



WASHBURN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

2021 Annual Report



CONTACT US

Washburn County Health Department

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<https://www.co.washburn.wi.us/departments/health-human-services/public-health>

Hours:

Monday-Friday

8:00am-12:00pm

1:00pm-4:30pm

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ABOUT US

2021 continued to revolve around COVID-19. Emergency Use Authorization of COVID Vaccine was a turning point in the pandemic. The vaccine was rolled out by tiers, due to limited vaccine supply. Spooner Health and Indianhead Medical Center assisted in vaccinating Health Care Workers and First Responders. When vaccine was made available to 65+, the Health Dept. opened a Community Vaccination Clinic site, assisted by volunteers from Faith Lutheran Church, Shell Lake Lions, and the Spooner/Trego Lions.

The Pandemic waned in June and July, but returned with the Delta Variant in August, which continued to cause high case counts through the end of the year.

Staffing changes made response more challenging. Tim Nickell, the full-time Public Health Nurse, left in November to become the full-time jail nurse. Tim Reeber's Limited Term Employment as the COVID case investigator ended in September. He was replaced by two part time case investigators; Mary Slisz-Chucka and Bethany Deneen.

Dr. Beverly Bohac, our long-time Medical Advisor, retired in November. We are very grateful for her years of service. She was replaced by Dr. Kristen Dall-Winther.

WHO WE ARE

STAFF

Jim LeDuc, MSW, APSW

Director, Health and Human Services

Cheri Nickell, RN, BSN

Supervisor/Health Officer

Julie Erickson, RDN, CD

WIC Director/WIC Nutritionist

Cassidy Watson, MPH

Public Health Specialist

Tim Nickell, RN, BSN

Public Health Nurse

Joan Romanowski

Account Clerk II

Tim Reeber, RN, BSN

LTE COVID Case Investigator

Mary Slisz-Chucka

LTE COVID Case Investigator

Bethany Deneen

LTE COVID Case Investigator

VOLUNTARY ADVISORS

Beverly Bohac, MD

Public Health Medical Advisor 01/01-10/31/2021

Kristen Dall-Winther, MD

Public Health Medical Advisor 11/01-12/31/2021

Jeffrey Dunham, MD

Jail Medical Advisor

Allen Pederson, DVM

Veterinary Advisor



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@WashburnCoHealthDept

<https://www.facebook.com/WashburnCoHealthDept/>

COALITION MEMBERSHIPS

The Washburn County Health Department is a member of the following coalitions:

- Child Death Review Team (CDR)
- Children’s Coordinated Services Team (CCST)
- Continuum of Care (COC)
- Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC)
- Multidisciplinary Team (Includes Drug Endangered Children)
- Northwest WI Healthcare Emergency Readiness Coalition (NWWI HERC)
- Washburn County Community Alliance for Prevention
- Mental Health Task Force of Washburn County
- WI Association of Local Health Departments & Boards (WALHDAB)
- Western WI Public Health Readiness Consortium (WWPHRC)
- WI Family Planning Reproductive Health Association (WFPRHA)

SERVICES

COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Local health departments are required under Wisconsin Statute 251 to regularly undergo the “Community Health Improvement Process,” or the process of conducting a Community Health Assessment followed by developing and implementing a Community Health Improvement Plan. A Community Health Improvement Plan is a long-term, systematic effort to address problems based on the results of community health assessment activities and the community health improvement process.

In partnership with Spooner Health, a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) was conducted during the fall of 2021. Planning for the 2021 CHNA was headed by a Steering Committee consisting of Spooner Health’s Cara Walters, Marketing and Public Relations Director, and Washburn County Health Department’s Cassidy Watson, MPH, Public Health Specialist. A total of 320 surveys were completed by Washburn County residents. The results of these surveys will be used during a Prioritization Meeting to be held in January 2022 during which the priorities for the 2022-2025 Community Health Implementation Plan will be determined.

