

Tony Evers
Governor



DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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December 13, 2019

Chris Doubek, Chair
Portage County Health and Human Services Board
2225 Fourth Avenue
Stevens Point, WI 54481

Dear Mr. Doubek:

The Department of Health Services (DHS) congratulates the Portage County Health and Human Services Division of Public Health for demonstrating the infrastructure and program capacity to be certified as a Level III Health Department. I am happy to report the Portage County Division of Public Health provided all services required by statute and rule.

I want to acknowledge the work of the Portage County Division of Public Health staff. Gary Garske, health officer, did an excellent job of providing quality evidence of meeting statutes and rules. I also appreciate the support of the Portage County Health and Human Services Board for maintaining a strong public health department. I am sure that with ongoing support, the Portage County Division of Public Health will continue to protect and promote the health of the people in your jurisdiction.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jeanne F. Ayers".

Jeanne F. Ayers
State Health Officer
Division Administrator

c: Gary Garske, Health Officer
Allen Haga, City/County Board Chair
Angela Nimsgern Regional Director



DHS 140 Review Notes

Portage County Health and Human Services Division of Public Health

Date: November 4, 2019

Onsite Visit Participants

Local Health Department Representatives	
Name	Title
Ray Przybelski	Director, Portage County Health and Human Services
Gary Garske	Division of Public Health (PCDPH) Manager and Portage County Health Officer
Melanie Baehr	Public Health Nursing Supervisor, PCDPH
Lori Kawleski	Public Health Planner, PCDPH
Donna Warzynski	Health and Human Services Board citizen member
Elizabeth Beck	Community Health Planner, PCDPH
Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS), Division of Public Health (DPH) Staff	
Name	Bureau/Office and Title
Matthew Collie	Public Health Program and Policy Analyst, Office of Policy and Practice Alignment (OPPA)
Angela Nimsgern	Director, Northern Region, OPPA
Charlotte Ahrens	Public Health Nurse Consultant, Northern Region, OPPA
Jamie LaBrasca	Office Manager, Northern Region, OPPA
Jim Lawrence	Public Health Educator, Northern Region, OPPA
Christie Oestreich	Health Educator, Northern Region, Immunization Program, Bureau of Communicable Disease

Contact Information for Post DHS 140 Review Correspondence

Name and address of board of health chair:	Name and address of county board chair, mayor or other local official:
Chris Doubek 2225 Fourth Avenue Stevens Point, WI 54481	Allen Haga, Portage County Board Chairperson 2140 Norway Pine Drive Plover, WI 54467

Highlights, Strengths, and Impacts of Efforts from Level I, II, or III

Area	Highlight(s)
Emergency Preparedness and Response	PCDPH collaborates across the county, region, and state to strengthen plans, processes, and systems that allow the health department to prepare for and respond to public health emergencies. They are active in the regional PLOW-V Coalition (Portage, Lincoln, Oneida, Wood and Vilas). Through work with the Red Cross they developed a Family Assistance Center plan and shared statewide
Health Promotion	A strength of the PCDPH has been improving participation in the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). Through partnering with the area school districts in four years YRBS participation has expanded: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YRBS participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2016 – Public school districts participated in YRBS ○ 2018 – All school districts participated ○ 2019 – All school districts participated and added middle schools
Policy and Planning	To promote land use planning and sustainable development activities to create positive health outcomes PCDPH has a groundwater resource specialist. Through local and grant funds they have been able to do testing of private wells. Every five years PCDPH surveys another sector of the county for nitrates.
Performance Management and Quality Improvement	The PCDPH has made quality improvement (QI) a centerpiece of its work. The PCDPH uses self-assessments, recent work achieving PHAB accreditation, delegated authority reviews (such as by DATCAP) and program audits to identify areas of improvement. Ten individuals identified as the QI team have been trained and maintain the quality improvement plan. The PCDPH applied for, and was accepted as a member of the DHS Clear Impact partner pilot to improve QI and performance management.

Best Practice Opportunities for Public Health Practice, Function, and Staffing

Area	Opportunities
Surveillance and Investigation	When asked about methods used to ensure assessment data is reflective of all populations within the jurisdiction there was reference to places data is reported out (Annual Report, contract reports) but not methods.
Other Disease Prevention	The Portage County Division of Public Health self-identified this area as an area where they are working to improve. Adult chronic disease prevention is an important issue in the community, and the PCDPH wants to do more work to improve public health here. The PCDPH is finding it needs to do more work on increasing access to care: DHS used to fund a navigator through PCDPH to assist the community with health coverage options through the state and federal health insurance marketplace, however, that position funding has lapsed. Lastly, the PCDPH is internally reviewing their public health messaging regarding newborns in the wake of four recent SIDS deaths.

