



Department of Public Health

2025 Annual Report

Letter from Health Officer/Director

Dear Board of Health, Community Partners, and Residents,

It is my honor to share this year's Annual Report for the Watertown Department of Public Health. Over the past year, our team and community partners have worked together to strengthen health, safety, connection, and public health infrastructure.

Community Health Assessment & Priority Setting

This year, we completed a comprehensive Community Health Assessment with broad community input. Mental health emerged as our region's most urgent need. The assessment also identified four key drivers within our ability to influence:

- Belonging & Connection
- Basic Needs
- Housing
- Financial Stability

These priorities form the foundation of our work moving forward and support long-term community resilience.

Strengthening Social Connection for Families

To support belonging and reduce isolation, we offered family-friendly social connection events for families with young children. With strong partner support, these events created welcoming spaces to build relationships and access resources, reinforcing the value of ongoing community building efforts.

Advancing Environmental Health Services

We updated our Environmental Health fee schedule to meet DATCP requirements and support a sustainable, high-quality inspection program. We also launched in-house testing of water samples for public well water systems, improving efficiency and ensuring timely protection of drinking water quality.

Building Mental Health Awareness & Skills

To expand our community's capacity to respond to mental health needs, we provided Mental Health First Aid training to City staff. This training helps staff recognize signs of mental health and substance use challenges, respond appropriately, and connect individuals to resources.

Enhancing Emergency Preparedness

We strengthened public health readiness by working with Emergency Management to update policies and ensure alignment with current best practices. This coordinated approach improves our preparedness for future emergencies.

These accomplishments reflect the dedication of our staff, the leadership of the Board of Health, and strong community partnerships. As we look ahead, we remain committed to advancing the priorities identified in the Community Health Assessment and investing in the conditions—connection, stability, and safety—that support long-term health.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to a healthier community.



Carol Quest, RN, BSN
Health Officer/Director



Mission, Vision and Core Values

MISSION:

Support a community where all individuals can achieve their best health.

VISION:

To work with and advocate for the community by promoting health, preparing for emergencies, and preventing disease for the health of all generations .

ORGANIZATIONAL CORE VALUES:

Accountability: We take responsibility for our actions and decisions while striving to meet goals and outcomes.

Collaboration: We work in partnership to create an environment that brings together diverse people to work collectively towards shared goals.

Community: We promote cooperative and creative approaches to common issues.

Consistency: We are committed to consistent enforcement of agency policies to ensure fair treatment and assessments that uphold the public trust.

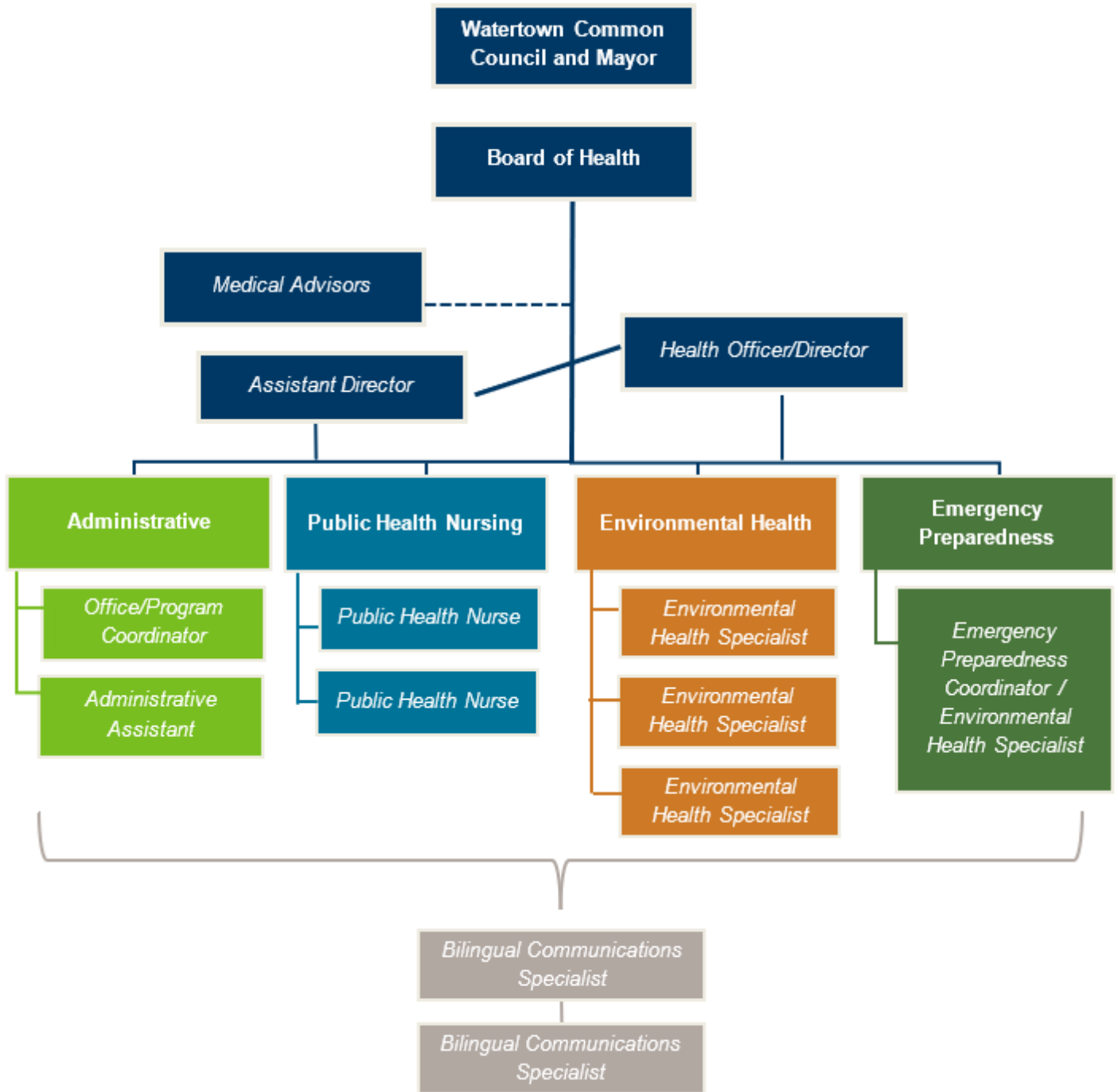
Knowledge: We foster education and implementation of best practice and evidence based strategies by educating staff, informing the community and supporting future public health professionals.

Leadership: As a team of Public Health professionals we adhere to and promote public health core functions and standards of practice, embracing responsibility and leading by example to achieve community public health goals.

Resourcefulness: We are committed to pursuing resources and the efficient use of limited assets to carry out our mission.

Responsive: We respond to the needs of the community by advocating for services that are meaningful and positively impact the health of the community.

Organizational Chart 2025

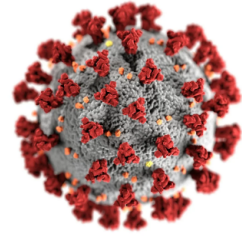


Foundational Area

Communicable Disease Control

Communicable Disease Control includes finding and responding to cases of infectious diseases like COVID-19, tuberculosis, hepatitis, or foodborne illnesses. Public health works with partners to quickly identify and report diseases, track how they spread, and take action to prevent more people from getting sick. This work helps keep schools, workplaces, and communities healthy and safe.

source: <https://phaboard.org> Communicable Disease Control Factsheet



Communicable Disease

Based on Wisconsin State Statute 252, communicable diseases are reported to the Watertown Department of Public Health (WDPH) to help stop the transmission of disease.

