

VERNON COUNTY COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2022-2025



"Promoting and Protecting a Healthy Community Since 1921"

Vernon County Health Department

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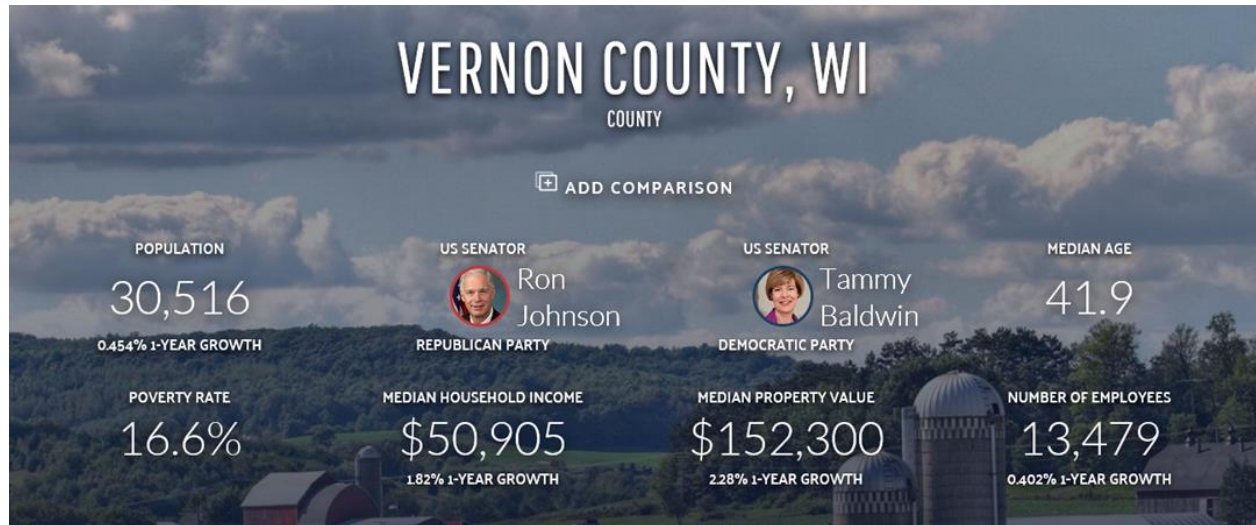


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ABOUT OUR COMMUNITY

Deep in the heart of Wisconsin's Hidden Valleys lies Vernon County. It is a place so quiet and beautiful, it's no wonder we call it God's Country. Our celebrated rivers, rugged hills, scenic farms, sturdy forests, tranquil back roads, crystal air and friendly people combine to make Vernon County the ideal place to find rest and renewal.



Here in Vernon County, outdoor fun is always in season. All year long, you'll find plenty of outdoor action. Join us for boating, biking, paddling, hiking, bird watching, fishing, snowmobile and skiing.

Throughout Vernon County, you'll find clean, pleasant communities that are proud of their heritage, their history and their values. We celebrate that heritage with world-renowned festivals, cultural centers, parks, nature reserves and historical sites. And we're always ready to share our love of the land and our way of life.



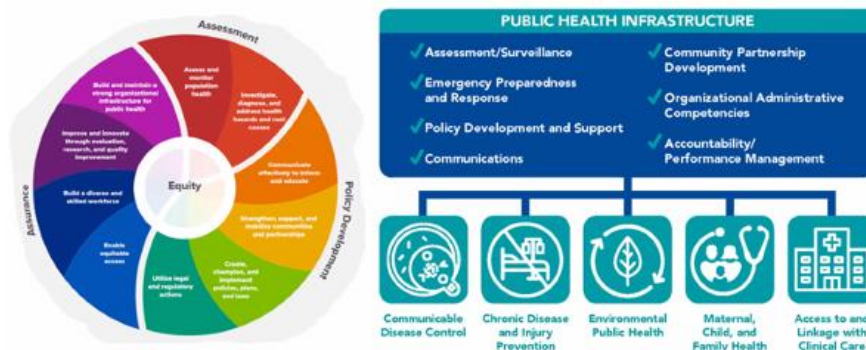
<https://viroqua-wisconsin.com/viroqua-tourism/what-to-do/area-attractions/scenic-tours-sights>

ESSENTIAL PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES

Public Health strives to protect and promote the health of all people in all communities. The 10 Essential Public Health Services provide a framework for public health to protect and promote the health of all people in all communities. To achieve equity, the Essential Public Health Services actively promote policies, systems, and overall community conditions that enable optimal health for all and seek to remove systemic and structural barriers that have resulted in health inequities. Such barriers include poverty, racism, gender discrimination, ableism, and other forms of oppression. Everyone should have a fair and just opportunity to achieve optimal health and well-being.

- #1 Assess and monitor population health status, factors that influence health, and community needs and assets
 - #2 Investigate, diagnose, and address health problems and hazards affecting the population
 - #3 Communicate effectively to inform and educate people about health, factors that influence it, and how to improve it
 - #4 Strengthen, support, and mobilize communities and partnerships to improve health
 - #5 Create, champion, and implement policies, plans, and laws that impact public health
 - #6 Utilize legal and regulatory actions designed to improve and protect the public's health
 - #7 Assure an effective system that enables equitable access to the individual services and care needed to be healthy
 - #8 Build and support a diverse and skilled public health workforce
 - #9 Improve and innovate public health functions through ongoing evaluation, research, and continuous quality improvement
 - #10 Build and maintain a strong organizational infrastructure for public health
- <https://phnci.org/uploads/resource-files/EPHS-English.pdf>

