to substance abuse and mental health treatment and raise awareness to mental health concerns. We also try to have a staff member trained in QPR (question, persuade, and respond) to speak to residents considering suicide.

We work with the Forest County CAN! Coalition to increase opportunities for physical activity and increase access to healthier foods.



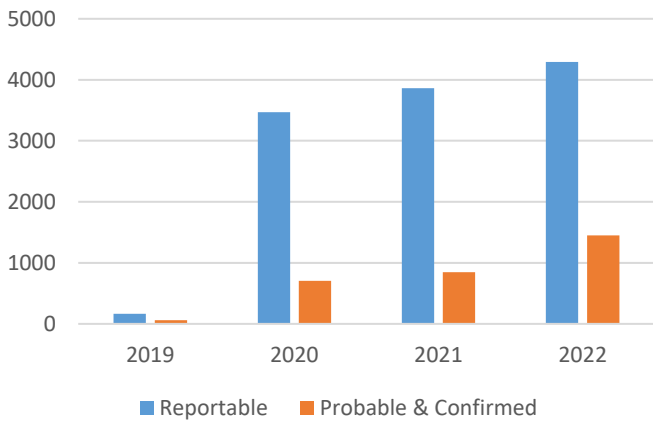
The health department supported a community garden that provided fresh produce to the meal sites, a traveling food pantry at the libraries, as well as local food pantries. The community garden also had a master gardener present to teach community members of all ages, about gardening so they can be successful when starting their own gardens. Our master gardener also started a school garden in Crandon and taught the elementary students how to plant vegetables! This will continue in 2023.

## Essential Public Health Service

**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 4,294 diseases. This is an increase compared to 3,863 investigated diseases in 2021.**

**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.

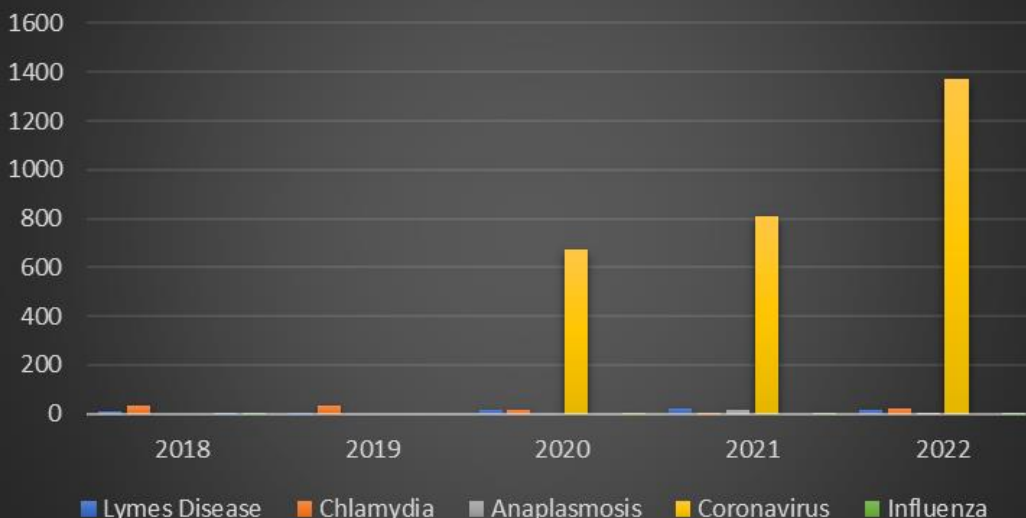
**Most common diseases:**

- Coronavirus: 1,373 confirmed & probable
- Chlamydia Trachomatis: 24 confirmed
- Lyme Disease: 16 confirmed
- Gonorrhea: 5 confirmed
- Salmonellosis: 3 confirmed

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

In 2022, we investigated **33 animal bites.** 0 animals were sent to the state lab for follow up rabies testing.

