

# Buffalo County Public Health

2021 Annual Report



# Mission

- Buffalo County Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) modified the mission to encompass scientific evidence and clinical expertise as the method used to achieve the mission.

*The mission of Buffalo County Department of Health & Human Services is to empower individuals, families, and communities to live well by preventing disease, protecting health, and assuring safety while encouraging independence.*

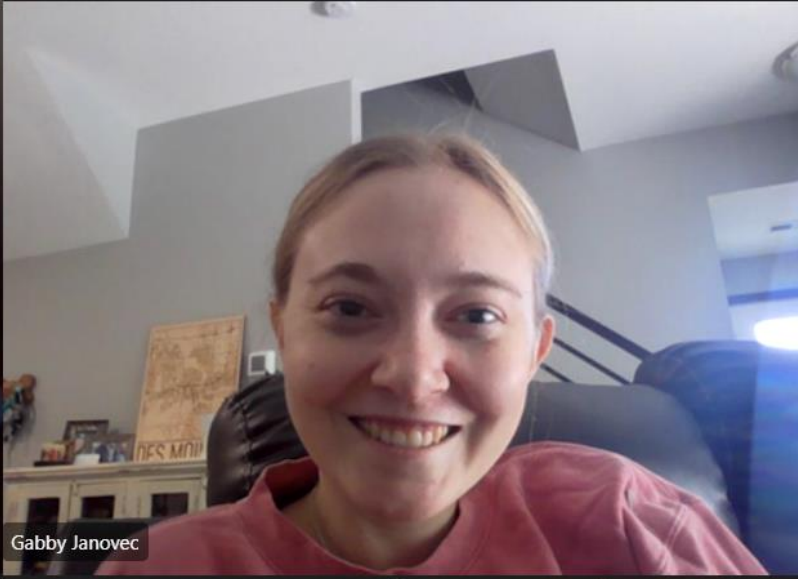
*The mission will be achieved using proven scientific evidence and clinical expertise.*

# Staff

- ***Buffalo County Public Health (BCPH) has continued to see turnover and vacancies persist through 2021.***
- Health Officer/Public Health Supervisor
  - This position remained vacant from January 1<sup>st</sup> through April 14<sup>th</sup>.
  - Interim Health Officer duties and responsibilities were fulfilled by Dave Rynders, Josie Knauber, Mickey Ganschow, and Jamie Weaver.
  - Josie Knauber, BSN, RN – April 14<sup>th</sup> through present.
- Public Health Nurse (PHN)
  - Josie Knauber, BSN, RN – January 1<sup>st</sup> through April 14<sup>th</sup>
  - This position has remained vacant since April 14<sup>th</sup>.
  - With no qualified candidates, DHHS created a Public Health Specialist position in order to open this position up to nursing students.
  - The expectation is for the nursing student to obtain a Bachelors of Science in Nursing and Registered Nurse license within one year of hire.
  - This method proved effective as Public Health was able to quickly hire a student nurse in August.
- Public Health Specialist (PHS)
  - Kelsa Myszewski – August 24<sup>th</sup> through present

# Staff Cont.

- Environmental Health Specialist (EHS)
  - Jamie Weaver, REHS
- Public Health Educators (PHE)
  - Mickey Rice, CHES
  - Sarah Schlaefer\*
  - Darby DeGross, CHES\*
  - Gabby Janovec\*
  - \*These positions are funded through a variety of COVID-19 related funding.
- WIC Project Manager
  - Public Health contracts with Trempealeau County Health Department for WIC services.
  - Kaila Baer, MPH, RDN, CD, CLC – January 1<sup>st</sup> through August 26<sup>th</sup>
  - Kaitlyn Niebur, MS, RDN, CD – August 26<sup>th</sup> through present
- Support Staff Specialist
  - Molli Eckelberg – January 1<sup>st</sup> through
  - Vacant October 25<sup>th</sup> through December 31<sup>st</sup>
- Public Health Social Worker
  - Molli Eckelberg – October 25<sup>th</sup> through present



# Public Health Services

- Immunizations – Vaccines for Children (VFC) & Private
- Communicable Disease Surveillance & Control
- Rural Farms Clinics
- Lead Poisoning Prevention
- Human Health Hazards
- Animal Bites
- Water Testing Lab
- Transient Non-Community Public Water System (TNC)
- Environmental Health Inspections
- Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
- Community Health Assessment/Community Health Improvement Plan
- Botvin *LifeSkills*
- Signs of Suicide (SOS)
- Tobacco Prevention
- Narcan
- COVID-19 Response

# Immunizations

- BCPH provides immunizations to children through the VFC program. VFC is a program that provides vaccines at no cost to children.
  - Eligible children include those on BadgerCare or Medicaid, no insurance, insurance that does not cover vaccines, or children who are American Indian or Alaska Native.
- BCPH offers seasonal influenza vaccines to children and adults. Children are served through mass vaccination exercises at their schools each year. BCPH travels to farms, businesses, and schools to vaccinate adults for seasonal influenza.