The 2015 Community Health Assessment and 2016-2021 Community Health Improvement Plan can be viewed at <http://www.co.washburn.wi.us/departments/health-human-services/public-health>

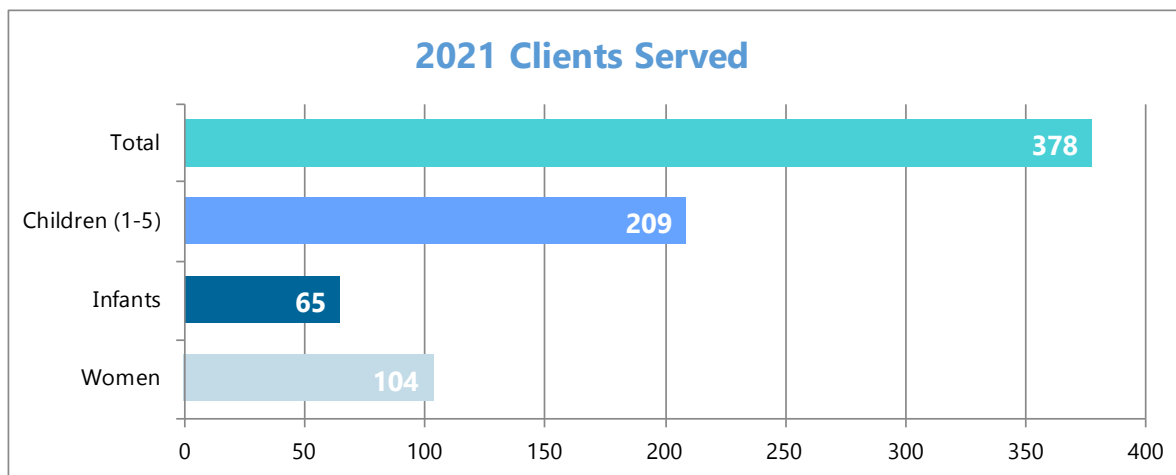
Participating Organizations

- ◆ Washburn County Health Department
- ◆ Washburn County Human Services Department
- ◆ Washburn County Board of Supervisors
- ◆ Washburn County ADRC
- ◆ Spooner Health
- ◆ Northlakes Community Clinic
- ◆ Spooner Memorial Library
- ◆ Lakeland Family Resource Center
- ◆ Red Cross Pharmacy
- ◆ Essentia Health
- ◆ Indianhead Medical Center
- ◆ UW Extension
- ◆ Mental Health Task Force of Washburn County
- ◆ Washburn County Community Alliance for Prevention

WIC (WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN)

The WIC Program is a Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children. WIC helps income eligible pregnant, breastfeeding and postpartum women, infants, and children up to age 5 years who have a health risk due to inadequate nutrition.

The program improves pregnancy outcomes, reduces infant mortality and provides infants and children with a healthy start in life by improving poor or inadequate diets. In 2021, **378** participants received nutrition education and food benefits. WIC food benefits support our local businesses. In 2021, redeemed food benefits generated **\$93,933.97** in revenue at grocery stores throughout Washburn County.



Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP)

Through the WIC FMNP, participants are provided food benefits to be redeemed at local farmers' markets. The WIC FMNP benefits both WIC participants and local farmers. In 2021, WIC FMNP redeemed benefits that totaled **\$1,980**. In the summer of 2021, *every* eligible family member was offered \$30 to spend at local farmers' markets. In the recent past, the allotment had been \$25-35 *per family*.

Since March 23, 2020, USDA has continued to extend waivers to allow 1) non-physical presence for certifications, 2) one authorized person to do both certifications and issuance of benefits without file reviews required, 3) local agency monitoring to be done without on-site visit, and 4) no on-site visits for vendor authorizations.

Although the program has seen some benefits to remote operations, a transition back to in-person services is desirable and planned. There are multiple considerations for both staff and participants in order to provide a safe environment.

Guidelines include:

- Social distancing
- Spacing between appointments (which may require adjustment of clinic hours)
- Offering some remote appointments
- Wearing PPE
- Maintaining a sanitary clinic environment
- Communicating to families about staying home when sick
- Limiting number of family members coming to an appointment
- Having families bring their own toys/books

For now, virtual visits continue. We request that participants provide referral data from Primary Care Provider for heights, weights, hemoglobin results. If not available, this data is waived. We do now require proof of pregnancy, but this is provided remotely, along with proofs of identity, residence, and income.