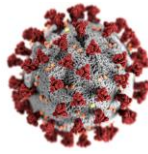
Communicable Disease Trend



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 20 skin tests in 2022.**

# COVID-19 Pandemic Response



## Background

Covid-19 is a viral respiratory illness that can spread from person to person through respiratory drops and aerosol particles. Forest County saw its first positive cases in May of 2020. 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 2022. By the end of 2022, Forest County had experienced 1,373, confirmed and probable cases and 7 confirmed deaths.

## Public Information and Education

Our staff has continued to respond daily to phone calls and emails regarding COVID-19. We sent over 69 press releases to our local newspapers regarding COVID-19 and posted to our website and Facebook page, informing the public on the number of positive results, number of hospitalized patients, and number of confirmed and probable deaths.

## Partner Collaboration and Communication

We continued frequent communication with schools, nursing homes, businesses, tribes, law enforcement, emergency management and clinics with virtual meetings.

## 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

The staff continued to work daily, contacting positive cases and reviewing isolation procedures. Contact tracing for COVID-19 is no longer being done.

## Testing

Testing was available in the community from area clinics and throughout the northern region. Public Health was a resource to provide people with test kits, testing sites and information.

## Vaccine

2022 was spent encouraging community members to get vaccinated and working with our healthcare providers to hold vaccine clinics throughout the county. Current completed COVID-19 vaccination rate is 50.9%.

## Looking at 2023

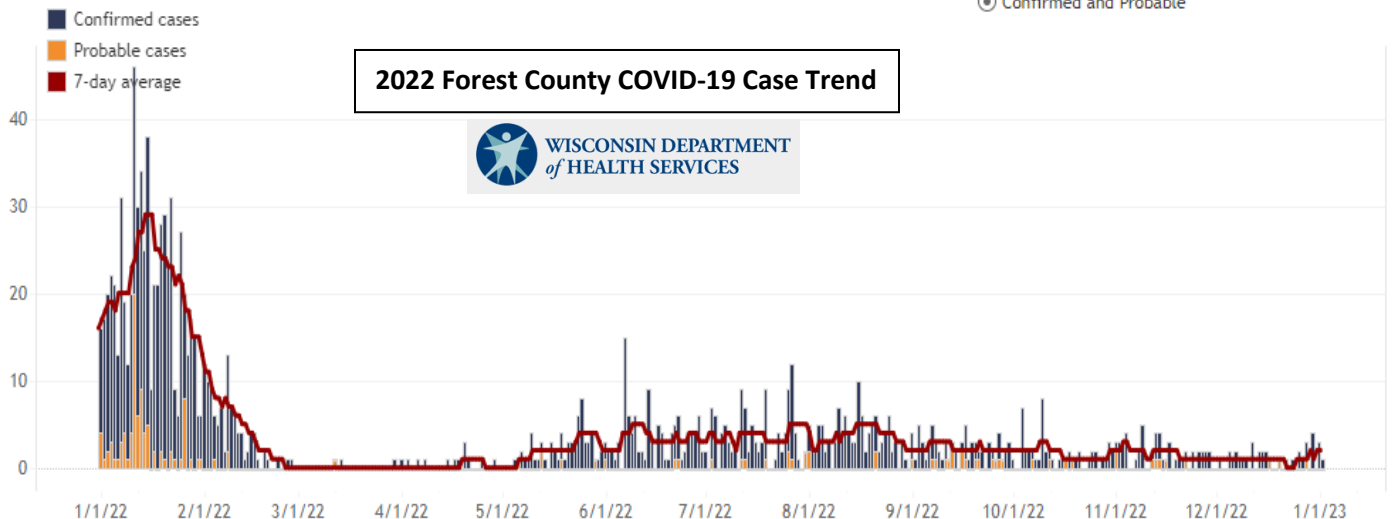
We anticipate declining rates of Covid-19 due to masks, handwashing, sanitation practices and increased vaccination administration.