Area	Opportunities
Public Health 3.0	PCDPH described challenges the LHD is experiencing in embracing operations under Public Health 3.0. Concerns expressed in areas of assuring access to care without providing too much direct service. Community Health Planners/Strategists are funded by local funds. School nurses are doing more case management than they previously have done. The sense is direct service provided is at the request of community.
Performance Management and Quality Improvement	An area of improvement PCDPH self-identified was the need to identify more QI projects focused on population health. PCDPH staff has stated the language and formalized process of QI can be scary. Consequently, PCDPH is working to make QI less scary, and plans to do basic QI training again as a review and refresh for staff. The QI plan will be reviewed and revised in 2020.

Discussion Notes

Area	Summary
Jurisdiction and Structure	<p>The Portage County Division of Public Health serves a county of about 70,000 people, mostly rural, with UW- Stevens Point and Midstate Technical College bringing in 5,000 students. The county contains Hmong and Latinx populations.</p> <p>Portage County has a joint health and human services department employing 23 FTEs over 35 regular and contracted positions. Major work done in the public health division includes environmental health (DATCAP, DNR, and DSPS agent), school nursing, Seal-a-smile fluoride treatment, immunization clinics, and WIC among others.</p>
Board of Health	<p>The Portage County Health and Human Services Board's nine members meet twice a month: six elected county board member and three citizens. All are appointed by the county executive. The board mostly reflects the diversity of Portage County with members representing Hmong residents, people with physical disabilities, both male and female representation both urban and rural perspectives. Most of the board consists of retired individuals; the board could strive to better reflect the working age population of the county.</p> <p>The board reviews all employment vacancies and is responsible for the confirmation of the local health officer and environmental health director. The board is policy-making; the PCDPH does not adopt any policy without the input of the board. To that end, the board receives quarterly updates on programs and the PCDPH's budget is heard publicly annually.</p> <p>The board supports public health issues, recently addressing groundwater issues.</p>

Area	Summary
<p>Surveillance and Investigation</p>	<p>The Portage County Division of Public Health collects information from a wide range of sources including YRBS, WEDSS, EH inspections, and WIR/RECIN. Policies on investigations were updated in the past year as part of the PCDPH’s successful seeking of PHAB accreditation. PCDPH makes an effort to ensure assessment data is reflective of all populations, noting that more could be done in this area.</p>
<p>Communicable Disease Control</p>	<p>The Portage County Division of Public Health ensures surveillance, investigation, prevention, and control of communicable diseases throughout Portage County. Gary Garske, as local health officer, serves on the local Infection Control Board. The PCDPH provides immunization clinics in all school districts as well as quarterly reports and data on communicable diseases to local providers.</p> <p>The public health nurses PCPHD provides to schools under contract allows the public health division to provide education, prevent, and control potential communicable disease outbreaks such as MRSA on wrestling mats, hockey team members sharing water bottles, band members spreading pertussis, etc.</p>
<p>Other Disease Prevention</p>	<p>The Portage County Division of Public Health has undertaken work to prevent or reduce adult chronic disease and excessive weight. The PCDPH is looking into family-wide approaches such as policies on school breakfast, farmers market EBT, and using diabetes education in school to help handle home environments.</p> <p>PCDPH staff participate in injury prevention and control efforts in the community addressing suicide, child deaths and child passenger safety.</p> <p>In developing and implementing other disease prevention interventions, the primary step is to connect eligible residents to economic support such as Badger Care, Food Share, WIC, and the new Comprehensive Community Services mental health program. In the Almond School District, free flu vaccines assist Latinx families, and PCDPH provides interpreters who can speak both Hmong and Spanish. Ongoing efforts are made for the PNCC and WIC programs to go to residents to ease travel barriers.</p> <p>The PCDPH self-identified this area as an area where they are working to improve. See “Best Practice Opportunities for Public Health Practice, Function, and Staffing” for more information.</p>

Area	Summary
<p>Emergency Preparedness and Response</p>	<p>The Portage County Division of Public Health is a member of the multi-county PLOWV (Portage, Langlade, Oneida Wood, and Vilas) coalition and works with PLOWV and state partners to meet emergency preparedness requirements. Portage County DPH's family assistance center plan for identifying service needs was shared as a statewide template. Portage County DPH has also done work to assist vulnerable populations during emergencies, implementing a process to collect addresses of residents on oxygen that would need supplies during an extended power outage (summer of 2019) and bridging communication gaps with in-house Hmong and Hispanic translators.</p> <p>Emergency preparedness and response is a strength of the PCDPH. See "Highlights, Strengths, and Impacts of Efforts from Level I, II, or III" for more information.</p>
<p>Health Promotion</p>	<p>The Portage County Division of Public Health promotes health promotion in a variety of events and mediums. The PCDPH attends fairs around specific topics: baby fairs, mommy fest (PNCC and WIC), safety fair, UW health fair, and the county fair. They also target specific groups for education such as AODA awareness at community events, providing tick removal kits at campgrounds, have EH staff at cultural festivals, and offer a camp safety event for recreational education camps. The public health division has been asked to provide public health overviews at community organizations such as Rotary International, Kiwanis, and UW-Stevens Point.</p> <p>A strength of the PCDPH has been improving participation in the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). See "Highlights, Strengths, and Impacts of Efforts from Level I, II, or III" for more information.</p>
<p>Human Health Hazard Control</p>	<p>The Portage County Division of Public Health investigates complaints of human health hazards within 48 hours, and if identified as a health hazard, orders abatement. The public health division has good partnerships in the community, receiving calls from local fire, police, planning and zoning, municipal governments and citizens.</p>