As part of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA), Wisconsin WIC was able to increase the fresh, canned and frozen fruit and vegetable benefit for children and women. \$9 per month for children and \$11/month for women was adjusted \$35/month for both. As expected, WIC redemptions for fruits and vegetables at grocery stores doubled over the period from June through September.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

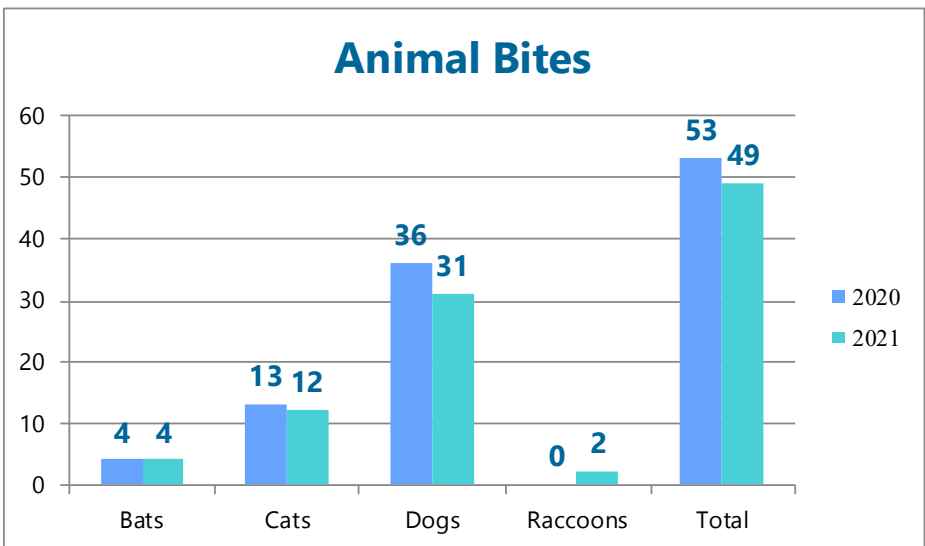
Wisconsin Statute 252 requires that local hospitals and clinics report communicable diseases to Local Health Departments for investigation and surveillance. Preventing the spread of disease remains a public health priority. In 2021 the Washburn County Health Department conducted **313 Non-COVID** communicable disease investigations, confirming **213** cases.

Tick-borne diseases, including Lyme, Ehrlichiosis, and Babesiosis, continued to account for almost half of the reported diseases.

RABIES CONTROL

State Statute 254 requires that the Health Department investigate all animal bites/exposures involving humans. Rabies is almost always fatal, unless post-exposure prophylaxis (treatment) is given.

Public Health Nurses provide education regarding the need for human medical evaluation. They also order and enforce animal quarantine or rabies testing. All domestic animals, including dogs, cats, and ferrets, must be quarantined for 10 days following a bite or other exposure to a human. If an animal has a current rabies vaccine, they may be allowed to be quarantined at home. Unvaccinated animals must be quarantined at the Washburn County Area Humane Society at the owner's expense.



Wild animals involved in a bite to either humans or pets are humanely euthanized and tested for rabies. In 2021 **49** animal bites/exposures were reported and investigated. **No animals** tested positive for rabies.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Under Wisconsin Statute 254, the Health Department is responsible for investigation and abatement of immediate Human Health Hazards to the public.

Washburn County Health Department conducted **2** immediate Human Health Hazard investigations in 2021. One involved blue-green algae blooms. Information about blue-green algae blooms can be found at <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/water/bg-algae/index.htm> The other involved Carbon Monoxide poisoning. Information about CO can be found at <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/air/co.htm>

CHILDHOOD LEAD MONITORING

The Washburn County Health Department provides Childhood Lead Screening Surveillance and Lead Abatement under Wisconsin State Statute 254. There is no safe level of lead in the human body. Even very low levels of lead can cause permanent brain damage and negatively affect health throughout life. The Centers for Disease Control defines lead poisoning as a blood lead level of 5 mcg or greater.