Frameworks that Inform the Public Health System



<https://phnci.org/uploads/resource-files/EPHS-English.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/publichealthgateway/publichealthservices/essentialhealthservices.html>

OUR DEPARTMENT

Vernon County Health Department will celebrate 100 years of service to our community in December of 2021. Over the years, our staff have worked behind the scenes and on the front lines to protect our community members from actual or potential health risks. From providing measles, mumps and polio vaccines to our current communicable disease outbreak of COVID-19, or working to support environmental emergencies within our community. Our staff are here to help. We hope to continue to meet the ever changing and growing needs of our community through education, prevention and collaboration with community partners. We work to uphold our mission of "Protecting and Promoting a Healthy Community" in all that we do. Our core values include respect for all people, empathy, equality, and a passionate team that focuses on all aspects of public health. Our Vision is that "our department strives to be a trusted partner with a viable presence in the community to ensure optimal health and wellness"

Current services offered by the Vernon County Health Department include the following:

Public Health Nurses

- **Participate in Community Health Assessments and Community Health Improvement Plans**
- **Develop community programs and services to address current and emerging needs**
- **Arrange for services to promote, maintain and/or restore health for individuals and families**
- **Evaluate public health nursing services in the community and for at-risk populations**
- **Arrange for continuity of care for individuals and families requesting or referred to the general public health nursing program**

Public Health Services Currently Provided by the Vernon County Health Department:

- **Newborn Screening:** Genetic disease screening, pulse oximetry and infant hearing.
- **Car Seat Safety Checks:** A certified car seat safety technician is available by appointment to educate parents on proper installation, fit for child, recall/defects and answer any questions.
- **New Mom Visits:** Upon request or referral, a Public Health Nurse provides home visits for the purpose of education, breastfeeding support, trouble shooting, physical assessment and parenting.
- **Prenatal Care Coordination:** A Public Health Nurse helps pregnant women coordinate their prenatal care, providing education, counseling and assistance in selecting medical care.
- **New Beginnings:** This program is available to pregnant moms and children up to age 5. A Public Health Nurse provides parent with education on a variety of topics, home visiting and support.
- **WIC:** The Women Infant and Children program helps pregnant and breastfeeding women, infants and young children achieve better nutrition and health through nutrition and health assessments and education.
- **Well Water Testing:** Health Department is certified by DATCP to provide well water testing for bacteria.
- **Immunization Clinics:** Clinics are held the third Thursday in Viroqua from 9 am to 11:30 am and 4:30 pm to 6 pm. Immunizations are

Vernon County Health Department

Community Health Improvement Plan

also available by appointment. Vaccines are available only for children and adults if uninsured, under- insured or on Badger Care. In the upcoming 2022 school year, we will also be doing on site COVID-19 vaccine immunizations on site at our schools.

- **Influenza Clinics:** Held at Health Department and some sites throughout the County each fall.
- **Home Visits:** Visits are made to individuals of all ages upon request or referral for the purpose of health monitoring. These visits include but are not limited to blood pressures, blood sugars, foot care and education.
- **Community Health Education:** Including First Aid education, Bloodborne Pathogen education and CPR training.
- **Environmental Health Services:** Screening and follow-up is provided to detect and treat the source of lead poisoning in children. Under the ordinance for Human Health Hazards, Public Health Nurses and an Environmental Health Consultant provide services as needed.
- **Licensing & Inspections:** Licensing & inspections of all retail food establishments, hotel/motel, campgrounds, tourist rooming houses, bed & breakfast, pools, and restaurants.
- **Communicable Disease Follow-up:** Including but not limited to foodborne illness, TB, HIV, Tick related diseases, influenza, COVID-19 and STD's.

Vernon County Health Department Staff

Left to Right: Brandon Larson, Emergency Management Director, Sara Hewitt, RN, BSN, Emily Olson, RN, BSN, Deputy Health Officer, Courtney Everson, RN, BSN, Amy Kleiber, RN, BAN, Health Officer/Director, Margie Brownell, WIC Staff, Amy Ducharme, WIC, Director, RDN, CD, CLS, Julie White, Office Administrative Assistant, Betty Nigh, RN, BSN, and Isaiah Armendariz, Sanitarian.



COVID RESPONSE: 2020 AND 2021

Vernon County Health Department was honored to serve the community in providing COVID-19 vaccines once these became available in January 2021. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) along with The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) indicated phases for distribution of the vaccine to those at highest risk first. We used this guide to start rolling out vaccines to our community as soon as vaccines were available. With COVID cases surging and strict precautions around distancing, our first couple of clinics were held in January in a mobile emergency tent. With temps in the single digits our team braved the harsh elements to get the first doses in arms.

Below are photos of staff participating in our first COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic on January 13th, 2021. Our first clinic was held in an emergency use tent to adhere to COVID-19 safety protocols. Emergency Preparedness is a huge part of Public Health. During the COVID-19 vaccine mass clinic efforts that took place from January through May of 2021, our department, in alignment with essential public health services, collaborated with local law enforcement, local health care entities, such as Gundersen Viroqua Clinic and Vernon Memorial Health Care, Viroqua Church of Christ and many other businesses within the community to help support these efforts.

As of September 30th, 2021, Vernon County Health Department staff administered 6272 doses of COVID-19 vaccine. Staff are committed to continuing vaccine efforts moving into the remaining months of 2021 and into 2022.

We continue to offer COVID-19 clinic appointments at the health department as we incorporate COVID-19 prevention into our everyday work.



