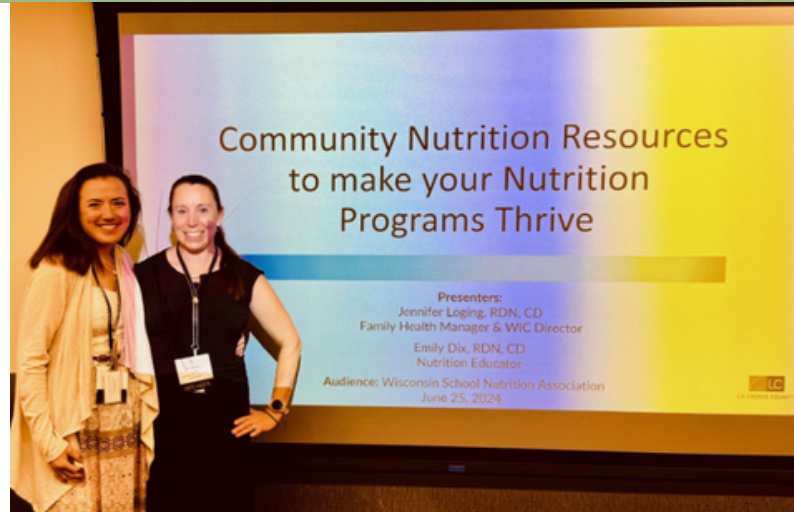


2024

Impact Report

LA CROSSE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT



Audra Martine, Health Officer



LA CROSSE COUNTY

An Equitable Approach

MESSAGE FROM THE HEALTH OFFICER



Over the past year, the La Crosse County Health Department stabilized and improved services in a variety of ways. One way we strove to improve our aim on community health outcomes in La Crosse County was to maintain a clear focus on the highest areas of need based on our Community Health Assessment. This assessment is created every 3-5 years and is used by our agency and others to select priorities for projects, to inform grant writing, and to build partnerships and collaborations that further outcomes for the most important needs in our community. Our 2022-2024 Community Health Assessment identified access to care, behavior health/addiction needs, and creating healthy environments as the most needed areas of focus that the community wished improvement in. This year completes the cycle of those priorities being worked on and ushers in a new opportunity for the community to name those areas that are both strengths and

needs for us in the upcoming period of 2025-2027. Over the past three-year period, we worked creatively with our community partners to improve access to care. We've brought our clinical services, health education, and resources to the community through our Seal-A-Smile and La Crosse Smiles dental programs, outreach to unsheltered people with our partner agencies, and by building relationships with our community residents. We also made strides related to our work in behavioral health and addiction needs in our community. Department staff worked closely with families and community members to study both incidences of suicide and of overdose deaths. Evidence-based recommendations created from these conversations will be brought forward in 2025 for continued implementation by identifying where system improvements can occur. This year we also worked collaboratively to provide a substantial amount of outreach to our local Tavern League regarding opioid addiction and harm reduction tactics. Through this work, additional doses of Narcan have been made available to businesses and individuals who have received training/education and are available to respond to instances of overdose. We also continued to lead the Alliance to Heal community collaborative project that identifies systems challenges and opportunities; this team of committed community partners has been in existence for over six years and continues to make valuable contributions to improved community services. Finally, in the area of healthy environments, the department participated in community development planning, transportation and mobility safety collaborations. We also expanded our use of epidemiology, technology and census tract mapping to improve our focus toward specific areas of our community that have less access to fresh foods, those that experience higher negative health outcomes (injuries, overdose, numbers who have higher disease impacts) and creating opportunity with well water quality data mapping. Our department continues to lean in toward our goal of working collaboratively with health system partners, community partners, schools, businesses, governmental agencies, and community members to build collective impact toward meeting the needs of our county. We look forward to the coming year and continued efforts to address our health priorities guided by data and community input. We invite you to join us in creating a healthier La Crosse County!