Communicable Disease	2023	2024	2025
Chlamydia & Gonorrhea	84	56	53
Food/Water Borne	20	17	25
Hepatitis A, B, C	46	41	53
Hospitalized Associated Influenza	28	29	44
Lyme Disease	9	*	*
Measles & Mumps	*	*	*
Pertussis	9	79	63
Invasive Streptococcal Disease	5	*	6
Tuberculosis- Latent & Active	*	7	*
Varicella	*	*	*

* Numbers less than 5 will not be reported due to privacy

Chart includes results including: "confirmed", "probable", "suspect", and "not a case" numbers



Outbreaks

Long-term care facilities and schools report outbreaks for respiratory and gastrointestinal viruses. Health department staff monitor, answer questions, and provide guidance during outbreaks.

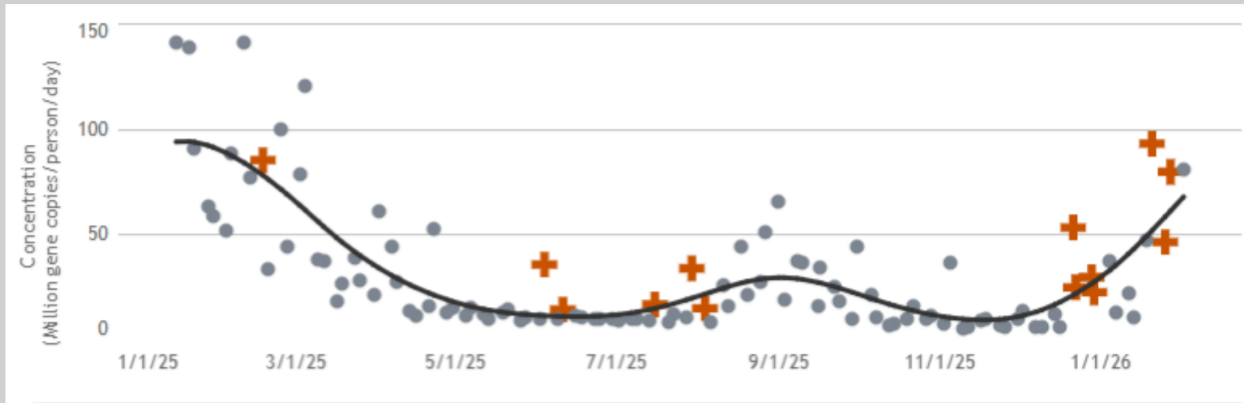


Rabies Follow-up

Staff conduct follow-up including guidance and next steps for community members with possible exposures to rabies.

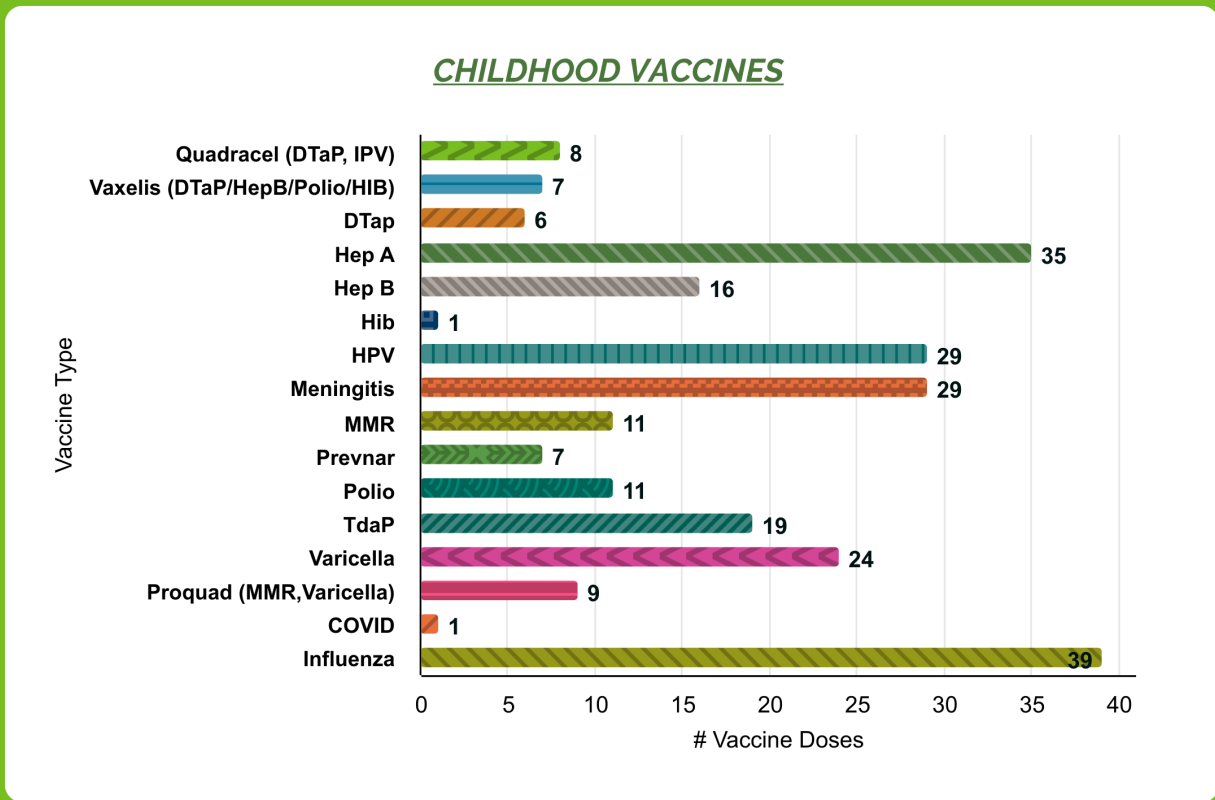
Covid-19 Wastewater Surveillance Sampling

In collaboration with the City of Watertown Water/Wastewater Department, WDPH staff submit weekly wastewater samples to the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene as part of a statewide effort to monitor COVID-19 levels. This testing helps public health officials track circulating variants and identify where the virus is spreading, allowing them to better protect the community.



2025 Immunization Report

WDPH offers immunizations to children that are on state insurance (BadgerCare), are uninsured, or are underinsured. The department provided 16 different childhood vaccines to 182 people.



Foundational Area

Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention

Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention is about helping people live longer, healthier lives by preventing conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and cancer, and reducing injuries from things like falls, car crashes, or overdoses. Public health does this by using data to identify risks, promoting habits like regular physical activity and healthy eating, and working with communities to improve access to safe housing, transportation, and healthcare.



source: <https://phaboard.org> Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention Factsheet

Childhood Lead

Lead, a naturally occurring metal, can affect almost every organ and system in the human body. Lead exposure has the potential to impact individuals of all ages, but it is especially harmful to young children because the developing brain is particularly sensitive to environmental contaminants.

People are exposed to lead by eating lead paint chips, ingesting contaminated food or water, and/or breathing in lead dust. Children younger than 6 years are more likely to be exposed due to their hand-to-mouth behavior.



450 blood lead test results

reported to WDPH



27 results high >3.5 mcg/dL

Wisconsin's defined level of "lead poisoning or lead exposure"

2025 Objectives



Wisconsin law requires intervention when a child's blood lead level reaches an "elevated blood lead level (EBLL)." The statutory definition of an EBLL is a venous BLL $\geq 20 \mu\text{g/dL}$ or two venous BLLs $\geq 15 \mu\text{g/dL}$ drawn at least 90 days apart. Local health departments are required to do environmental investigations for all children with an EBLL.