Select County:  
Forest County

Move the slider to select a date range:  
12/31/2021 1/1/2023

Select Case Status:  
 Confirmed  
 Probable  
 Confirmed and Probable



## Emergency Preparedness

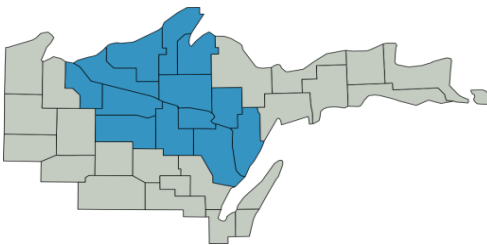
The department receives grant funding through the Department of Health Services and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to support public health preparedness activities. Each year we focus on two of the CDC Public Health Emergency Capabilities.

### Our Local Partners:

Our local partners consist of 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) annually. We are working to improve communication with our partners and the public when an emergency happens, so we have monthly zoom meetings. 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. We are a part of the North Central Wisconsin Healthcare Readiness Coalition (HERC). Each year we work with the coalition to complete a table-top exercise to improve our planning and test our capabilities.



### Mutual Aid

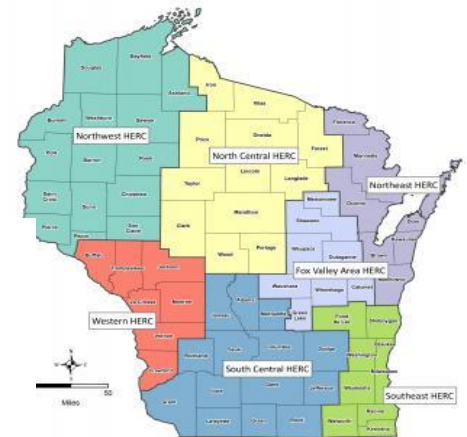
The health department has several mutual aid agreements in place to assist us. The Northern Regional Local Public Health Departments, the Wisconsin Disaster Medical Reserve Corps, and the Wisconsin/Michigan Border Group. We have MOUs in place with local agencies such as the Forest County Potawatomi and Sokaogon Chippewa tribes to assist with response and recovery. We meet with our bordering counties in Michigan annually to prepare and plan.

### 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.*



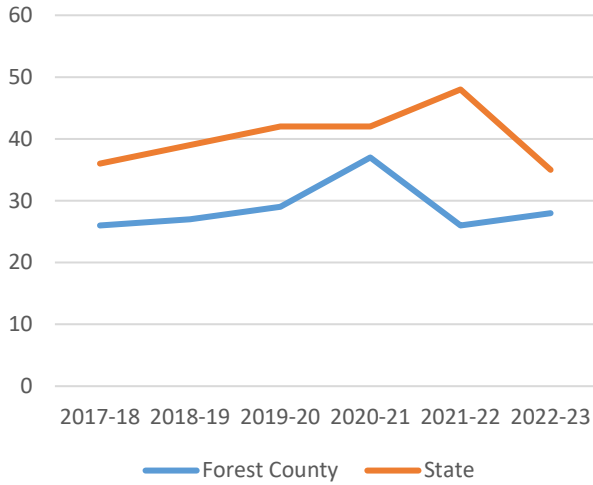
### **Wisconsin Healthcare Emergency Readiness Coalitions (HERC)**



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

# Immunizations

## Adult Flu Immunization Rates



*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 on time.*

The Health Department took part in a school mass vaccination clinic to offer students flu vaccine free of charge.

### School Influenza Mass Clinic Numbers

- 2019:** 280 doses for an increase of 39%
- 2020:** 243 doses for a decrease of 13%
- 2021:** 198 doses for a decrease of 19%
- 2022:** 158 doses for a decrease of 20%