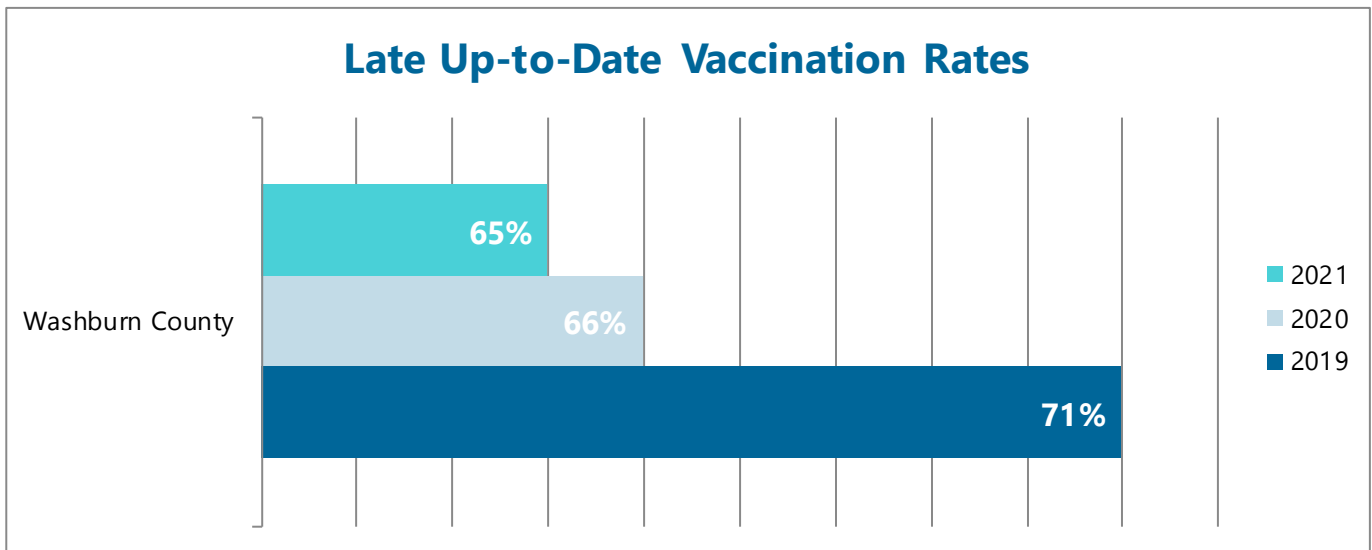
There were **0** children with elevated blood lead levels in Washburn County in 2021.

IMMUNIZATIONS

Under Wisconsin Statute Chapter 252 and in conjunction with the Vaccine for Children Program and the Wisconsin Immunization Program, The Health Department offers recommended childhood vaccines to children 0-18 years who meet program guidelines. In addition, a limited selection of vaccines are available to adults with no vaccine insurance coverage.

As part of our chronic and communicable disease surveillance duties, we monitor the immunization records and send vaccine due letters quarterly to the parents of all Washburn County children under the age of three. In 2021 [941](#) total letters were sent to parents.

In 2021, [59%](#) of all Washburn County 2 years olds were up-to-date, with [65%](#) considered late up-to-date (completed by age 3), a 2% decrease from 2020, and a 7% decrease from 2019. Nationally, on-time vaccination rates have declined as parents have delayed seeking care due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Washburn County's up-to-date rate is well below the **75%-95% required rate** for herd immunity (depending on disease and vaccine), which is of concern as it means Washburn County is at risk for a vaccine-preventable disease outbreak, such as measles.



ADDRESSING THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC

The Health Department completed activities related to the Overdose Data to Action (Opioid Awareness) grant through the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Opioid Harm Prevention Program (OHPP). The grant expired August 2021.

Between January and July 2021, [5](#) social media advertising campaigns were conducted on Facebook and Instagram, primarily focusing on safe disposal and storage of opioid prescriptions in the home. The results of the advertising campaigns are: [288,593](#) Impressions (total views), an average Reach (unique users viewing the ads) of [13,319](#), and [1,453](#) clicks by users on linked pages within the advertisements.