Staff left to right: Sara Hewitt, RN, Janet Reed, RN, Julie Mills, Contact Tracer, Emily Olson, Deputy Health Officer, Pat Peters, RN (receiving vaccine) and Jerry Franks, Emergency Management Services.

Review and Actions Completed from Vernon County Health Department CHIP 2018-2021

In planning for the upcoming 4 years, it is helpful to review our past 4 years of work. Below we will share some of the many actions which were taken to enhance our community and achieve goals directed by stakeholders.

Drug/Substance Abuse and Addictions, actions achieved:

- Creation of a substance abuse task force to provide education regarding available resources.
 - Vernon County Health Department staff presented an educational in person session regarding vaping and tobacco use at Desoto School District and LaFarge School district during the 2018-2019 school years. Collaboration continues to occur on this with our local schools.
 - Vernon County Health Department staff and members of the Vernon County Prevention Team applied for and received a Community Dialogue Mini-Grant from the Department of Health Services in April of 2019. Surveys were distributed to community members to screen for drug/substance use in our local schools and community events. Data from the surveys was shared with local schools and the Department of Health Services.
- Promote and support current drug task forces available for the community.
 - Vernon County Health Department staff attend quarterly meetings with Seven Counties Coalition- Tobacco coalition during the years 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021.
 - Vernon County Health Department staff attended The Child and Adolescent Health Symposium in April of 2021. The focus of education was on substance use, drugs, tobacco and mental health.

State Health Assessment Community Dialogue Mini-Grant

Health Department Name: **Vernon County Health Department**
 Point of Contact Person: **Elizabeth Johnson, RN, BSN**

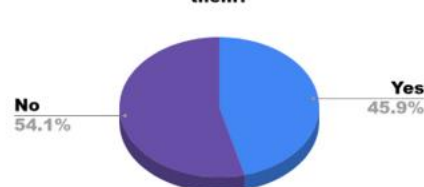
Objective

The Vernon County Health Department is seeking monies available to support our 2018-2020 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). Our first objective within the CHIP is to focus on our Health Priority Area #1: Drug/Substance Abuse and Addiction. Our staff would initially collect data from community members on their knowledge of the problem, thoughts and concerns related to this problem.

9-26-19 Summary of Grant Actions

The Vernon County Health Department staff and members of the Vernon County Prevention Team completed goals as outlined in previous plan of action for the Community Dialogue Mini-Grant. The following is a summary of the events including press releases, flyers, data, pictures and feedback from community members.

Could you get drugs easily if you wanted them?



28 Yes, 33 No

Assessment of the Data

By collecting information and drawing conclusions about the current conditions, we can make a strong case for action. With this evidence in hand, we can engage organizations and key people in our community to help address concerns. We hope that the results of this assessment can be a powerful tool for calling our community to action.

Based on the information gathered, it was clear that the community recognizes concern and wants to see action. Our survey data indicates the following:

** Almost 80% of adults think drugs are a problem in our schools and almost 70% of adults wanted increased education and more drug prevention.*

**Over 50% of adults surveyed know someone who suffers from addiction.*

**The availability of drugs and alcohol to the high school and college age students was close to 50% of youth identifying that they could easily get these products if desired.*

**Students identified marijuana, e-cigarettes and alcohol as drugs that they are approached about using most frequently. Cocaine and Meth, although small in numbers reported, still are present in our community.*

Have you ever been approached about using the following?



Alcohol: 30 Yes, 32 No
 Marijuana: 21 Yes, 31 No
 Meth: 1 Yes, 61 No
 Cocaine: 1 Yes, 61 No
 E-Cigarettes: 29 Yes, 33 No

Increased Access to Mental Health Services, actions achieved:

- Identify and meet with existing coalitions and groups within Vernon County to determine alignment with goals.
 - Collaboration with Vernon County Prevention Team in implementing the Community Mini-grant project

"The active involvement and development of communities to address health and social problems is so important. Key features include understanding the root causes of problems, focusing on specific concerns, engaging in effective problem solving, encouraging active community participation, and gaining the power to produce lasting change. Our goal is to create and grow a coalition dedicated to long-term, lasting change in our community to prevent substance abuse and build resiliency among our youth. We hope to utilize the Strategic Prevention Framework as identified by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHSA). "- Community Grant Evaluation report Vernon County Health Department
 - Vernon County Partnership Counsel meeting attendance, quarterly. Discussed current topics around availability of services and updates within the community.
- Explore perceived community awareness of mental health
 - Due to the COVID-19 pandemic many of our opportunities to outreach in a face to face nature were postponed. However, our staff provided support via phone calls during contact tracing efforts. If a person identified any mental health concerns, staff assisted and directed those individuals to mental health resources within our community.
 - Vernon County Health Department staff attended The Child and Adolescent Health Symposium in April of 2021. The focus of education was on substance use, drugs, tobacco and mental health.
- Promote and support healthcare services available for the community.
 - Provide a class or community education on stress management techniques by 12/31/2020- This objective as many others during the year 2020 was put on hold due to COVID-19. We will continue this work into 2022 and beyond.
 - Collaborated and shared information with community members via Facebook and media releases regarding UW extension health and safety promotional releases.



<https://www.nami.org/Get-Involved/Awareness-Events/Mental-Health-Awareness-Month>

Wisconsin Department of Health Services supports Resilient Wisconsin,

"Building resilience—the ability to adapt and recover from adversity—within ourselves, our relationships, and in our communities matters. When we find healthy ways to cope with trauma and toxic stress, especially during the tough times, we take a step closer to becoming more resilient."