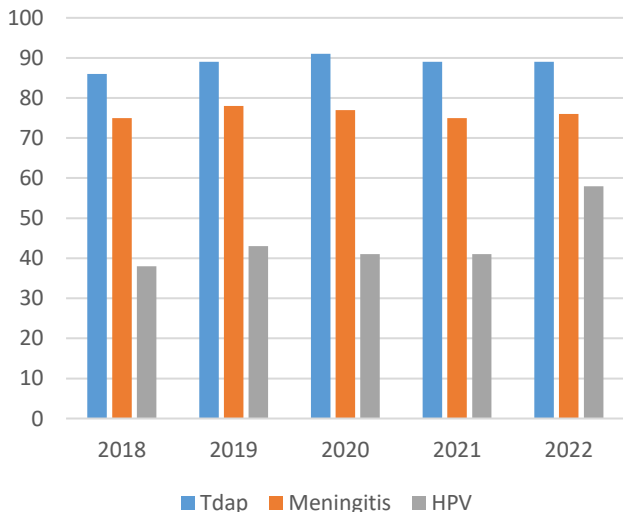


**The Health Department is part of the Northwood's Immunization Coalition which focuses on improving vaccination rates, increasing access to care, vaccine education, and being prepared for mass vaccination.**

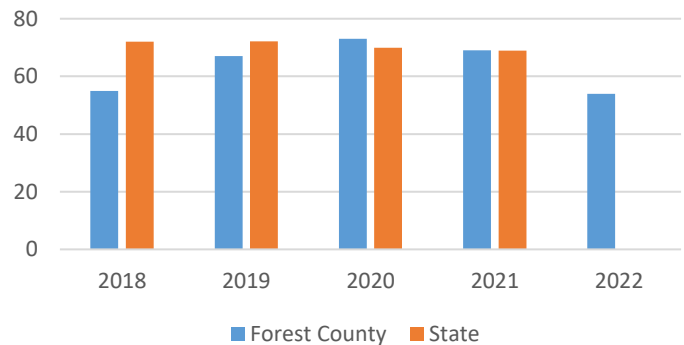
**617** vaccinations were given by the health department in **2022**. **194** were given free to children under the Vaccine for Children Program. **423** were administered to adults and of those, **333** were flu shots and **76** were COVID-19 shots.



## 13 to 18 Year Old Vaccination Rates



## 24 month old up to date with all recommended vaccines





## Environmental Programs

### Health Hazards

A variety of Human Health Hazards are investigated by the health department. These range from concerns regarding water, air, housing, garbage, and more. Typically, an investigation is done following a complaint or concern from a community member. If property owners do not comply with removal of the hazard, a citation may be issued. We investigated **4** health hazard complaints in 2022. The graph to the right shows the categories in which the hazard fell. Some hazards fall into multiple categories.



**Radon:** **12** radon tests were sold to Forest County residents in 2022. 1 of the results was above the recommended level and required either re-testing or remediation.



**Lead:** **73** children were screened for lead in Forest County in 2022, and 1 child had high lead results requiring a retest. No children had 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 2022, testing was requested by **3** 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