Yours in health,

Audra Martine, Health Officer,
amartine@lacrossecounty.org

Inside the Health Department

PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

- Through the Department's work as an agent of the state for the State of Wisconsin's Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP), **Health Department Sanitarians** provide plan review, routine inspection and complaint investigation for a variety of local establishments through the year. This includes preparation done before festivals occur to make sure food provided for the public is made in ways that meet food safety guidelines and that handwashing stations are available as required. It includes reviewing restaurant kitchen preparation areas, ensuring staff receive training on safe food handling and storage, and receiving reports of concerns with food safety or illness that may have occurred from unsafe food sources or human error in food service. Performing this work on behalf of DATCP also requires Health Department staff to complete a variety of reports and permitting activities that ensure public safety and transparency in compliance.
- A recent update by DATCP now allows the public to submit complaints to the Health Department about Food Borne Illness concerns electronically. You can access this option at: **DATCP Home Food and Recreational Safety Complaints**. Additionally, you can review past reports related to businesses on the DATCP website.
- Food service settings are only one of the licensed establishments that Sanitarians inspect; some of the other include hotels/lodging, tattoo parlors, and manufactured home parks. They also work with well diggers and septic system installers to provide service to landowners, ensuring proper setting, compliance, and permitting occurs for new projects and for ongoing maintenance. This ensures that safe drinking water and sanitation is available to home and business owners as well as to those visiting other community settings.
- Sanitarians review compliance to the regulations that keep the public and staff safe in settings where established laws or rules have been created to ensure **public safety**. Most often, the public is unaware of the work of these public servants – but their work is important to each of us daily!



2024 Highlights

1. The Health Department achieved national **Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB)** re-accreditation in 2024, renewing our commitment to quality and best practice in our work.
2. In 2024, the Department updated software that will improve customer service for **well diggers/septic pumpers** and permit seekers.
3. 1,047 doses of **Narcan** were distributed to community settings in 2024.
4. In 2024, staff working in the DATCP and DSPS licensed facility inspection programs completed **1,293 inspections** and 97 plan reviews; this work supports and ensures the safety of licensed facilities in our community.
5. WIC provided support to **2,530 individuals** in 2024, including education, access to infant nutrition and healthy foods.

Looking Ahead

- As we look forward to 2025 and beyond, a broader look at how the world of public health engages with the community is likely to occur. Federally, there are initiatives to review and update programs and systems. Within the State of Wisconsin, there are goals to improve the **sustainability** of the governmental public health system.
- A significant goal of the continual need to review and update the work of any program is to ensure the program meets its **identified objectives**. In the realm of public health, there has been specific effort to identify and report alignment toward this process. Relevancy during this time of continued system change is pivotal. Some functions that traditionally were the focus of public health agencies have over time become systematized into the work of the private sector and other health service providers. This system evolution can also present opportunities as it continues.
- In our department, we will be using local data, **community indicators**, and assessments to identify where our work can most effectively provide impact and relevant value to the health of our community. We welcome your participation in our work as we make these steps.

Employee Spotlight: Karlene Buckmaster



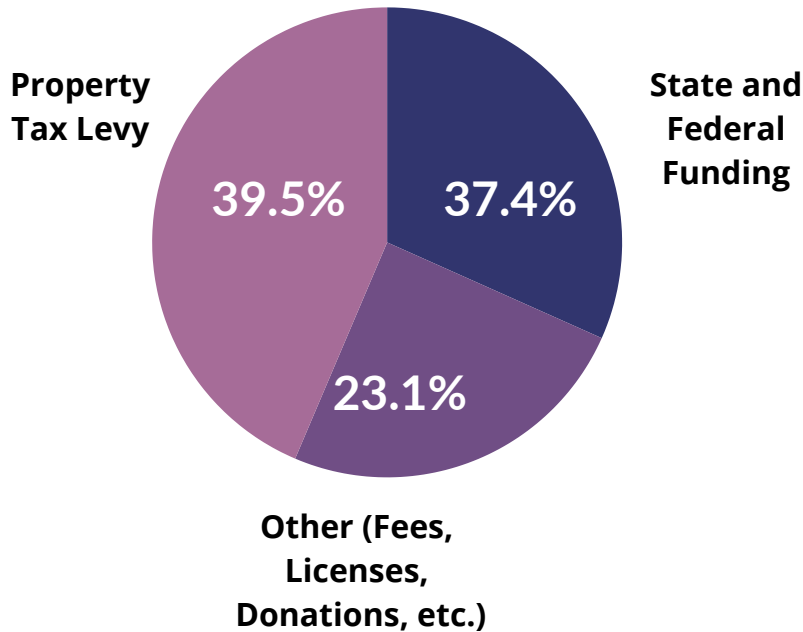
For the past three years, Karlene Buckmaster has served as a dedicated social worker with the Health Department, working closely with sanitarians who identify and address environmental hazards in homes. While these hazards could lead to a home being condemned, Karlene's goal is to help residents take proactive steps to prevent that outcome.