For more information on Resilient Wisconsin, please visit,
<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/resilient/index.htm>

Vernon County Health Department

Community Health Improvement Plan

Health Care Access, actions achieved:

- Development of new projects/groups to encourage access to services within Vernon County
 - Proposal and award of Community Mini-grant funding in 2019 which supported community outreach event to educate, survey and interact with the community in regards to substance use in our community.
 - Foot care clinics are made available at our office or within the community as needed due to increased cost of this service at local clinics from 2018-2021. These will continue to be offered as needed for our community.
 - Car Seat grant submitted to Walmart with awarded status in 2021.
- Promote and support current health care services in the community
 - Provided childhood immunizations for community members with no insurance or insurance that did not cover vaccines. Home visits made to Amish families to provide vaccine for children. Many of these families in our community do not have means to access care easily due to the rural nature of our community.
 - Car seat safety checks and promotion of these services in the community. Collaboration with local car dealerships, Sleep Hollow and River Valley auto.
 - Provided cardiovascular screening at local business, assessment of BP and teaching staff of values of concern and when to follow up with their provider.
 - Hearing and Vision Screenings in schools to aid in access of service.
- Increased access to dental services for all members of Vernon County.
 - Biannual review of provider lists to share with community members.
 - Staff share available resources in the community at health screening visits and remind community members to follow up with a dental provider at least every 6 months.



Community Conversations Dinner

- ✓ Share your thoughts about substance use in Vernon County
- ✓ Learn about services and prevention efforts in our area

August 22, 2019

The Vernon County Health Department and the Vernon County Prevention Team invite you to a **FREE** community event.

Talk with your local prevention team, mental health service providers, public health staff, local law enforcement and more!

We want to hear your thoughts and concerns about substance use in our county.



First come, first served!

No reservations needed. For questions regarding this event please feel free to call Amy at the Vernon County Health Department at 608-637-5251.

*Community Dialogue Sessions are supported in part by the Prevention Health and Health Services (PHHS) Block Grant: State Health Assessment Community Dialogue Mini-Grant BO1 OT009175, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the Department of Health and Human Services.



**Viroqua Community
Arena**
858 Nelson Pkwy, Viroqua,
WI

Free Dinner
5 pm to 8 pm

Kids' Activities

**Browse Fun Educational
Booths**

**Catering by Kickapoo
Corners**

Menu

Hot Pulled Pork Sandwiches*
Coleslaw, Beans, Dessert,
Milk, Water, Coffee
Hot Dogs for Kids!

*Gluten free option available

Vernon County Health Department, WI
August 4 · 🌐



Vernon County Government
August 4

Fantastic event put on last night for National Night Out! Thank you to all law enforcement, EMS, Fire and all those involved in the planning of this event. Health Department staff gave out almost 30 vaccines last night! They appreciate everyone who helped direct individuals to them in the VMH building.

Just a reminder from Vernon County Health Department that if you have any symptoms of COVID, you should be tested regardless of vaccination status. You can contact your primary care provider for testing. Numbers are increasing as you know here in Vernon County and we are seeing rare breakthrough cases.

17

1 Share

Like

Comment

Share

STAKEHOLDERS DIRECT NEEDS WITH COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

As we work to complete our planning with the community health improvement plan, we look to our community to share their thoughts on what areas of need they would like us to focus on for the upcoming 4 years. The following is a summary of the work done in collaboration with the Great Rivers United Way - Compass Now 2021 coalition. Compass Now 2021 was a joint effort of the Great Rivers United Way area healthcare organizations and county health departments to assess the needs of the community, to identify resources, and to address the most urgent needs.

Introduction- Compass steering committee

2020 was a year that will go down in history due to the significant number of defining moments that took place. A global pandemic, which changed the way we lived, increased social isolation, and crippled the economy took place against a backdrop of increasing political, racial, and social tension.

Due to these significant issues, we feel it is necessary to provide some additional commentary on how these issues may have affected responses to our survey and impacted our approach.

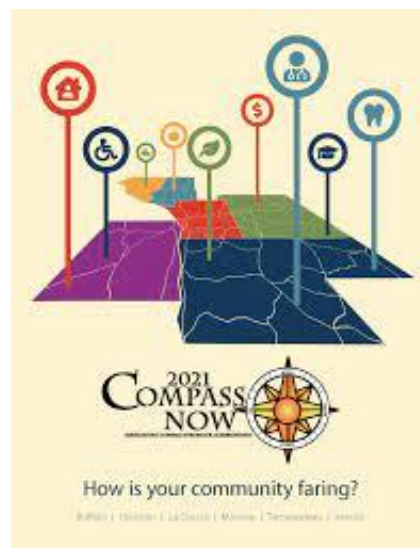
2020's effect on the development of the report

Due to social-distancing measures, and staff and committee members being involved in handling the public health emergency, some initiatives to improve the content of the report needed to be scaled back or abandoned altogether. These initiatives included tailored approaches to gathering feedback from identified and historically under-represented racial, ethnic and social communities found within the Great Rivers region through in-person measures. As a result, this is one of the shortcomings of this report.

How 2020 may have affected survey responses:

In conclusion

It's important to note that 2020 was highly polarizing. Some saw the pandemic as nothing more than an exaggerated flu season. Some choose to disregard social distancing advice and mask-wearing while others declared it as the new normal. Some saw the racial tension as a long-overdue response to a system that doesn't represent them while others saw it as an excuse to be unlawful and violent. With it being an election year, almost every issue was reduced to red or blue. It is therefore important to note that the survey responses will reflect this in some way. Some may have answered the survey as if 2020 was a minor bump in the road, others may have responded as if this was our new normal and a turning point on many fronts. It is also highly likely that these points of view aligned with social, political, racial, and economic backgrounds. The COMPASS NOW 2021 committee acknowledges that 2020 will have a resounding effect in the coming years and looks forward to continuing to monitor future public health metrics to learn about the effects of this milestone year.