Children with results over $10 \mu\text{g/dL}$ receive comprehensive home visits from a public health nurse.



27

Children receiving public health nurse follow up after their blood lead level results (1 home visit, 10 phone calls, and 16 letters)



1

Home in Watertown passed lead abatement clearance. Clearance assessments are completed by Environmental Health Staff certified as lead risk assessors.

Radon Information Center

The Watertown Radon Information Center (RIC) serves as the lead contact for Radon awareness and education for the City of Watertown and Jefferson and Dodge Counties. Radon test kits are provided with paid return postage included. From October 2024 to September 2025 the kit return rate was only 55%, meaning a little more than half the citizens who picked up kits had completed the test and mailed it to the lab for analyzing.

To help increase returns, we made over 200 phone calls reminding residents who picked up kits to complete their Radon test.

Radon Information Center:

- ✓ Provides outreach to the public regarding dangers of Radon in homes
- ✓ Educates and trains health department staff on Radon 101 and test kit distribution
- ✓ Promotes National Radon Action Month in January
- ✓ Purchases short and long term Radon test kits for free distribution for RIC health departments
- ✓ Answers questions and advises general public on proper follow up after Radon testing



47% of Radon test kits returned were over the EPA action level of 4.0 pCi/L. (262 kits returned out of 468 distributed)

Sharps Disposal



74 sharps containers

were sold to community members, further supporting safe and responsible disposal practices.

As more individuals manage their health needs at home using sharps (such as needles, syringes, and lancets), the potential risk to workers in recycling and waste management facilities also increases. When sharps are improperly disposed of in household garbage, recycling bins, or flushed down toilets, workers may face accidental needlestick injuries.

To support safe disposal and protect community and environmental health, WDPH serves as a household sharps drop-off site.



1,262 pounds of sharps

were safely collected from community members through drop-offs for disposal of used sharps.

CHILD PASSENGER SAFETY

Throughout the year, the Health Department supported **child passenger safety** by providing free car seat checks to provide education to families and caregivers.

CAR SEAT CHECKS

Certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians conducted hands-on inspections to ensure car seats were correctly installed and age-appropriate, while also educating caregivers on proper use and best practices. These efforts helped reduce injury risk for children and increase caregiver confidence.



WHAT WE CHECK

- Age-appropriateness
- Fit of child
- Correct installation
- Proper use guidelines
- Best practices



CAR SEATS CHECKED

49

CAR SEAT DISPENSE

The Health Department provided free car seats to eligible families to help ensure children are transported safely. Through this program, caregivers received age- and size-appropriate car seats along with education on proper use and safety guidelines. By reducing financial barriers to obtaining car seats, the program supported child passenger safety and promoted safer travel for children throughout the community.



ELIGIBILITY

- Parent/Guardian of child
- Live in City of Watertown
- Have a financial barrier
- One seat per child

CAR SEATS DISPENSED

17

Foundational Area

Environmental Public Health

Environmental Public Health (EPH) is about making sure our surroundings are safe and healthy. EPH checks the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the places we live and eat to make sure they meet safety standards. They also work with partners to prevent exposure to harmful substances like lead, mold, and dangerous chemicals.



source: <https://phaboard.org> Environmental Public Health Factsheet

Inland Beach Monitoring

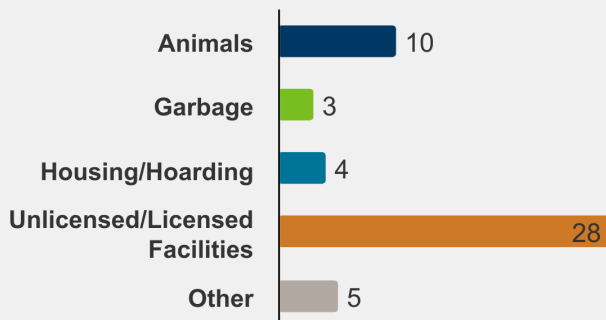
Weekly beach water monitoring is completed at three Jefferson County beaches from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Elevated E.coli advisories are required for beaches with an E.coli level of 235 parts per million (p.p.m.) or higher but below 1,000 p.p.m. Beach closure is required for results over 1,000 p.p.m. Elevated E.coli levels can be impacted by many environmental factors including geese waste, hot weather, and heavy rains.

	Lower Spring Lake, Palmyra	Rock Lake Ferry Park, Lake Mills	Lake Ripley, Cambridge
Number of Samples	14	14	14
Elevated E.coli Advisory	1	1	1
Beach Closure	0	1	2

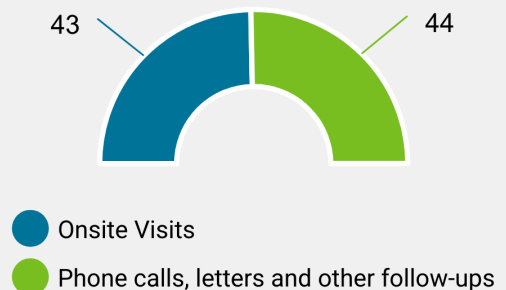
Human Health Hazards

Throughout the year, the Environmental Public Health Consortium handles a variety of complaints from citizens that require investigation and follow-up.

50 complaints in 2025, shown below by type



Follow-Up Contacts by Type



Transient Non-Community Water Program

The Transient Non-Community Water Program (TN) is a contracted program with the Department of Natural Resources. Through water sampling (for bacteria and nitrate) and onsite well water system inspections (sanitary surveys and annual site visits), staff ensure safe drinking water for the private well systems serving the public.



TN Overview	Jefferson County	Dodge County
Number of Systems	140	125
Routine Bacteria Samples	171	135
Routine Nitrate Samples	147	125
Sanitary Surveys Completed	30	31
Site Visits Completed	113	96
Level 2 Assessments Completed	2	1
Follow Up Samples	19	22

WDPH Water Analysis Laboratory

Over 500 Samples Analyzed

The WDPH Laboratory analyzed 247 bacteria and 258 nitrate samples in 2025.

These samples include routine monitoring (annual, quarterly, bi-monthly) or part of follow up sampling after an unsafe sample.

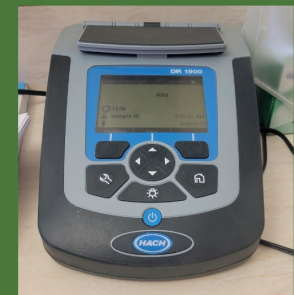
Quality Control

Quality control for bacteria and nitrate testing included calibration checks, detection and quantitation limits, method blanks, pipette verification, Colisure checks, and empty bottle verification.

Training

One new staff member joined in 2025 and successfully completed their initial competency demonstrations for both bacteria and nitrate testing.

All other laboratory staff completed their annual refresher training for both bacteria and nitrate.



Agent Inspection Program

As an agent county contracted with the Department of Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection, the Environmental Public Health Consortium is the regulatory authority for licensing and inspecting food and recreational facilities in the City of Watertown and Jefferson County. The chart below is an overview of the types of license categories and the number of inspections completed in 2025.