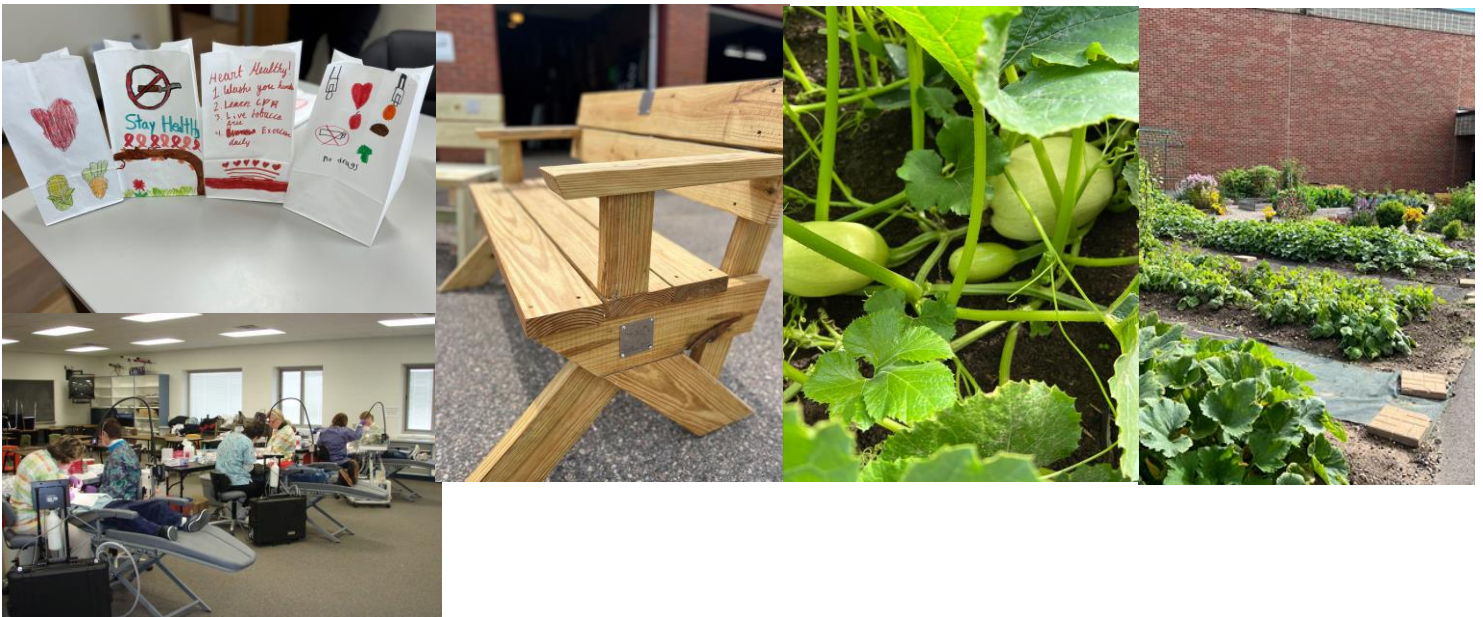
<http://healthspace.com/Clients/WI/State/web.nsf/home.xsp>



## Maternal Child Health Programs

### School Health:

The public health nurse provide consultation to the local school districts and Head Starts related to communicable disease, school illnesses, school wellness policies, 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. 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! Our master gardener, Jill, from the health department educated elementary students on the importance of gardening. We collaborated with Laona and Crandon schools to have students build benches for the county trails to promote physical activity. Crandon elementary students made heart healthy bags for February's heart month to have shown at a community candle light walk!



### NorthLakes Dental Outreach Project 2022:

We partnered 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 Grant. For 2022, **362 students** out of 1,529 were preventatively screened (23.68%). **110** students had untreated tooth decay, **348** received one fluoride treatment, and **107** received **at least** one sealant after the event. **14** of these students had *no insurance*. This program is continuing into 2023, so the numbers should go up yet this 2022-2023 school year!

### Child Passenger Safety:

The Health Department has **TWO** Certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians and are able to provide education and assistance to parents on how to choose the correct seat and check that it is installed safely. We were able to give away a limited number of car seats to low-income families. In 2022, **9** 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 2022. FCHD is working on adding two more life jacket stations throughout the county in 2023.

### 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 2022 due to not having WIC in person due to the pandemic. The health department will continue to work with other providers in our community to provide the First Breath Cessation program in 2023.

FIRST BREATH

**There were 85 births in 2022.** The Forest County Health department provides postpartum follow-up phone calls for all new parents in the county.



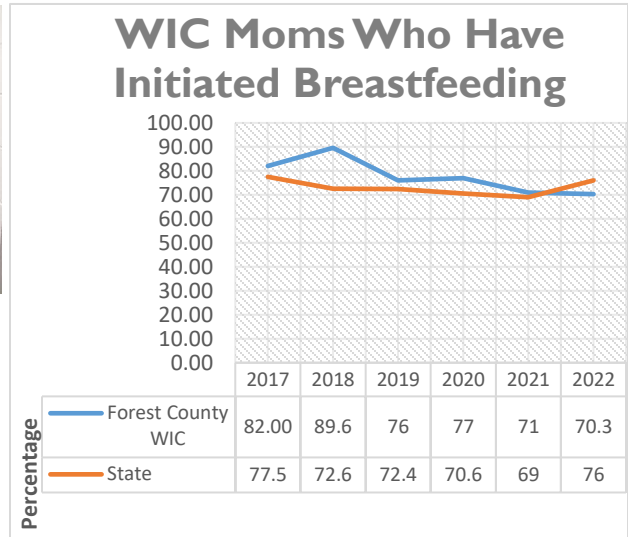
The **Forest County WIC program** helps income eligible pregnant and breastfeeding women, women who recently had a baby, infants and children up to age 5 who are at a health risk due to nutrition.