PLANNING FOR A HEALTHIER FUTURE

Discussion at the stakeholder virtual meeting focused around many topics of concern within Vernon County. Members brainstormed in breakout sessions to come up with areas of concern that they felt people in our community are currently facing. Below is the report for Vernon County from that meeting.

Vernon County

Exhibit C.11 Priority Needs Identified by Vernon County Community Stakeholders

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 1. Mental Health | 7. Health Information Education |
| 2. Poverty / Livable Wages / Socioeconomic Disparities | 8. Overall Access to Care |
| 3. Childcare | 9. Emergency Response |
| 4. Safe & Affordable Housing | 10. Vaccine Hesitancy |
| 5. Mobility & Transportation Access | 11. Safe Drinking Water |
| 6. Overall Ability to Pay for Care | 12. Civil Unrest |

Source: The 25 participants in the community stakeholder meeting were invited to prioritize the areas of need identified during the meeting via a post-meeting survey. Nine participants responded. Items are ranked 1-12 based on the mean priority score for each area of need.

Exhibit C.12 Ideas for Solutions Submitted by Vernon County Community Stakeholders

What are your ideas for solutions to the top community needs identified at the stakeholder meeting?

- Increased access/providers for Behavioral Health.
- Education on reducing the stigma of receiving Behavioral Health services.
- Find ways to bring mental health providers to our community who are willing to accept patients with Badger Care or Medicaid.
- Are villages/towns able to offer some start up assistance for daycare centers or offer grants or support for those running in home daycares to enhance their opportunities?
- Also encourage and support the development of mixed income housing development.
- Advocate for livable wages.
- I feel that at the heart of everything we struggle with is the family unit. There are families that are flourishing and there are families who are struggling. The families who are struggling have a lower socio-economic status, lower paying jobs, struggling with understanding how to manage life, debt, healthcare, childcare, money, etc.
- County, cities, villages to make it easier for business to come to Vernon County. Available jobs will help deal with some of the other issues.
- Attract and retain new business to bring more jobs to the rural regions of the county.
- Strong Local Economic Development Programs and Initiatives.
- Partnerships with local stakeholders.

Note: The 25 participants in the community stakeholder meeting were invited to respond to this item in their own words. There were seven responses with eleven ideas as listed above.

Having taken the above concerns into consideration, the Vernon County Health Department and the Vernon County Board of Health, choose to focus on the following three areas through 2024 as primary broad areas of need within our county for the upcoming 4 years:

- ***Health Information Education***
- ***Mental Health***
- ***Environmental Health***

HEALTH PRIORITY #1

HEALTH INFORMATION EDUCATION

Overview

Health information education is one strategy for implementing health promotion and disease prevention programs. Health information as cited by Rural Health Information 2018, can help direct education needs to targeted populations within a community. It also provides tools to build capacity and support behavior change in an appropriate setting. Considerations for implementation of health education interventions should focus on enhancement of the overall goal of health promotion and disease prevention. For our rural communities we must consider the populations that we serve, being culturally sensitive to needs within the community. We must also be inclusive with all members of our community.

<https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/toolkits/health-promotion/2/strategies/health-education>

Characteristics of effective health education opportunities include actions and activities that focus on clear health related goals, are research based, address values, attitudes and beliefs. Further actions for supporting effective outcomes include using strategies designed to personalize information, engagement with activities, provide age appropriate information, teaching methods and materials. Effective strategies also provide opportunity to reflect on learning, reinforce skills and make positive connections within community groups.

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/sher/characteristics/>

Vernon County is a rural community with areas of community that lack even basic internet capacity. Supporting efforts that can provide and improve the quality of broadband capabilities supports communication efforts not only on a public health level, but on many other levels of support within our community. Health information education is a broad reaching area that we can work within many areas of support for our community.



[oogle.com/search?rlz=1C1GCEA_enUS931US931&source=univ&tbn=isch&q=images+of+health+education+community+education&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwil8YrP8YjyAhWTcc0KHWqIB50QjKjEegQICBAC&biw=1680&bih=939#imgsrc=Wb2yfWbVC0yHWM](https://www.google.com/search?rlz=1C1GCEA_enUS931US931&source=univ&tbn=isch&q=images+of+health+education+community+education&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwil8YrP8YjyAhWTcc0KHWqIB50QjKjEegQICBAC&biw=1680&bih=939#imgsrc=Wb2yfWbVC0yHWM)

1. HEALTH INFORMATION EDUCATION

Objective:

Strive to provide information that is useful and important to community members.

Goal: To provide the most up to date and relevant health education to our community members.

Alignment:

VCHD and Community Stakeholders	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2021	Wisconsin Department of Health Services 2021
Data obtained from the Compass Now 2021 report, stakeholders and citizens identified sharing of public health information as a priority topic of interest and need in our community.	"Health information sources, such as electronic health records, health information exchanges, vital records, immunization information systems, syndromic surveillance systems, and other public health databases, can provide critically important data about specific population health needs and effective interventions to practitioners responsible for addressing public health and patient care."	"Aggregated, population-level health information can inform a local health department about the prevalence of conditions like asthma or obesity in their service area. This assists departments in priority areas of outreach to the community it serves. "

Background on strategy:

As sited by the CDC,

“Effective use of information is the foundation of modern public health practice. Public health responses—such as outbreak investigations, prevention strategies for diseases such as cancer, and health system improvements to quality and performance—require timely, accurate health information. As a result, a range of public and private entities use health information to increase our knowledge about, and improve our response to, emerging public health issues, whether aggregated, de-identified, or attributed to individuals who need treatment.”