License Category Type	Pre-inspection	Routine Inspection	Re-inspection	Onsite Visits	Complaints	Total
Retail Food: (Restaurants, Grocery Stores, Convenience Stores, bakeries, etc)	75	395	38	4	21	533
Recreational Business: (Recreational Water, Lodging, Rec-Ed Camps, Campgrounds)	22	126	38	90	5	281



Pre-inspections are required for any new business prior to obtaining a license. This includes newly constructed businesses or existing businesses that are changing ownership. A pre-inspection is also required for significant remodels for existing facilities.

During pre-inspections, physical features of the facility must meet most recent Food Code standards. Some facilities may require multiple pre-inspections before having their license released and opening to the public.

Re-inspections are chargeable inspections that are completed based on violations observed during a routine, complaint, or on-site visit that fall under the re-inspection criteria for that license type.

Re-inspections are required for imminent health hazards, an excessive number of violations or the same violation observed on three consecutive inspections.

Monthly pool chemistry onsite visits that result in closure due to non-complying chemicals will also require a re-inspection to re-open.

All licensed facilities are required to have a **routine inspection** completed every license year (July 1 through June 30).

At routine inspections, inspectors observe food safety practices and processes (e.g. cooking, cooling, hand washing, etc.), physical features of the facility (e.g. equipment, cleanliness, pest control), employee health and competency/training.

On-site visits can be a visit to a facility that does not fall under a pre-inspection, re-inspection, or routine inspection.

Most frequently, onsite visits occur for recreational water facilities (i.e. pools, whirlpools) monthly chemistry onsite visits. Inspectors test water chemistry to assure levels are within code required ranges.

Complaint inspections are completed when a food safety concern is reported to our department from the public or other entities.

In collaboration with the Watertown Water/Wastewater Department, inspection staff complete **grease trap inspections** for businesses in Watertown that have a grease trap (interceptor) installed in their facility.

When grease traps are not properly maintained, grease can enter city sewer lines and infrastructure, leading to build up and blockages in sewer laterals.

Inspection staff complete onsite visual inspections of the grease traps and review any service or maintenance logs.



Number of grease traps inspected in 2025

55



64 school inspections
in 2025

Schools participating in the National School Lunch and Breakfast Program receive two **school food safety inspections** per school year by our department, as required by the Department of Public Instruction.

One inspection is a routine kitchen inspection based on the Wisconsin Food Code. Second inspections are a review and audit of the school's Food Safety Plan and records, including Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) principles, policies and procedures, and documentation logs.

Vendors providing food and beverages during **special events** --such as fairs, festivals, and farmer's markets-- may require licenses and inspections. Inspectors are onsite during these events to ensure food safety practices are being followed. In addition to our locally licensed vendors, we also inspect vendors licensed in other jurisdictions.



Foundational Area

Maternal, Child, and Family Health

Maternal, Child, and Family Health includes core public health services that support healthy pregnancies, safe births, and strong starts for children. Health departments collect and use data to understand community needs and help families access important services like newborn screening, breastfeeding support, and safe sleep education. These efforts help prevent health problems early and support lifelong health for children and families.



source: <https://phaboard.org> Maternal, Child, and Family Health Factsheet

Prenatal Care Coordination



The Prenatal Care Coordination Program supports eligible families throughout pregnancy by providing monthly, one-on-one support tailored to their unique needs. Program staff offer education on healthy pregnancy practices, share timely information, and connect families to community resources and services. By building strong relationships and addressing medical, social, and emotional needs, the program helps promote healthy pregnancies and positive birth outcomes—supporting families on their path to welcoming a healthy baby.



35

Number of Families Enrolled in PNCC

19

Number of Newborn Visits

11

Number of Families transitioned to TalkReadPlay

TalkReadPlay Home Visiting Program

The TalkReadPlay Program supports families by promoting healthy early childhood development through monthly visits with nursing staff. During these visits, nurses partner with families to talk about their child's growth and development, share simple, age-appropriate activities that encourage learning through talking, reading, and play, and provide guidance tailored to each family's needs. The program also checks in on the well-being of the family and connects them to community resources and services, helping build a strong foundation for healthy development and family success.



33

Families Enrolled in TalkReadPlay

57

Letters sent to Families with Newborns Promoting TRP

Safe Sleep & Pack 'N Play Program



2

Pack 'N Plays dispensed to families in need of a safe sleep environment for their child

The Safe Sleep Program promotes safe infant sleep practices by providing education to families and helping ensure infants have a safe place to sleep. Staff educate caregivers on evidence-based safe sleep guidelines during PNCC and TRP visits. Staff dispense free Pack 'N Plays to eligible families who may lack access to a safe sleep environment. By reducing sleep-related risks and supporting families with essential resources, the program helps prevent sleep-related injuries and deaths.

Community Baby Shower

In May, our department partnered with Watertown Family Connections to host a Community Baby Shower for expectant families. Staff from the Watertown Department of Public Health, Watertown Family Connections, Safe Babies/Healthy Families, and the Jefferson County Health Department invited 20 families to learn about available community resources, connect with service providers, and build supportive relationships with one another.



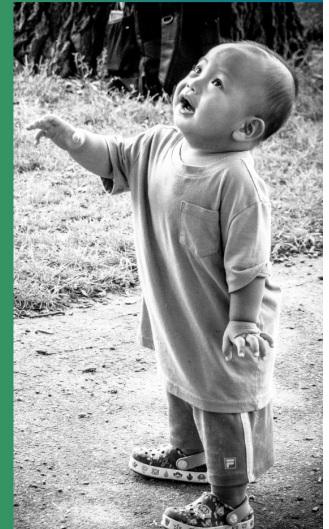
Families had the opportunity to socialize, ask questions, and receive essential baby items, helping reduce barriers and support a healthy start for both parents and babies.



Social Connection Events



Throughout the year, department staff hosted 4 social connection events in partnership with Watertown Family Connections Playgroups in the Park, Sandwiches in the Park, and the Watertown Fire and Police Departments. These family-friendly gatherings created welcoming spaces for parents and caregivers to socialize and connect with one another, learn about local resources, and build relationships with community partners. By reducing social isolation and fostering peer support, these events supported positive mental health, strengthened protective factors, and helped families feel more connected to their community. Creating opportunities for meaningful connections remains a key strategy in supporting the overall health and well-being of the families we serve.



Foundational Area

Access to & Linkage with Clinical Care

Public health plays a key role in helping communities connect with clinical care. This includes making sure people know how to access services, supporting health coverage enrollment, and working with local providers to improve care coordination. Health departments do not provide all clinical services themselves but ensure residents can access the care they need to stay healthy and prevent disease.



source: <https://phaboard.org> Access to & Linkage with Clinical Care Factsheet

Access to & Linkage with Clinical Care

Ensuring that every community member has access to the care they need to achieve and maintain optimal health

What we do:

Connect residents to the right care at the right time.

Why it Matters:

Improves access, reduces barriers, and strengthens the community's continuum of care.

Key partners:

Rock River Community Clinic, Watertown Regional Medical Center, plus additional medical, dental, and behavioral health providers.

Impact:

Streamlined referrals, coordinated communication, and improved access to preventive, acute, chronic, and specialty services.

Seal-A-Smile

249

Students screened

412

Sealants Applied

137

Students receiving sealants

50%

Students with decay

16

Urgent Cases

\$54,448

Total Value of preventative care given



2025

In November 2025, the Seal-A-Smile program participated in its scheduled on-site review, which occurs every three years. The visit, conducted by Wisconsin Department of Health, included:

- observing dental procedures during clinic in the school
- reviewing paperwork and charting processes
- interviewing school staff

The final report was very positive, noting that the program was well-organized, efficient, and operated smoothly onsite. It also highlighted the excellent chairside teaching provided by the dental hygienist.