"Many people haven't had friends or family visit their homes in years due to unsafe conditions," Karlene explains. "When we help them achieve a successful outcome, they're often able to reconnect socially. It's pretty incredible to be part of that transformation."

Beyond housing support, Karlene plays a key role in a suicide prevention program and assists individuals in accessing essential resources. Whether helping someone navigate a crisis or connecting them with the services they need, her work is centered on empowering people to improve their well-being and build a stronger, healthier community.

2024 Budget

REVENUE & EXPENSES

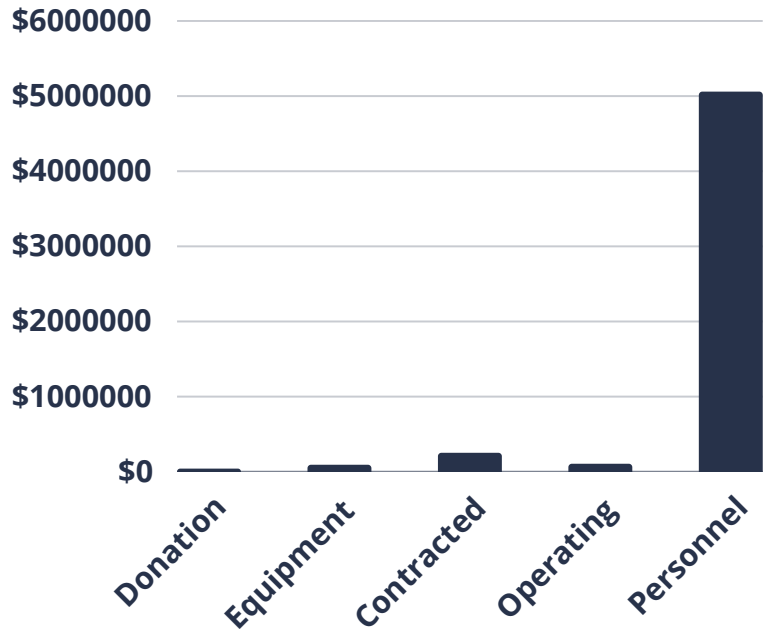


REVENUE

- Donation: \$41,843
- Grants: \$90,650
- Fund Balance: \$188,430
- Sales, Screenings, Other: \$174,358
- Licenses: \$880,049
- State & Federal Funding: \$1,762,480
- Property Taxes: \$2,425,673
- **Total: \$5,563,483**

EXPENSES

- Donation Expense: \$41,843
- Equipment: \$93,168
- Contracted Funds: \$262,400
- Operating: \$106,518
- Personnel: \$5,059,554
- **Total: \$5,563,483**



18%

Increase in breastfeeding rates among Hmong WIC families since 2022, showing benefit of new videos in Hmong language.

630

People received support from social workers to apply for health, childcare, and food assistance.

729

Students have received dental care through the Seal-A-Smile program in the 2024-2025 school year to date.



LA CROSSE COUNTY
Exceptional services. Extraordinary place.



[Website](#)



[Newsletter](#)



[Facebook](#)



[Instagram](#)