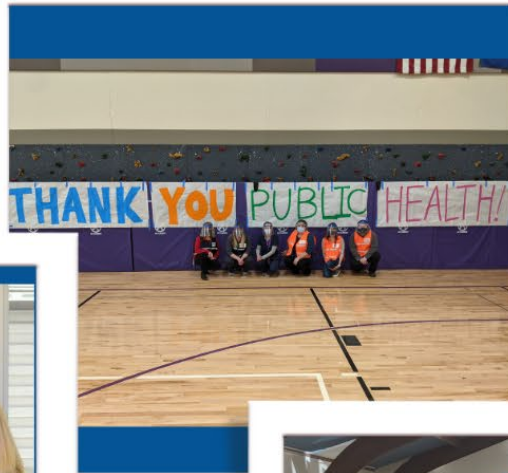


PIERCE COUNTY *Public Health*



Annual
Report

2021



March 2022

To: County Supervisors, Board of Health Members, Colleagues, Partners, and County Residents,

2021 was another year full of both hope and unexpected challenges. Pierce County led the community through the monumental task of distributing lifesaving COVID-19 vaccinations. In 2021, Pierce County provided more than 18,000 COVID-19 vaccinations to the public. Although this was a major undertaking, providing these much-anticipated vaccines to our residents was the highlight of the year for public health staff.

The Delta variant of COVID-19 required an exceptional demand upon our resources. The variant caused a large surge of cases in late 2021, leading to increased hospitalizations and deaths. During this surge, Public Health staff focused our efforts on reaching out to the county's most vulnerable residents, promoting vaccinations, coordinating early treatment options with healthcare partners, and countering misinformation commonly spread on social media platforms.

Misinformation continues to be a significant threat to the health of the public and has driven efforts to harass and intimidate public health workers nationally and locally. This trend not only threatens the ability of public health agencies to provide essential services, but it has consequences in terms of the sustainability of the public health workforce. A study conducted by the CDC found that over half of public health workers serving during the pandemic reported symptoms of at least one mental health condition, which is a higher rate than the general population, emergency response personnel, and healthcare workers. Our work going forward must include building our community's capacity to recognize and defend against misinformation. It is also vital to support our public health workforce as we rebuild essential services based on the emerging health needs of our communities.

Public Health encompasses so much more than our COVID-19 work. Pierce County Public Health works to ensure the water we drink is safe, the air we breathe is clean, that our children have a healthy start to their lives, that we have access to quality healthcare, and more. The work we do is essential, and the committed professionals who conduct that work are invaluable.

Thank you to the Pierce County Public Health team and the many partners who have supported this department over the past year.

AZ Snyder, MSc
Public Health Director/Health Officer



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OUR MISSION

To promote healthy behaviors, prevent disease and injury, and protect against environmental hazards

About Us



Mission

To promote healthy behaviors, prevent disease and injury, and protect against environmental hazards.

Vision

Healthy People in Healthy Communities

Values

We are committed to:

- **Prevention:** We proactively identify and develop strategies to prevent disease and injury and ensure an environment where the healthy choice is the easy choice.
- **Respect:** We treat our team members, clients, partners, and community members with mutual respect and sensitivity, and we recognize the importance of diversity. We respect all individuals and value their contributions.
- **Collaboration:** We work with partners and stakeholders to provide the community with the best service possible. We engage the public to address needs and foster involvement in public health.
- **Excellence:** The best policies and practices are evidence-informed, based on research with evidence that demonstrates effectiveness. Quality improvement comes from testing new ideas and approaches.

Photos courtesy of department staff and community members.

Section 1: The COVID-19 Response Continues

The COVID-19 public health emergency, first declared in 2020, continued throughout 2021. Misinformation and the rapidly changing nature of the pandemic have all contributed to PCPH's continued efforts and prioritization of local COVID-19 response efforts.

- **Emergency Information and Warning**, including social media, press releases, and website management.
- **Information Sharing** with federal, state, and local partners from a variety of sectors.
- **Medical Countermeasure Dispensing**, including vaccination clinics and coordination of emerging therapeutic treatments.
- **Surveillance and Epidemiological Investigation** in the form of COVID-19 testing and disease investigation.
- **Volunteer Management**, including staffing for large vaccine clinics.
- **Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions**, including masks, social distancing, washing hands, and staying home when sick.

Data collection, review, and dissemination remained a vital tool incorporated into all aspects of the department's COVID-19 response. Throughout the year, data was used to monitor case rates, outbreaks, and vaccination progress. Data was used by the disease investigation team to ensure priority was focused on the most vulnerable members of our community. In addition, data was utilized to ensure public health efforts were reaching community members equitably.

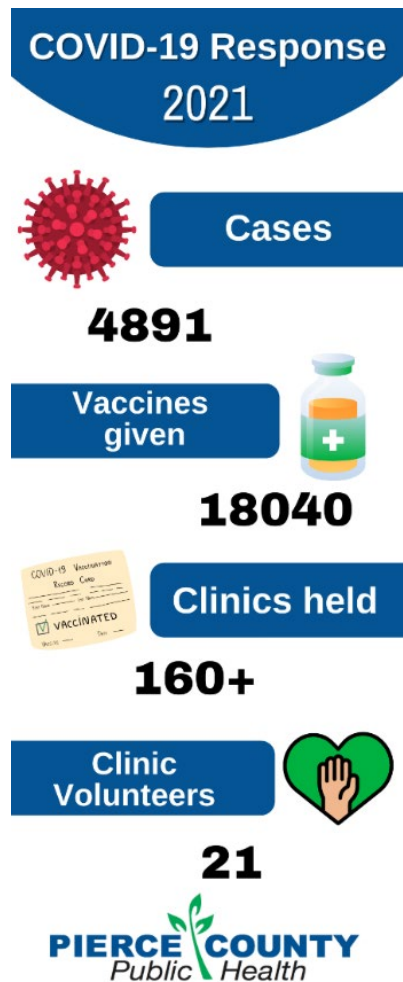
Section 2: Provision of Other Public Health Services

Public Health Staff adapted to a new normal. Work responsibilities included COVID-19 response efforts while simultaneously resuming pre-pandemic roles to ensure other essential public health services and programs continued to thrive and grow.