Foundational Capability

Assessment & Surveillance

Assessment means gathering and studying information to understand a community’s health and what affects it. Surveillance uses this information to spot new health trends, risks, and problems so public health can take action. Assessment and surveillance are both key components of all population health work, which rely upon strong capabilities to collect, access, analyze, interpret, and use data.



source: <https://phaboard.org> Assessment & Surveillance Factsheet

REDCap Immunization Assessment



Stage
1

School Begins & Records are Due

At the start of each school year, parents have 30 school days to provide written documentation showing that their child has received all required, age-appropriate vaccinations or to submit a signed waiver.



Stage
2

Schools Submit Reports

By the 40th school day, each school submits a School Immunization Assessment to the local health department. This report outlines the vaccination status of students by grade level.



Stage
3

WDPH Assistance

WDPH sent 4 reminder emails to three schools that had not submitted their reports, both before and after the deadline. Additional emails were sent to the State requesting that four reports—submitted on time but coded incorrectly—be recoded.



Stage
4

WDPH Tracking

With the recent rise in measles cases, WDPH is closely monitoring which students are not up to date on their MMR vaccinations. This helps ensure that, if a measles outbreak occurs, WDPH can quickly alert schools and guide them through the appropriate protocols.

Community Health Assessment

WDPH, in partnership with Dodge Jefferson Healthier Community Partnership, completed a Community Health Assessment using the Vital Conditions Framework, with mental health as the overarching priority. This approach recognizes that mental well-being is shaped by the conditions in which people live and connect.

The assessment focused on four vital conditions to better understand how these factors influence mental health across our community. Findings will inform future priorities, partnerships, and actions to support a healthier, more resilient community.

Belonging

Human beings are wired for belonging and connection. These relationships are not just “nice to have” — they are essential for health and wellbeing.

Basic Needs

Basic needs like nutritious foods, clean water, fresh air, sleep, physical activity, and routine healthcare are the foundation of health and stability.



Financial Stability

Stable families and individuals build strong communities. When people don't have to choose between rent, food, or healthcare, they contribute more and stress less.

Housing

Having a safe, stable, and affordable place to live provides the foundation for families and individuals to maintain good health, pursue education and employment, and participate fully in community life.

Foundational Capability

Community Partnership Development

Community Partnership Development brings people and organizations together to tackle health challenges and create better opportunities for everyone. By working as a team, sharing resources, and listening to the community, public health agencies and their partners can make a real, lasting difference. One important strategy is service and resource sharing, where public health departments collaborate to share staff, tools, and expertise. By working together, they can reduce costs, strengthen partnerships, and ensure that essential services reach the communities that need them most, especially in areas with limited resources

source: <https://phaboard.org> Community Partnership Development Factsheet



Food Pantry

Through a partnership with the Bread Basket Food Pantry, families enrolled in our programs are invited to attend a private event one Friday each month. During the event time, families can access food, clothing, and baby and household items in a welcoming environment while department staff are on site to answer questions, provide guidance, and connect families to additional services. This partnership helps reduce barriers to essential resources and strengthens support for families as they meet their basic needs.



243
Families
Assisted

961
Individuals
Assisted

To ensure access to nutritious food for families facing transportation barriers, our department coordinates food box deliveries for enrolled families who are unable to visit the Bread Basket Food Pantry in person. These food boxes provide essential groceries directly to families' homes, helping meet immediate needs while reducing barriers to care. This service ensures that all families enrolled in our programs can access healthy food and support, regardless of transportation challenges.



Crossroads of Watertown Rental Assistance



Welcome Baby Workgroup

WDPH collaborated with Greater Watertown Community Health Foundation, Watertown Regional Medical Center, Jefferson County Health Department, and Jefferson County WIC as part of a cross-agency workgroup dedicated to supporting parents from pregnancy through their child's first year of life. This workgroup aimed to ensure all children have a strong start in life, by implementing universal social screening, promoting early infant development and parental mental health through TalkReadPlay, connecting families to essential supports, and using data to strengthen referral systems.



In 2025



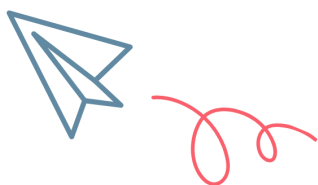
The workgroup focused on implementing a HIPAA compliant way of connecting with medical providers, using a closed-loop system to follow up on referrals for public health programming. By removing communication barriers, we can directly connect with the medical offices, and ensure all families receive the community resources they need.



Back to School Support



Our department is proud to collaborate with the Watertown Unified School District nursing team each fall as they prepare for a successful and safe school year. Our nursing staff worked closely with health room aides to strengthen back-to-school readiness efforts by ensuring school personnel are competent and confident in essential health procedures. This included training and guidance on medication administration, diabetes management, allergic reaction response, seizure management, and accurate immunization documentation and reporting. Through this partnership, we are helping create a safe, prepared, and health-focused learning environment for all students.



129 Nursing Hours Utilized



Foundational Capability

Organizational Competencies

Organizational Competencies help public health departments work well. This includes Leadership & Governance, which means making decisions, creating policies, and ensuring fairness; Information Technology, which keeps data safe and communication systems running; Workforce Development, which focuses on hiring, training, and supporting staff; and Financial Management, which handles budgets, funding, and keeping public health facilities running smoothly.



source: <https://phaboard.org> Organizational Competencies Factsheet

Workforce Development

897

Number of training hours completed by WDPH staff in 2025.

Staff participated in various webinars, online and in person trainings, and conferences regarding important ongoing education in public health.



Students and Interns

This year, our department supported the future public health and nursing workforce by precepting eight nursing students—including one RN-to-BSN student—and one Master of Public Health student. Through hands-on learning experiences, students gained exposure to local public health practice, community engagement, and population-based health initiatives. By investing in student mentorship and professional development, our department helps to build a skilled, informed workforce prepared to serve communities now and in the future.



Onboarding New EHS

In 2025 the Environmental Health program underwent the process of onboarding a new Environmental Health Specialist (EHS) for the first time in nearly a decade. Onboarding took place over the course of a roughly five-month period. During this time the new EHS spent time training under the guidance of the other department EHS in our inspection, DNR well water, water analysis laboratory, human health hazards, and all other programs of which they will be a part.



Standardization

Our Environmental Health program, operating as an agent of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP), is required to have one standardized inspector. To become the department standard, a staff member completes a standardization process with a DATCP inspector. This process includes eight shadowed inspections using a standardized report to ensure inspections are risk-based and scored correctly. If the candidate stays within the allowed number of discrepancies, they become standardized. That standardized inspector then completes the process for the rest of our program's inspectors. Afterward, the department standard and all internally standardized staff complete maintenance standardization annually within a three-year cycle.

In 2025, both the department standard and internally standardized staff successfully completed maintenance standardization.