<https://www.cdc.gov/phlp/publications/topic/healthinformation.html>



ACTION PLAN Priority #1:

Performance Measures: How will we know we are making a difference? The following activity areas are identified to help direct implantation and track progress for the next 4 years towards our goal.

ACTIVITIES	TARGET DATE	RESOURCES REQUIRED	LEAD PERSON/ORGANIZER	ANTICIPATED RESULT	IMPLIMENTATION
Participate in activities that promote the expansion of internet/broad band services.	12/31/25	Internet access, computers, phones, adequate updates to technology	Vernon County Health Department (VCHD) Staff, Community Partners	Increased access to technology for all members of our community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in open forums to promote the expansion of technology services. Advocate for equitable access to internet/broad band service for all community members.
Provide education to community members on data driven studies that influence our community's overall health.	12/31/25	Current data on health information topics, internet access	Vernon County Health Department (VCHD) Staff	Increased community awareness regarding data driven information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information to the community via social media posts. Seek funding through grants based on data driven information pertinent to our community.
Target populations that are at risk of injury or harm.	12/31/25	Educational materials, pamphlets, social media	Vernon County Health Department (VCHD) Staff	Prevention of harm in preventable health outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide classes for at risk elderly regarding fall prevention. Provide car seat installation sessions to ensure proper car seat installation. WIC will support actions that aim to reduce adverse outcomes of developmental ages. Vaccine outreach to communities with limited access to care.
Promote and support activities with community partners in regards to health education.	Ongoing	VCHD Staff Time, Local Healthcare Facilities, Community Partners	VCHD with Community Partners	Education and collaboration with community partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in at least 5 community educational activities with a community partner by 12-31-24. Focus on ways to reach at risk populations with information sharing. Home visits to populations at risk with targeted education interventions.

HEALTH PRIORITY #2

MENTAL HEALTH

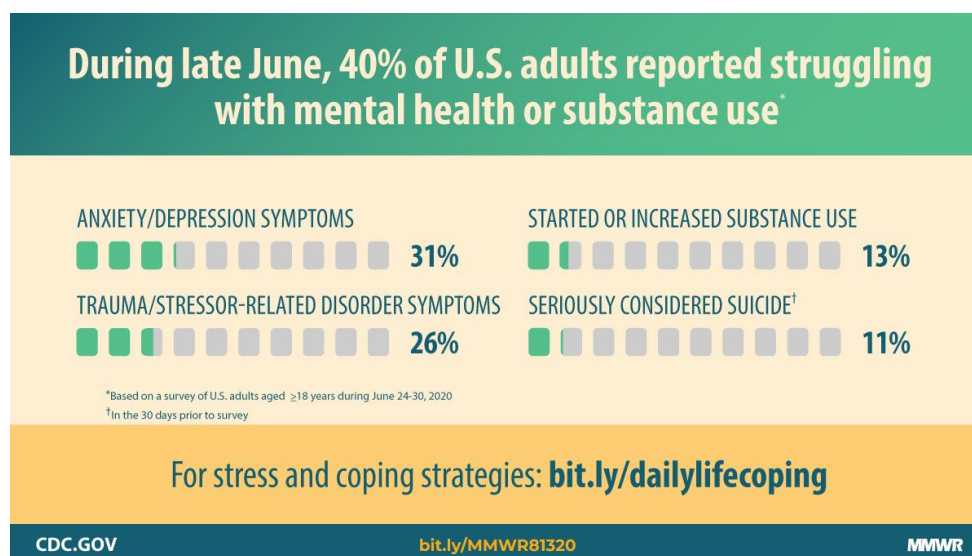
Overview

As cited in the 2021 Compass now report, "The pandemic brought about many changes in the way we live our lives. Social distancing prevented family and friends from connecting in person, children were not able to play with their friends, families were not able to visit with elderly relatives, and celebrations were cancelled. Even though many found creative ways to maintain a social connection using virtual means, those on the lower end of the economic spectrum could not afford the technology to participate. Nor could they use avenues that were previously open to them, such as libraries, to access online services."

Vernon County is made up of rural communities, making access to care for mental health issues more challenging. In addition to limited access due to rural communities, another factor is the current shortage of mental health care providers in the United States. About 37% of the U.S. population, or 122 million Americans, were living in areas experiencing mental health professional shortages as of March 31, 2021. According to the USA Facts report, 6,398 mental health providers are needed nationally to fill those gaps.

Jun 10, 2021

Our action plan for mental health is to assist and/or guide community members to resources that promote and support mental health initiatives, resiliency and promote access to services.



2. MENTAL HEALTH

Objective

Assist and/or guide community members to resources that promote and support mental health initiatives, resiliency and promote access to services.

Goal: Support efforts that promote and or contribute to increasing accessibility of services and support systems in our community.

Alignment:

VCHD and Community Stakeholders	Wisconsin Department of Health Services and Healthiest Wisconsin 2020	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2021
Data obtained from the Compass Now 2021 report, stakeholders and citizens identified mental health care, access to care and civil unrest as priority areas of focus for the upcoming four years as areas of concern for our community.	"Mental Health Objective 2: reduce disparities in suicide and mental health disorders for disproportionately affected populations, including those of differing races, ethnicities, sexual identities and orientations, gender identities, educations or economic status."	"The public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic should increase intervention and prevention efforts to address associated mental health conditions. Community-level efforts, including health communication strategies, should prioritize young adults, racial/ethnic minorities, essential workers, and unpaid adult caregivers." https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6932a1.htm

Background on strategy:

Contributing factors and causes:

- Limited access to treatment and preventative services due to prohibitive costs that affect care for lower socioeconomic status community members here in Vernon County.
- Adults in Vernon county with "frequent mental distress" is noted at 14.5% of the population, state rate is 12.8%.