Participants receive nutrition counseling, education, learn about other services and receive WIC approved foods. We averaged **173 clients per month** in 2022. This was an increase of 1% from 2021.

*The Northwood's Breastfeeding Coalition works to improve breastfeeding rates by promoting breastfeeding as the natural nourishment for babies.*



The WIC Peer Breastfeeding Counselor assists our WIC mothers with education and resources needed to be successful at breastfeeding. **70.3%** of our WIC moms initiated breastfeeding and Forest County continues to be above the state average for 2022.



**\$ 77,131.85** of WIC approved food was redeemed at our WIC approved grocery store in Forest County. **\$974** of farmer market coupons were redeemed at WIC approved farm stands.

**Fit Families:** Fit Families is an 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 & 2022, enrollment is down. **8 Forest County** children were actively enrolled in the program in 2022.



- #### 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.

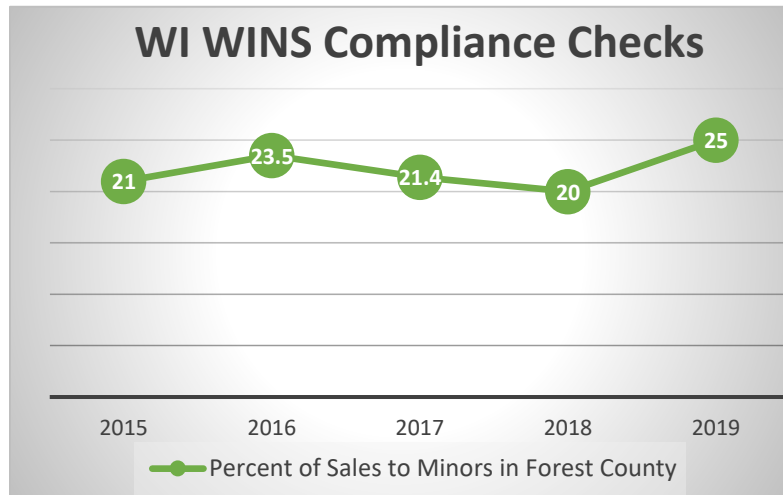
## Other Programs

**Blood Pressure Screenings:** We provide blood pressure screenings in the community at meal sites, community events, worksites or at the office when community members stop by.

**Tobacco Prevention:** WI WINS Program is designed to monitor the sales of tobacco to minors at our tobacco retailers. We offer education and information to local 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 or 2022. There is a difficulty currently trying to find teenagers willing to participate.***

**Health Education:** The health department was able to participate in several community educational events throughout 2022. These events focused on prevention such as, “Hidden in Plain Sight,” for National Night Out, maternal child health, and nutrition and physical activity education with community members. We send a postpartum newsletter and educational information to all new mothers in Forest County following their phone call with a nurse at the department. We submitted over 69 different public awareness articles either in newspapers, social media, or newsletters. Several were related to COVID-19.

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

## Finance and Management

**Workforce Development:** To provide the highest quality public health service, the Forest County Health Department strives to ensure staff possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to perform their jobs effectively and efficiently. Staff review the Public Health Core Competencies each year to determine training needs and attend trainings and conferences to keep abreast of best practices and emerging public health issues. Due to COVID-19, these competencies were not completed in 2022, but will be in 2023.