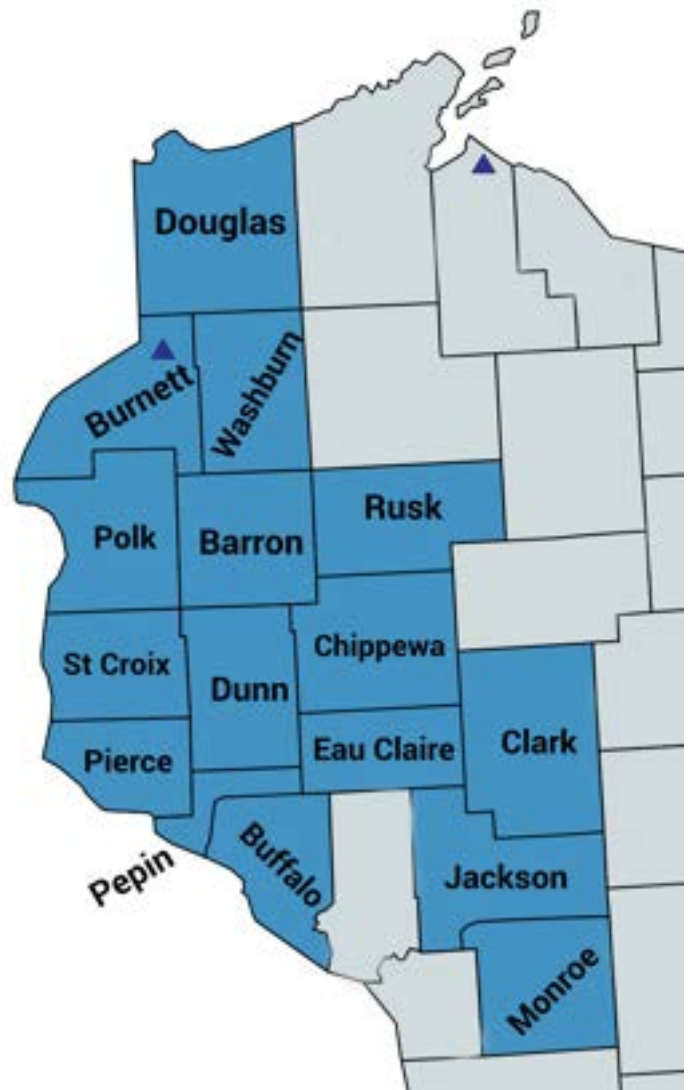
PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Washburn County Health Department engages in a continuous planning process with community partners in preparation to respond to public health emergencies, from large scale disease outbreaks to acts of bioterrorism to ice storms.

The Health Department is a member of the [Western Wisconsin Public Health Readiness Consortia \(WWPHRC\)](#), a multi-county coalition that supports public health emergency preparedness. The WWPHRC has managed to remain a model and resource for member agencies, Wisconsin, and the country in the area of exceptional public health preparedness planning, training, exercising, and response since 2003.

Currently, the WWPHRC has sixteen local public health agencies and two tribal public health agencies as members, working hand in hand with the Northwest Wisconsin Healthcare Emergency Readiness Coalition and the multiple sectors it represents. This seamless approach provides a foundation for alignment of planning, efficiency of resources, removal of redundancy, and exceptional information sharing before, during, and after exercises and real events.

The WWPHRC was instrumental in allowing the western region to have a uniform response to COVID. The Consortia provided a forum for addressing the unique needs of the Northwestern Counties, as well as providing communication tools for use with our partners and the public.



Triangles denote Tribal Health members:
St. Croix Tribal Health Clinic
Bad River Health & Wellness Center