Pierce County Public Health Reaccreditation



In November 2021, Pierce County Public Health Department was awarded national reaccreditation status by the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB). The reaccreditation process is designed to ensure that health departments continue to evolve and advance, consequently improving the health of the population they serve. PHAB judged PCPH to have met every measure required for reaccreditation, with advocacy, commitment to evidence-based practices, and quality improvement infrastructure being noted as areas of excellence. Pierce County is only the 5th county in Wisconsin to achieve this honor.



Public Health Programs and Services

Access to Care – PCPH received 21 phone calls and had 3 office visits in 2021 to provide residents with information about health insurance plans and affordability programs. This work also includes assistance with applications and enrollments in the Federal Marketplace (Healthcare.gov).

Birth to Three Program – The program received 95 new referrals. Of those referrals, 70 developmental screenings were conducted, and 62 children received further developmental evaluation. Birth to 3 also provided 70 Individual Family Service Plan meetings (IFSP) last year and coordinated 23 Transition Planning Conference meetings with families for a smooth transition to the six Pierce County school districts. The program received a major grant related to social-emotional health of children in the program. With this grant, Birth to 3 was able to collaborate with Pierce County Human Services-CPS Social Workers to develop a referral protocol to aid in the referral process. The grant also drove an increase focus on social-emotional goals for families, and increased the percent of children who demonstrated improvement in their final social-emotional outcomes from 57% to 75% of children. The grant also facilitated screening of 25 parents for mental health conditions.

Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program – 45 women were enrolled in 2021. The breastfeeding incidence for Pierce-Pepin WIC participants in 2021 was 83.2%, which is 13.3% above the state WIC rate of 69.9%.

Child Blood Lead Testing Promotion – Instant environmental home lead test kits were distributed to WIC, Birth to 3, and daycare providers in the county to be distributed to families of 1 or 2-year-old children.

Communicable Disease Control and Prevention – In 2021, staff received 225 reports of communicable diseases (excluding cases of COVID-19), which was 38% less than in 2020. There was a significant increase in campylobacteriosis, salmonellosis and gonorrhea cases.

Emergency Preparedness – The Public Health Emergency Plan was used to guide staffing and logistics for points of dispensing (PODs) for the COVID-19 vaccination. Over 18,000 people were vaccinated through our PODs at a variety of locations around the county.

Environmental Concerns Follow-up – 15 environmental health issues were reported and investigated by Environmental Health staff. This included seven for unsafe/unsanitary living conditions, three for mold, one for indoor air quality, one for asbestos, one for septic systems, and one for pesticide application concerns.



Farmers' Market Nutrition Program – 94 families participated in this program in 2021, which provides vouchers to families enrolled in WIC.

Fit Families Supplemental Nutrition Education Program – 19 families enrolled were in FY2021. Staff promoted policy, systems, and environmental changes to help make the “healthy choice” easier in partnership with the Hunger Prevention Council of Pierce County.

Food Safety and Recreational Licensing and Inspections – Staff conducted the following inspections: 191 routine food facility inspections, 24 pre-opening food facility inspections, two investigations resulting from complaints, eight public pool inspections, nine campground inspections, four hotel/motel Inspections, and 22 bed and breakfast or tourist rooming house inspections.



Healthier Together - Pierce & St. Croix Counties – In 2021, our partners were able to continue work in the priority areas of mental health and substance use disorder. PCPH continued offering Naloxone trainings to community partners and continued distributing Narcan as needed to our trained partners. In the summer of 2021, Healthier Together conducted a community health needs assessment as the first step in designing the 2023-2025 Community Health Improvement Plan.

Immunizations – Staff responded to the pandemic by hosting over 150 COVID-19 vaccine clinics and administering 18,040 immunizations. PCPH also hosted school influenza clinics at all the public schools in Pierce County and administered a total of over 1,200 flu shots in 2021.



Injury Prevention & Occupational Health – PCPH continued to assist county residents in properly disposing needles and sharps.

Maternal and Child Health – MCH focused on COVID-19 prevention. PCPH worked closely with school nurses to provide education materials and messaging to all families. PCPH worked with day care providers to understand isolation and quarantine timelines for staff and clients, especially those too young to mask.

Pregnancy and Reproductive Health Services – Staff turnover and the ongoing pandemic's demand on staff time resulted in limited clinic hours. In response to these challenges, adaptive measures were taken to include the offering of telehealth visits. The clinic continued to provide 648 (209 telehealth) billable nursing visits to 345 clients.

Water Quality Inspections – All 76 transient-non-community water system wells throughout the county at businesses, campgrounds and parks were inspected and had bacteria and nitrate water samples conducted.

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program Services – 722 WIC participants were served. Federal waivers have allowed for extended remote benefit issuance and allowed participants to enroll or re-enroll in WIC without visiting a clinic in-person. The WIC vegetable and fruit benefits were increased from \$9-11 per month to \$35 per month in Summer 2021, before being adjusted in October 2021 to \$24 per month for children, \$43 for pregnant and postpartum women, and \$47 for breastfeeding women in the continuing resolution.