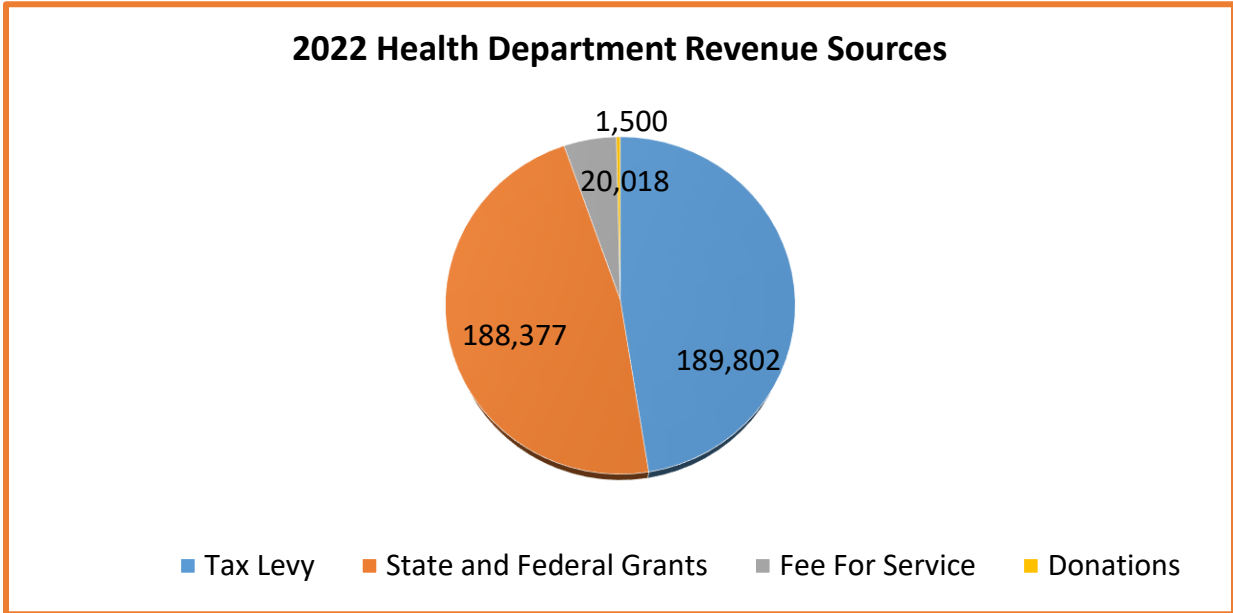


### Professional Memberships:

- National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO)
- Wisconsin Women, Infants and Children Association (WIC)
- Wisconsin Public Health Association (WPHA)
- Wisconsin Association of Local Health Departments & Boards (WALDHAB)



**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. We were not able to complete a Quality Improvement project for 2022 due to staff turnover and COVID-19, but it will be done in 2023.



Forest County Health Department  
 200 East Madison Street  
 Crandon, WI 54520  
 715-478-3371  
<http://forestcountypublichealth.org/>



Dear Forest County Community Members,

I would like to present the Forest County Health Department Annual Report for 2022. The year has been filled with changes and challenges. There has been staff turnover and a shortage of employees. The COVID-19 response has continued, and we have started to see a decline towards the end of the year. Even with these challenges, the public health staff have continued to provide services and education to the community through team effort and determination. I commend them for their positive attitude and perseverance.

As the pandemic continues to slow, we have begun recovery efforts in collaboration with our partners and are increasing work in the areas of health screening, disease prevention and health promotion. We have hope for continued rebuilding of the services provided by the health department and growth in coalitions and community health. The Community Health Assessment is in process, which will assist us in identifying priorities for our county over the next 5 years.

Thank you to the Board of Health and county supervisors for your support of the health department.

We welcome our new Medical Advisor, Khristyne Lindgren to the Board of Health and two new community members, Kathleen Kautz and Althea McMillion.

Sincerely,

*Amy Gatton, MSN, RN, CNE*

Amy Gatton MSN, RN, CNE

Forest County Health Officer