<https://www.usnews.com/news/healthiest-communities/wisconsin/vernon-county>



ACTION PLAN Priority #2:

Performance Measures: How will we know we are making a difference? The following activity areas are identified to help direct implantation and track progress for the next 4 years towards our goal.

<u>ACTIVITIES</u>	<u>TARGET DATE</u>	<u>RESOURCES REQUIRED</u>	<u>LEAD PERSON/ORGANIZER</u>	<u>ANTICIPATED RESULT</u>	<u>IMPLIMENTATION</u>
Prioritize mental health surveillance and research	12-31-2025	VHCD Staff time, internet resources	VHCD Staff	Compile an up to date list of mental health providers in our community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share resources widely and often to ensure the public has current contact information for resources.
Participate in and support public health media Campaigns	Ongoing	VHCD Staff Time, Community Partners	VHCD Staff with partnership of Local Healthcare Facilities	Keeping the community up to date on current mental health information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designation of new Public Information Officer, incident command training
Promote, develop and engage with activities that decrease the stigma around public health	12-31-2025	VHCD Staff, internet, social media	VHCD Staff	Reduction of mental health stigmas to encouraged people to seek care of mental health issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend and participate in Partnership Counsel Postpartum Screening assessments to help normalize mental health screenings.
VHCD staff will attend trainings regarding mental health to remain current in up to date resources and practice models.	Ongoing	VHCD Staff time, high speed internet with access to meeting forums, transportation	VHCD Staff	For staff to remain current and knowledgeable regarding mental health treatment needs and resources in our community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 VHCD staff attended Health Conference Summit on 8-12-21 at the Westby School District. Staff will attend opportunities for education regarding mental health

HEALTH PRIORITY #3: ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Overview

Environmental health hazards are not just limited to Vernon County, but are a concern for our neighboring counties as well. We are a rural community and members often have to drive extensive lengths to seek health care or other resources readily available to populations with higher population density.

Environmental health hazards can be found anywhere within our community. They can range from water contamination to lead in our homes to the cleanliness of our businesses and eating establishments.

Vernon County Health Department staff investigate a wide range of concerns when it comes to the topic of environmental health. From inspection of homes with suspected rodent or bug infestations, to toxic substances in homes such as asbestos or lead paint, our staff help to provide education and resources to community members.

Vernon County 2021 County Environmental Health Profile lists areas of environmental health concerns that pertain specifically to Vernon County Residents. To view the full 2021 Environmental Health profile, please visit, <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p0/p00719-vernon.pdf>



⚠️ Radon

Percent of tests with results ≥ 4 pCi/L



⚠️ Lyme Disease

Rate per 100,000 people



⚠️ Childhood Lead Poisoning

Percent of tested children with blood lead ≥ 5 μ g/dL



✅ Nitrate

Percent of test results above EPA standard of 10 mg/L



3. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Objective: Increase safety and/or awareness of environmental health hazards within our community.

Goal: To provide the most up to date information and access to services regarding environmental health hazards to our community members.

Alignment:

VCHD and Community Stakeholders	World Health Organization 2021	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2021, National Center for Environmental Health (NCEH)
VCHD and Community Stakeholders identified flooding concerns, emergency response preparedness, safe drinking water and safe and affordable living as areas of environmental concerns for Vernon County Residents in the 2021 Compass Now report.	"Clean air, stable climate, adequate water, sanitation and hygiene, safe use of chemicals, protection from radiation, healthy and safe workplaces, sound agricultural practices, health-supportive cities and built environments, and a preserved nature are all prerequisites for good health."	"At the National Center for Environmental Health (NCEH) we work to prevent illness, disability, and death from contacts between people and the environment. We are especially committed to protecting the health of vulnerable populations — children, the elderly, and people with disabilities – from certain environmental hazards."

Background on strategy:

Contributing factors: Health People 2030

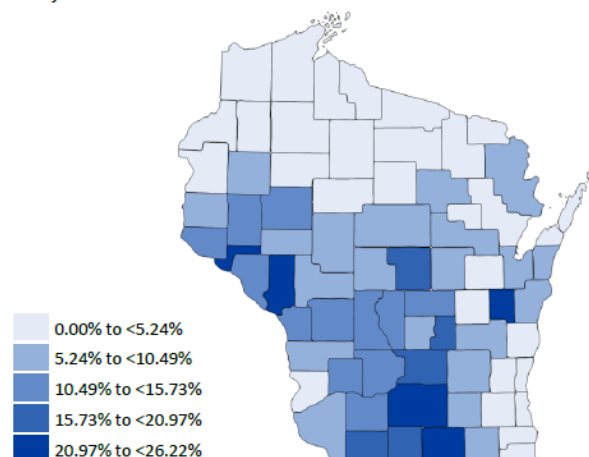
"More than 12 million people around the world die every year because they live or work in unhealthy environments. Healthy People 2030 focuses on reducing people's exposure to harmful pollutants in air, water, soil, food, and materials in homes and workplaces."

Environmental pollutants can cause health problems like respiratory diseases, heart disease, and some types of cancer. People with low incomes are more likely to live in polluted areas and have unsafe drinking water. And children and pregnant women are at higher risk of health problems related to pollution."