Foundational Capability

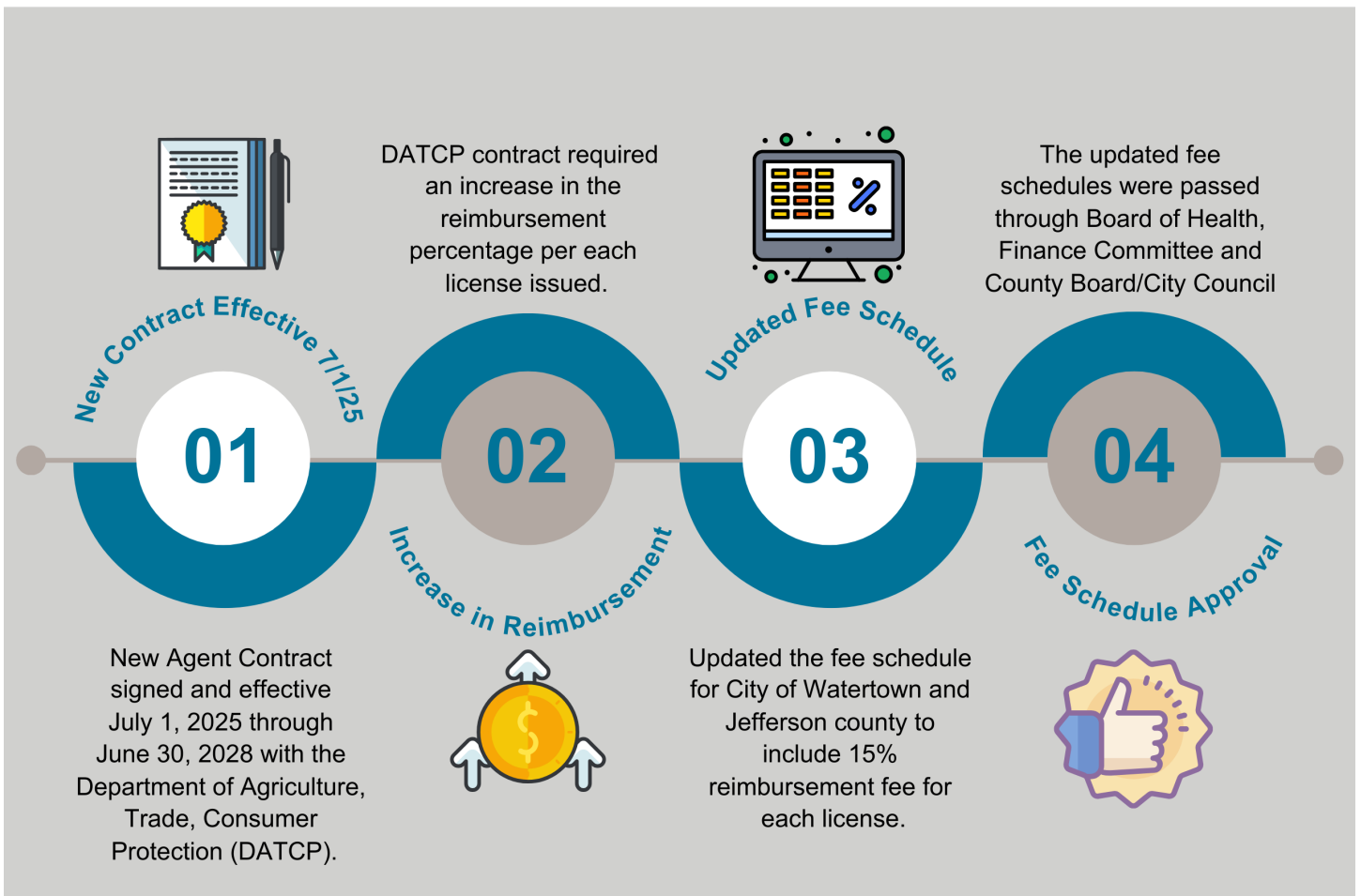
Policy Development & Support

Policy development and support means working with communities, organizations, and leaders to create and improve rules that help people stay healthy. It includes identifying health problems, helping to shape solutions, and making sure solutions are put into action effectively.



source: <https://phaboard.org> Policy Development & Support Factsheet

Update of the Environmental Public Health Consortium Fee Schedule



Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act Policy Update



Staff conducted a comprehensive review and update of the Department's Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) policies and procedures to ensure continued compliance with federal privacy and security regulations.

The review process included partnering with Quarles and Brady LLP to complete an evaluation of administrative, technical, and physical safeguards; updates to reflect current operational practices; and alignment with evolving regulatory guidance.



Updates were made to strengthen protections for protected health information (PHI), clarify workforce responsibilities, and enhance breach response protocols.

These efforts demonstrate the Department's ongoing commitment to safeguarding sensitive health information and maintaining public trust while delivering essential public health services.

Warming/Cooling Center/Shelter

01

WDPH worked closely with the City Emergency Manager to guide the development of the City's Warming/Cooling Center and Shelter Policy—now Chapter 6 of the City of Watertown Policy Manual. Our involvement helped ensure a coordinated, community-focused approach to protecting residents during severe weather events.



02

This policy update was the product of extensive collaboration, including multiple meetings, tabletop discussions, and several rounds of revisions. Throughout the process, we drew on real-world experiences to identify improvements that would better serve the community.



03

The final policy was presented to the Common Council and approved on August 19, 2025, marking an important step in strengthening the City's overall emergency preparedness. The Warming/Cooling center was opened 3 times in 2025.



04

As part of this effort, the process for updating the City's policy manual also evolved, creating a more streamlined and responsive framework for future revisions.



Foundational Capability

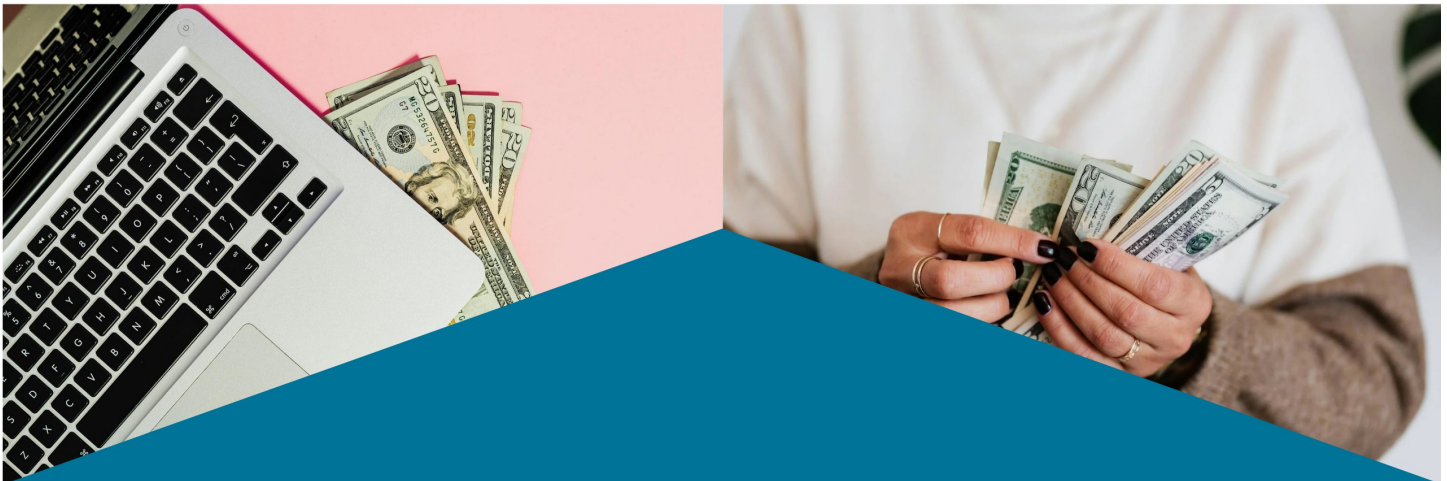
Accountability & Performance Management

Accountability and Performance Management means making sure health departments run effectively, track their progress, and keep improving their services. It helps public health teams set clear goals, measure success, and make better decisions based on data.



source: <https://phaboard.org> Accountability & Performance Management Factsheet

Administrative Quality Improvement: Cash Handling Policy



What

Our administrative team introduced a new payment-handling process to make receiving and tracking payments for all departmental programs more efficient and accurate.