Area	Summary
<p>Level III: Environmental Health Program</p>	<p>The Portage County Division of Public Health contracts with the Wisconsin state agencies DATCP, DNR, and DSPS to provide for environmental health services. The PCDPH sanitarian is also a lead risk assessor. The environmental health expertise of the PCDPH is recognized by other divisions of Portage County government, as the local housing authority asked PCDPH to assist with implementing federal requirements and PCDPH works with municipal zoning authorities regarding tourist rooming houses and online rentals such as AirBNBs.</p> <p>All county level regulations the PCDPH administers are proposed to the Health and Human Services Board and then adopted by the Portage County Board. The PCDPH does water testing, distributes radon gas test kits, and ensures follow-up testing for diseases like Lyme and West Nile Virus. The PCDPH sanitarian sat on the LIFE report data group.</p>
<p>Policy and Planning</p>	<p>The Portage County Division of Public Health conducts its community health assessment (CHA) in coordination with the Portage County LIFE report which is conducted by a wide range of partners in government, health care, and nonprofit settings. About 4,000 surveys were sent to the community with a return rate of about 43% in 2017. The main public health indicators selected - AODA, mental health, affordable housing, and financial stability – were then used to create a community health improvement plan (CHIP) with involvement of community members. When creating a strategic plan PCDPH sought feedback from external stakeholders.</p> <p>The PCDPH has identified a need to reduce the number of priority areas in their CHIP. The 2012 LIFE report included 70 indicators which the community then identified five calls to action. That proved too many to effectively implement. The goal for the 2017 LIFE report was to identify one call to action, however after discussing it the community identified four.</p> <p>PCDPH conducts internal review of policies and procedures annually per their policy on policies.</p> <p>Policy and planning is a strength of the PCDPH. See “Highlights, Strengths, and Impacts of Efforts from Level I, II, or III” for more information.</p>
<p>Level III: State Public Health Agenda</p>	<p>The CHIP is aligning with <i>Healthy Wisconsin</i> more than <i>Healthiest Wisconsin 2020</i>. The PCDPH found <i>Healthiest Wisconsin 2020</i> to be ambiguous and <i>Healthy Wisconsin</i> is more helpful at the operational level. The <i>Healthy Wisconsin 2018 Addendum</i> brought the SHIP down to a useful level and brought health focus areas PCDPH finds they can use in their processes.</p>

Area	Summary
Leadership and Organizational Competencies	The Portage County Division of Public Health has a QI plan and a workforce development plan. The PCDPH has a good working relationship with corporation counsel.
➤ Performance Management and Quality Improvement	The Portage County Division of Public Health self-identified Performance Management and Quality Improvement as both an area of strength and an area where they are working to improve. See “Highlights, Strengths, and Impacts of Efforts from Level I, II, or III” and “Best Practice Opportunities for Public Health Practice, Function, and Staffing” for more information.
➤ Workforce Development	<p>The Portage County Division of Public Health maintains a workforce development plan that has staff assessed for core public health competencies and each employee identifies two areas of improvement annually. The division holds quarterly staff meetings that address common issues. Trainings and presentations are also held.</p> <p>Staff licenses and certifications are checked regularly.</p>
Community Health Strategist [Level III Only]	The Portage County Division of Public Health often serves as a public health expert to elected officials, stakeholders, and community partners. The PCDPH conducted two meetings with local state representatives discussing WI WINS (anti-tobacco) programs and state legislators will contact the division for information or expertise. Resolutions championed by both WALHDAB and WPHA, such as medical marijuana and parental immunization waivers, have been discussed locally. The division led expansion of local participation in the YRBS. The division leads CHIP priority action teams with a health equity lens.
Public Health Nursing Services	<p>Prenatal care coordination nurses sit on a variety of multi-disciplinary teams, pertaining to breastfeeding, the Right from the Start coalition, and Born Learning program (formed through the prior CHIP to close academic achievement gap). PCDPH nursing staff sit on many community teams addressing AODA, mental health, suicide death reviews and child death reviews.</p> <p>Melanie Baehr, the Public Health Nursing Supervisor, is a member of Healthy People Portage County (which creates the CHIP), and PCDPH nurses are involved in LIFE report (CHA) as members of the wellness team and environmental team.</p>
Annual Reporting	The Portage County Division of Public Health’s annual report is presented to both the Health and Human Services Board and the Portage County Board. The PCDPH posts the annual report on its website, shares on social media, and shares with partners.