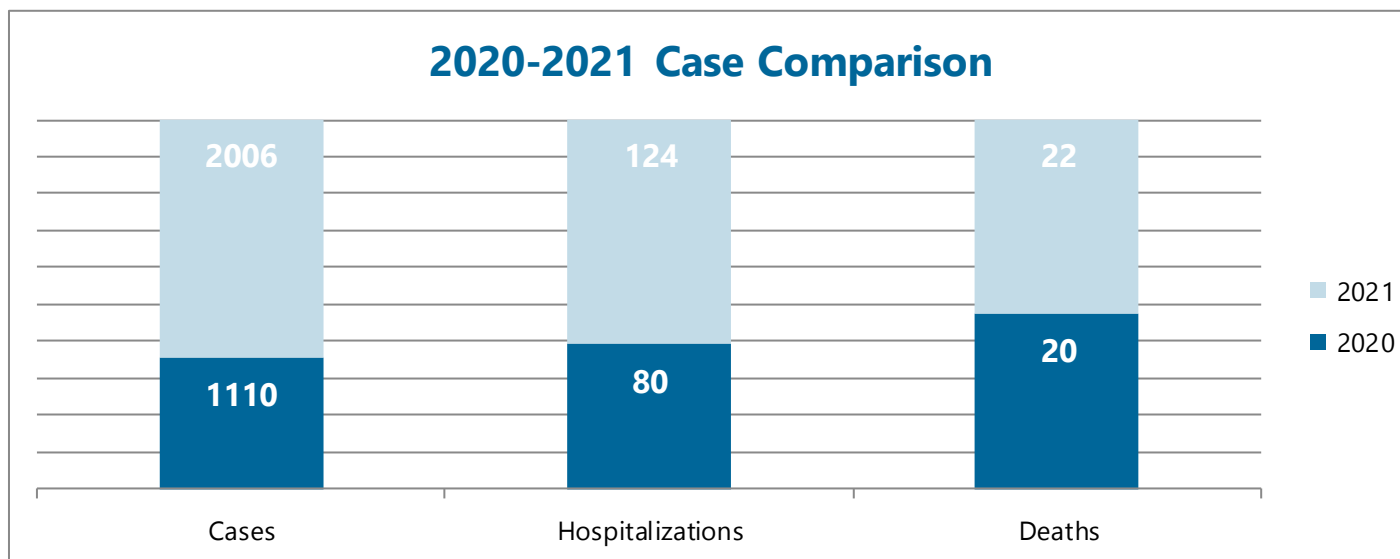
COVID-19: 2021 REVIEW

YEAR-END NUMBERS (01/01/2021 THROUGH 12/31/2021)

Total Cases (confirmed + probable): 2,006

Total Hospitalizations: 124

Total Deaths: 22



PARTNERS IN THE COMMUNITY

In 2021, we provided guidance on preventing spread of disease, testing, quarantine/isolation, best practices for employers and schools, vaccination, Personal Protective Equipment and masking, travel, and many other questions that have been directed to the Health Department. We also worked with partners to provide vaccination. Some of the partners we worked with in 2021 include:

- ◆ Emergency Management
- ◆ Local Media
- ◆ Faith Lutheran Church
- ◆ Northlakes Community Clinic - Minong
- ◆ Spooner Health
- ◆ Indianhead Medical Center
- ◆ Essentia Health – Spooner Clinic
- ◆ Red Cross & Shell Lake Pharmacy
- ◆ Washburn County School Districts
- ◆ Washburn County COC
- ◆ Law Enforcement
- ◆ Fire & EMS
- ◆ Municipal Governments
- ◆ Washburn County Coroner
- ◆ Skilled Nursing Facilities/Assisted Living Facilities
- ◆ Shell Lake, Spooner, Birchwood, and Northwood School Districts
- ◆ Washburn County Unit on Aging
- ◆ Lakeland Family Resource Center
- ◆ Washburn County Tourism
- ◆ Washburn County Economic Development Corporation
- ◆ Spooner Memorial Library
- ◆ Embrace
- ◆ Indianhead Community Action Agency
- ◆ Numerous Washburn County businesses
- ◆ Shell Lake Lions Club
- ◆ Spooner/Trego Lions Club

VACCINE

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) and Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) rolled out vaccination to the public to prioritized groups based on risk level. Individuals became eligible for vaccination in the following order:

- 1) Frontline healthcare workers; long-term care residents
- 2) Police and fire personnel; adults 65 years and older
- 3) People enrolled in Medicaid long-term care programs, such as IRIS, Family Care, Children's Waiver, and Katie Becket; utility and communications workers who cannot social distance at work; drivers for public transit who have frequent contact with members of the public; food supply chain workers, including farm and agricultural workers, livestock veterinarians and breeders, food production workers, retail food workers, and hunger relief personnel; non-frontline essential health care personnel; congregate living facility staff and residents; individuals with certain medical conditions
- 4) All members of the general public aged 18+
- 5) Children 16-17 (Emergency Use Authorization granted to Pfizer April 2021)
- 6) Children 12-15 (Emergency Use Authorization granted to Pfizer May 2021)
- 7) Children 5-11 (Emergency Use Authorization granted to Pfizer October 2021)

Washburn County Health Department held its first mass vaccination clinic on January 28, 2021 and its last mass vaccination clinic on May 28, 2021. 1,936 clients were registered through the web and phone registration system developed by the Health Department for mass vaccination clinics. Mass clinics were staffed by Health and Human Services Department staff and numerous volunteers from Faith Lutheran Church, Spooner/Trego Lions Club, and Shell Lake Lions Club.

Following the conclusion of mass clinics, limited vaccination was available weekly at the Health Department until November when the full time public health position was vacated.

By the end of 2021, approximately 64% of Washburn County residents had received at least one dose of vaccine while approximately 61% had completed the vaccination series (does not include booster doses).

FOR YOUR AWARENESS: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS, COVID-19

Why might WCHD guidance be different than CDC guidance?