This updated process helps ensure payments are recorded consistently and that program balances remain accurate and up to date.

How

When a payment is received, the admin team records the appropriate general ledger account to ensure it is posted correctly. If the payment is for the Agent inspection program, the details are also entered into HealthSpace.

Then the payment information is entered into Caselle for City Hall and added to our department's internal Excel spreadsheet, where we monitor each program's running balance.

Administrative Quality Improvement: Budget Reconciliation

Project Improvement:

To ensure fiscal integrity and real-time accuracy, a monitoring process was created for four primary budget workbooks. Each workbook contains a spreadsheet for every account associated with each budget. Using Miview software program that is used by the Finance Department, department budget account totals are audited 2-3 times monthly against departmental spreadsheets.



This proactive oversight keeps the accounts current, minimizes month-end errors, and provides leadership with an accurate "at-a-glance" view of the department's financial health, while promoting fiscal responsibility.

Nursing Quality Improvement: Immunization Scheduling Process



Issue Identified

Nursing staff would have to leave the clinic area to bring clients to the front desk to schedule follow-up vaccine appointments. This diverted clinical resources, leading to increased wait times and reduced efficiency during clinic hours.



Improvement

Nursing and Administrative staff collaborated to develop a standardized scheduling sheet. After several revisions, a sheet was developed that meets all the needs of Administrative staff when scheduling appointments. The new sheet captures the client, vaccine type, dose, and recommended return time.



New Process

Nursing Staff complete the sheet for return vaccines. Client brings the sheet to the front desk where Administrative staff are able to schedule the follow-up appointment.



Outcome

The change in the scheduling process helped to keep the clinic running smoothly, support teamwork between staff, and make the experience easier for clients and families.



Performance Management

Local health department performance management is a continuous, data-driven approach to improving public health services and outcomes through measurement, reporting, and quality improvement.

01

Environmental Health

Environmental Health Staff passed their Annual Bacteria and Nitrate Proficiency Testing.



02

Public Health Nursing

Increasing community outreach and education was a key performance management goal for this year. WDPH staff expanded their presence across the community by attending 26 community events, providing health information, resources, and education directly to residents. These efforts strengthened community connections, increased awareness of available services, and supported more accessible and responsive public health outreach. At left, staff attended Lights and Sirens sharing information about poison control and Mr. Yuk.

03

Emergency Preparedness

RAVE ALERTS: This real-time emergency alert system sends messages to employees during emergencies or other situations that affect their work. RAVE alerts are sent internally every quarter to city leaders and WDPH staff. WDPH had a response rate of 100% all four quarters, while city leadership response for each quarter was: Q1 - 95%, Q2 - 86%, Q3 - 86%, and Q4 - 79%.

MONTHLY EDUCATION: Monthly education was created and posted on WDPH's Facebook page and the city's website. Topics included emergency kits, sheltering, and severe storms.

Wisconsin Emergency Assistance Volunteer Registry (WEAVR): This online volunteer sign-up system is used during major public health emergencies. Volunteers are told where to go and what role they will fill. Training is provided when they arrive. Members participate in one drill each year, with a 45% response rate in 2025.



Foundational Capability

Emergency Preparedness & Response

Public health emergency preparedness means being ready to respond to disasters, disease outbreaks, and other emergencies. Health departments plan ahead, work with partners, and make sure essential services can continue. They focus on protecting people most at risk, keeping the public informed, and helping communities stay safe before, during, and after a crisis.

source: <https://phaboard.org> Emergency Preparedness and Response Factsheet



Mental Health First Aid

Two WDPH staff members were certified to teach Mental Health First Aid (MHFA), equipping staff to recognize early signs and symptoms of mental health challenges, offer support, and connect individuals to self-help or professional resources. Three MHFA trainings were held, certifying 32 city employees, including WDPH staff, the Post Emergency Response Team (PERT), and other city personnel.

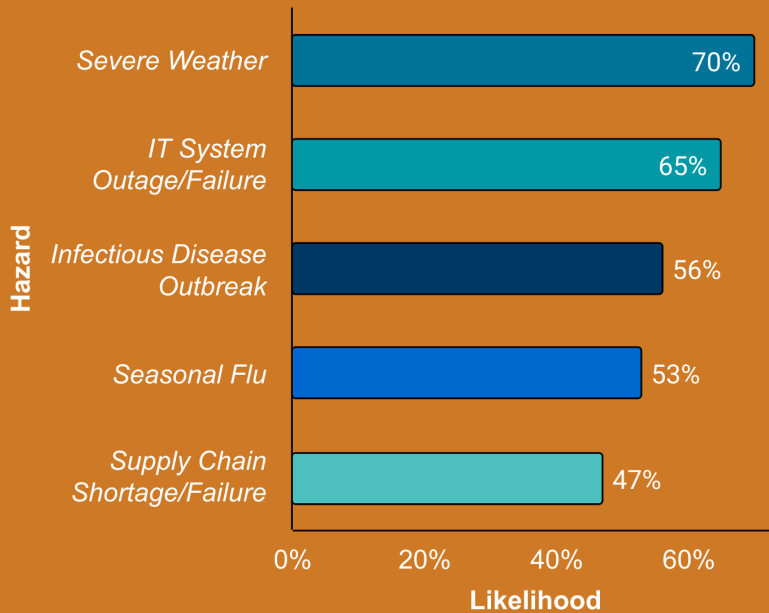


Emergency Preparedness and Response

Hazard Vulnerability Analysis Top 5 Risks

A Hazard Vulnerability Analysis (HVA) is a systematic process that identifies potential natural, man-made, and technological threats to the city, assesses their likelihood and potential severity, and evaluates the impact on operations, services, people, and infrastructure. The HVA then prioritizes emergency planning, mitigation, and response efforts.

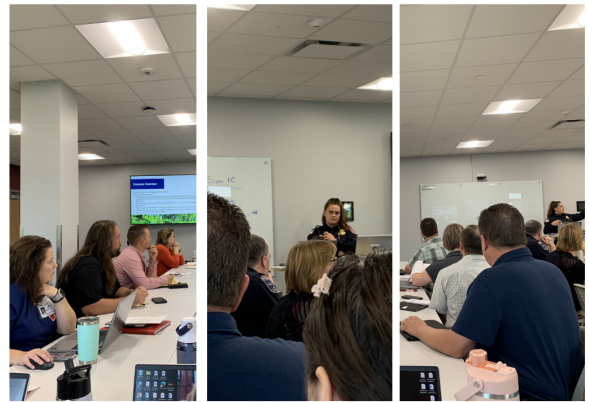
An HVA was conducted with internal and external partners to reveal the top five hazards that are most likely to have an impact on Watertown, as seen in the chart on the right.



In 2025, City Department Leadership had a workshop exercise to discuss how different departments would collaborate with each other to ensure the continuity of operations in the event an Emergency Operation Center (EOC) opened.

Continued participation with community partners was strengthened during the year through regular meetings with the Watertown Health Care Coalition and South-Central Wisconsin Healthcare Emergency Readiness Coalition.

WDPH conducted internal communication drills to ensure proper notification take occurs when emergencies take place.