<https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/browse-objectives/environmental-health>

NITRATE IN PRIVATE WELLS

PERCENT OF TEST RESULTS ABOVE EPA STANDARD OF 10 mg/L
1988 TO JULY 2019



Source: UW-Stevens Point Well Water Viewer

Vernon County Health Department

Community Health Improvement Plan

ACTION PLAN Priority #3:

Performance Measures: How will we know we are making a difference? The following activity areas are identified to help direct implantation and track progress for the next 4 years towards our goal.

<u>ACTIVITIES</u>	<u>TARGET DATE</u>	<u>RESOURCES REQUIRED</u>	<u>LEAD PERSON/ORGANIZER</u>	<u>ANTICIPATED RESULT</u>	<u>IMPLIMENTATION</u>
Promote and initiate actions to assist the community during natural disasters	12/31/25	VCDH staff time., internet resources	VCHD and Community Members	Supporting our community to finding resources and services during natural disasters in a timely manner	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide up to date information regarding safe drinking water, testing resources after a natural disaster• Ensure staff are up to date and trained in incident management to best respond to events• Collaboration with members of Emergency Management, Red Cross and Great Rivers 211 during emergency events.
Implementation of a nitrate testing site at the Vernon County Health Department	12-31-25	VCHD Staff time, nitrate testing equipment, funding for program development	VCHD Staff	Increased testing for nitrates in Vernon County and surrounding communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Train staff on use of nitrate machine• Develop a standard of practice for nitrate testing• Meet compliance standards with the Department of Natural Resources• Promote community awareness of services through social media• Develop an Outreach advisory committee to support sanitarian efforts in the community• Meet guidelines specified within grant funding for project development

Vernon County Health Department

Community Health Improvement Plan

Promotion of on- site water testing capabilities within our community	12-31-25	VCHD Staff Time, media releases, social media, internet access	VCHD Staff, community Partners, Gundersen St. Joseph Hillsboro	Increase testing of private and public water within our community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Distribute water testing kits at sites within the community increasing accessibility of testing services• Press releases as pertains to recent information regarding water testing• Mail community members information to reach community members with limited access to internet resources
Distribution of radon test kits to the community	12-31-25	Radon testing kits, Staff time for education of kit use	VCHD Staff	Increased awareness of radon issues in our community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep a current list of mitigation measures for those that have high radon levels.• Develop a guideline sheet for testing and share resources widely• Share resource information during times when testing is most appropriate/accurate. (Winter months)
Follow up with high lead level blood results	12-31-25	VCHD staff time, internet resources, fax, communication with providers	VCHD Staff and community providers/partners	Decreased risk of lead related health complications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Follow up with all individuals noted to have high lead levels blood results.• Follow guidelines set forth from the CDC to guide mitigation efforts.

Core Values:

- *Respect for all people*
- *Empathy*
- *Equality*
- *We are a team that is passionate about all aspects of Public Health*

Mission:

“Protecting and Promoting a Healthy Community”

MOVING FORWARD TOWARDS COMMUNITY GOALS

Over the years, Vernon County Health Department staff have worked behind the scenes and on the front lines to protect our community members from actual or potential health risks. "Protecting and Promoting our Community Since 1921" takes on a particular notion of honor this year as we celebrate 100 years in providing services to our community.

From providing measles, mumps and polio vaccines to our current communicable disease outbreak of COVID-19, or even working to support environmental emergencies such as helping with local flooding issues in our county. Our staff are here to help. We hope to continue to meet the ever changing and growing needs of our community through education, prevention and collaboration with community partners moving into 2022 and beyond.

Vision:

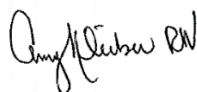
"The Vernon County Health Department strives to be a trusted partner with a viable presence in the community to ensure optimal health and wellness."

SUMMARY

Vernon County Health Department would be unable to carry out its many activities without their dedicated staff, the wonderful support of the Vernon County Board of Health, Vernon County Administrator, Cari Redington, Vernon County Board Chair, Justin Running, Vernon County Health Department Medical Advisor – Dr. Deborah Prior, Vernon County Medical Providers and other county departments, school nurses and volunteers who so willingly give of their time to assist us and work towards our goals.

Vernon County Health Department will strive to follow our mission, core values and vision as we navigate the next 4 years. To all community members and partners, we work with along the way, we express our utmost thanks and appreciation.

Respectfully Submitted,



Amy Kleiber, RN, BAN
Director/Health Officer
Vernon County Health Department

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CHIP Development Team

Vernon County Health Department Staff

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Troy Moris, RS Environmental Health Coordinator
Stephanie Neprud, Contact Tracer Specialist

Community Partners

American Red Cross	LaFarge Medical Clinic
Bland Clinic	Mauston Dental
Community & Economic Development Associates	Mayo Health System
Coulee Cap	Neighborhood Family Clinic
De Soto Area Schools	Organic Valley
Family & Children's Center	Scenic Bluffs Community Health Center
Family Health Center Marshfield	Vernon County Emergency Management
Go Macro	Vernon County Sheriff's Department
Great Rivers United Way	Vernon Memorial Healthcare
Gundersen Health System	Viroqua Area Schools
Gundersen St. Joseph's Hospital and Clinics	Viroqua Police Department
Gundersen Viroqua Clinic	Viterbo University
Hirsch Clinic	Western Technical College
Hillsboro School District	Welter Family Dentistry
Ho-Chunk Health Care	Westby Area Schools
Inclusa Home Care Services	Westby Creamery
La Crosse Pediatric Dentistry	Williams and Pearce Family Dental
LaFarge Area Schools	UW-Extension