The Washburn County Health Department is obligated by Wisconsin Law [Statute 252.03(3)] to follow Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) policies in place regarding COVID-19 and other communicable diseases.

What is the difference between a **Confirmed** case and a **Probable** case?

Cases are classified using the [national case definition](#) established by CDC and the CSTE (Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists).

- **Confirmed:** individuals who have a positive **molecular** test result detecting the SARS-CoV-2 virus (see testing information on next page), with or without the presence of symptoms.
- **Probable:** individuals with a positive non-confirmatory test (**antigen**, see testing information on next page) OR close contacts of lab confirmed cases who have developed symptoms but have not been tested

What are the different types of tests and how long does it take to get results?

There are two types of tests used to diagnose COVID-19: **Molecular (confirmatory)** and **Antigen (non-confirmatory)**

- **Molecular** tests are the most accurate type of test used to diagnose active COVID-19 infection by detecting the virus's genetic material. These tests are often referred to as PCR or NAAT tests and use nasopharyngeal, nasal, or throat swabs in the majority of tests, with some tests using saliva. Samples must be analyzed in a reference lab. **Molecular tests can take anywhere from a day (in some locations) to a week (depending on the capacity of the reference lab) to return results.** Positive results from molecular tests result in "confirmed" case status.
- **Antigen** tests detect specific proteins from the virus and are less accurate than molecular tests. Positive results are usually highly accurate, particularly in symptomatic individuals, but providers may order a confirmatory molecular test in situations where a symptomatic individual tests negative OR where an asymptomatic individual tests positive, depending on the circumstances leading to testing. **Antigen tests can return results in as fast as 15-30 minutes** using nasal or nasopharyngeal swabs, depending on the specific test used. Positive results from antigen tests result in "probable" case status.

Antibody tests may show if you have been infected by COVID-19 in the past. These tests are run using blood samples and have varying degrees of accuracy. Antibody tests cannot be used to diagnose COVID-19. Researchers do not know how long antibodies stay in the body following infection by the SARS-CoV-2 virus and do not know if antibodies give you protective immunity against the virus. Individuals who have had a previous COVID-19 infection are advised to continue taking protective measures, such as physical distancing, mask wearing, and hand hygiene.

How are COVID-19 deaths reported?

Cases are classified using the [national case definition](#) established by CDC and the CSTE (Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists).

- **COVID-19 Deaths:** deaths among confirmed cases of COVID-19 that meet the vital records criteria set forth by the CDC and Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) case definition. Those are deaths that have a death certificate that lists COVID-19 disease or SARS-CoV-2 as an underlying cause of death or a significant condition contributing to death.
- **Probable Deaths:** deaths among probable cases of COVID-19 that meet at least one of the following criteria:
 - ◇ test positive using an antigen test method
 - ◇ have symptoms of COVID-19 AND known exposure to COVID-19, meeting the national case definition of a probable case (linked above)
 - ◇ COVID-19 or SARS-CoV-2 is listed on the death certificate

Deaths among people with COVID-19 that were the result of non-COVID reasons (e.g., accident, overdose, etc.) are not included as a COVID-19 death or a Probable death.

DATA KEY

Definitions for data markers included in WCHD weekly data updates.

Total Cases: includes **confirmed cases** (confirmed by positive molecular tests) and **probable cases** (close contacts of lab confirmed cases who have developed symptoms but have not been tested OR an individual with a positive non-confirmatory test result, i.e. positive antigen test).

Deaths: confirmed cases of COVID-19 (positive molecular test) that result in the patient's death and probable cases of COVID-19 that result in the patient's death and meet one of the following criteria: 1) tested positive by antigen test method, 2) COVID-19 or SARS-CoV-2 listed on the death certificate, or 3) had symptoms of COVID-19 and known exposure to COVID-19, as defined under "probable" above.

Recovered: cases who have met the criteria for release from isolation and are no longer infectious.

Active: cases of COVID-19 who are still in isolation during their infectious period and/or have not met the symptom improvement criteria for release

Negative Cases: number of people with negative diagnostic test results.

Ever Hospitalized: individuals hospitalized specifically for COVID-19 treatment who were inpatient for 24 hours or greater. ***Not included in WCHD weekly data updates**

Most recent daily and weekly data updates can be found on the Washburn County Coronavirus Outbreak page: <https://www.co.washburn.wi.us/news/public-health/Coronavirus-Outbreak>