WDPH staff received monthly emergency preparedness training, including but not limited to a review of the National Incident Management System and Incident Command System, RAVE, WEA VR, public health's role in recovery operations, Emergency Support Functions, the City of Watertown Family Assistance Center, and the Strategic National Stockpile.

Foundational Capability

Public Health Communications

Public health communication ensures people get the right health information, at the right time, in a way they can understand and trust. This includes working with local media, using social media, providing clear updates during emergencies, and promoting health through education and outreach. Good communication helps people make informed decisions and builds trust in public health.



source: <https://phaboard.org> Public Health Communications Factsheet

Public Health Communications

City Connection Publication

WDPH took part in the city’s bi-annual City Connections publication throughout the Spring and Fall seasons. In Spring 2025, the department shared helpful articles on topics such as car seat safety, 211 Wisconsin, proper sharps disposal, immunization clinic information, autism awareness, and emergency preparedness.

The Fall edition continued that community focus with updates on flu vaccines and pricing, tips for building home and car go-kits during Preparedness Month, and another reminder on safe sharps disposal.

To ensure every resident has access to this information, all WDPH articles were published in both English and Spanish, supporting clear communication across the entire community.



Color the Path 5K Run

Two staff members proudly represented WDPH at the first Color the Path 5K Run held at Brandt-Quirk Park. The event highlighted the wide range of mental health resources available throughout Jefferson County. Our department shared information about our Mental Health and Substance Abuse Resource Guide, which is available in both English and Spanish. We also introduced a new QR code that directs community members to our website, where all of our resource guides can be easily accessed. This convenient feature makes it easier for residents to keep important resources handy without needing a paper copy.

Social Media Engagement

WDPH engages the community on Facebook by sharing timely public health information and promoting healthy, safe lifestyles. Topics include food safety, immunizations, radon testing, emergency preparedness, extreme weather, and car seat safety. We also post breaking health updates and product recalls—such as infant formula, ground cinnamon, car seats, vegetables, and sandwich meat in 2025. Over 450 posts were shared this year, with the City amplifying urgent messages to expand their reach.



Reminder Recall Project

The Health Department implemented a reminder-recall project to support timely childhood immunizations and increase vaccine coverage. Letters were sent to families of children who had not met the recommended immunization benchmark by age two, as well as to families with children ages 4–6 who had not yet received two doses of the MMR vaccine.

To further support the families of children ages 4-6 who had not yet received two doses of MMR vaccine, a pharmacy student followed up with phone calls to provide education about the MMR vaccine, answer questions, and address concerns. This project strengthened communication with families, promoted informed decision-making, and supported on-time immunizations in the community.

2 Year Old Benchmark

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends all children have the following number of vaccine doses by 2 years.

- 4 doses of DTaP (Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis)
- 3 doses of Polio (IPV)
- 1 dose of MMR (Measles, Mumps, Rubella)
- 3 or 4 doses of Hib (Haemophilus influenzae type B)
- 3 doses of HepB (Hepatitis B)
- 1 dose of VZV (Varicella/Chickenpox)
- 4 doses of PCV (Pneumococcal Conjugate)

MMR Vaccine

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends all children have the following doses of MMR by 4 years.

- 2 doses of MMR (Measles, Mumps, Rubella)

Outreach to Families

2 Year
Benchmark
Letters
49

4-6 Year
MMR
Letters
244

Financial Comparison

Watertown Department of Public Health Financial Information 2023 to 2025			
Revenue	2023	2024	2025
Maternal & Child Health Grant	\$ 10,445.00	\$ 8,571.00	\$ 9,010.00
Prevention Block Grant	\$ 8,018.00	\$ 8,000.00	\$ 11,969.00
Family Preservation Grant	\$ 24,439.00	\$ 25,497.90	\$ 23,938.00
Immunization Grant	\$ 7,393.00	\$ 6,961.00	\$ 3,646.00
Immunization Supplement			\$ 23,375.00
Emergency Preparedness Grant	\$ 72,098.00	\$ 21,615.00	\$ 21,195.00
Radon Grant	\$ 10,475.00	\$ 5,719.00	\$ 8,126.00
Childhood Lead Grant	\$ 5,932.00	\$ 4,434.00	\$ 4,675.00
Health Prevention	\$ 1,705.00	\$ 2,711.00	\$ 1,380.00
Public Health Infrastructure			\$ 9,964.00
COVID -19 - Tracing/Monitor grant	\$ 27,694.00	\$ 25,654.00	
Workforce / COVID-19	\$ 12,463.00	\$ 36,173.00	\$ 15,584.00
ARPA / COVID-19	\$ 23,362.00	\$ 70,796.00	\$ 49,681.00
Communicable Disease	\$ 3,600.00	\$ 3,540.00	\$ 3,540.00
Seal A Smile Grant & Donations	\$ 6,427.25	\$ 6,343.00	\$ 6,645.00
Fees for Service			
Title 18 (Medicare)	\$ 744.83	\$ 106.00	\$ 105.85
Title 19 (HealthCheck/PNCC)	\$ 12,391.96	\$ 6,837.55	\$ 6,943.53
Seal A Smile MA	\$ 12,104.80	\$ 11,520.00	\$ 11,797.38
Jefferson Cty Consortium	\$ 35,000.00	\$ 35,003.00	\$ 35,002.00
Environmental Health Fees/Interest	\$ 40,682.57	\$ 37,664.92	\$ 25,903.31
Dept of Ag	\$ 304,277.00	\$ 311,145.00	\$ 295,736.00
Agent Program / DSPS/Body Art	\$ 1,401.00	\$ 1,826.00	\$ -
Transient Well Water Program	\$ 55,833.75	\$ 58,491.00	\$ 37,847.75
Water Lab fees			\$ 15,225.00
Emergency Prep Misc			\$ 19,611.00
General Health Revenue Tax & non-tax	\$ 6,375.16	\$ 11,312.04	\$ 14,976.96
Total Revenue	\$ 682,862.32	\$ 699,920.41	\$ 655,876.78
Expenses			
Environmental Carry Over	\$ (18,235.75)	\$ (75,515.00)	\$ (47,486.00)
Emergency Prep/Pandemic Carry Over	\$ (21,995.81)	\$ (147,334.00)	\$ (13,460.00)
Seal A Smile Carry Over	\$ 7,544.56	\$ 3,172.00	\$ 3,035.00
Emergency Prep Coordinator Salary	\$ 33,141.31	\$ 34,799.00	\$ 35,231.00
Contracted Salary/SAS Hygienist & Dental Asst.	\$ 3,300.50	\$ 4,200.00	\$ 4,270.00
Personnel	\$ 873,733.00	\$ 857,537.00	\$ 902,314.00
General Supplies	\$ 161,188.27	\$ 341,744.00	\$ 208,080.00
Total Expenses	\$ 1,038,676.08	\$ 1,018,603.00	\$ 1,091,984.00
City Tax Contribution	\$ (355,813.76)	\$ (318,682.59)	\$ (436,107.22)



WDPH staff celebrating Public Health Week with a member of Wisconsin Public Health Association.



WDPH honored and bid farewell to long-time Board of Health Member Andrea Turke. We thanked her for her time and advocacy on behalf of public health.



Left: Director/Health Officer Carol Quest meets with Governor Tony Evers at a bill signing ceremony for Senate Bill 31.



Right: Public Health Nurse Laci at Children's Fair with Mr. Yuk resources and interactive game.



Staff participated in Wear Red Day to promote awareness of heart health.