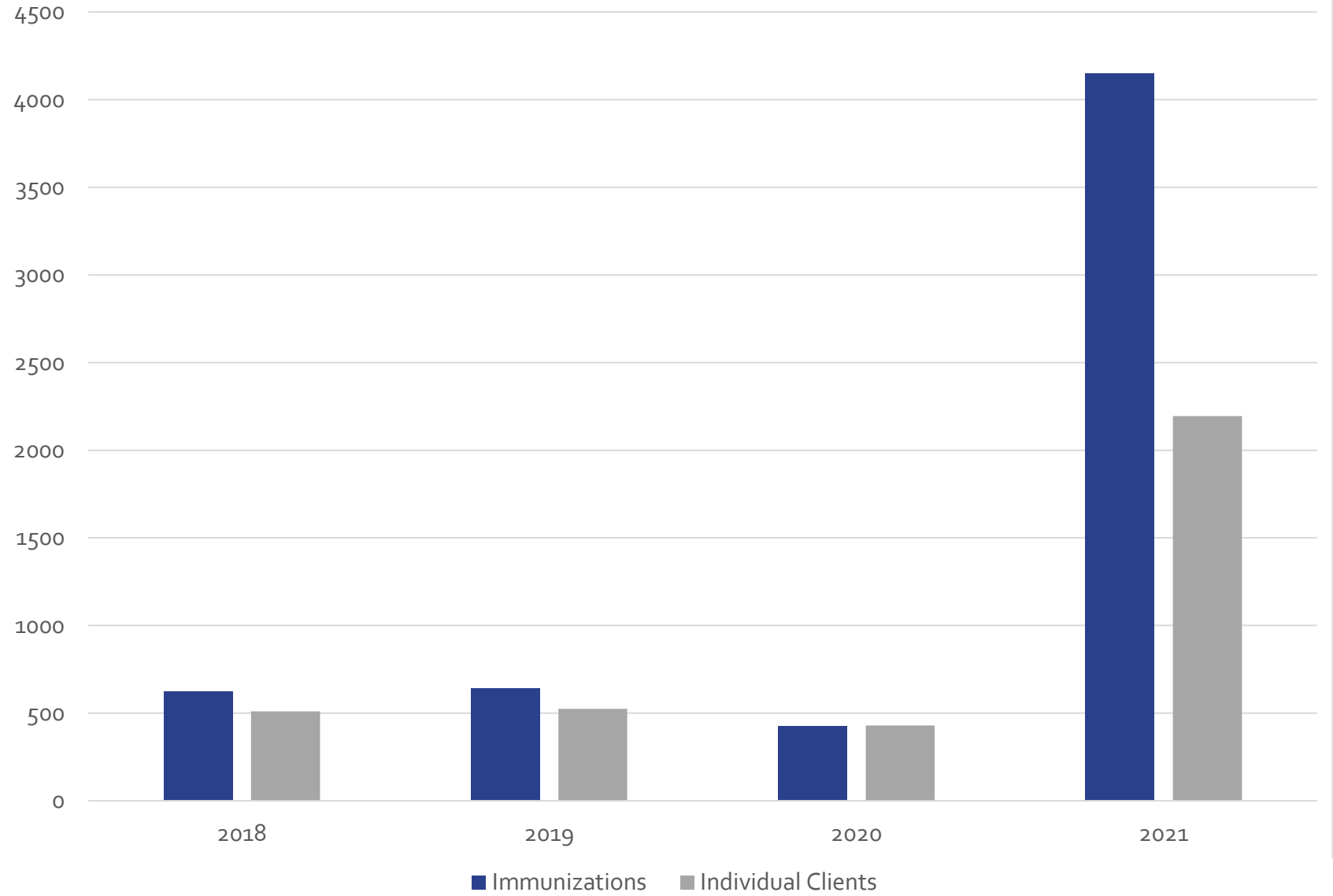
# Immunizations

- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, immunization administration has significantly changed.
- In previous years, BCPH provides around 500 vaccines per year. With the new COVID-19 vaccines, BCPH provided over 4,000 vaccines in 2021.
- The pandemic has also delayed routine childhood immunizations for many children in the Buffalo County community.
- Between 2015 and 2019, BCPH would give an average of 103.2 routine childhood immunizations annually. In 2021, BCPH only gave 7.



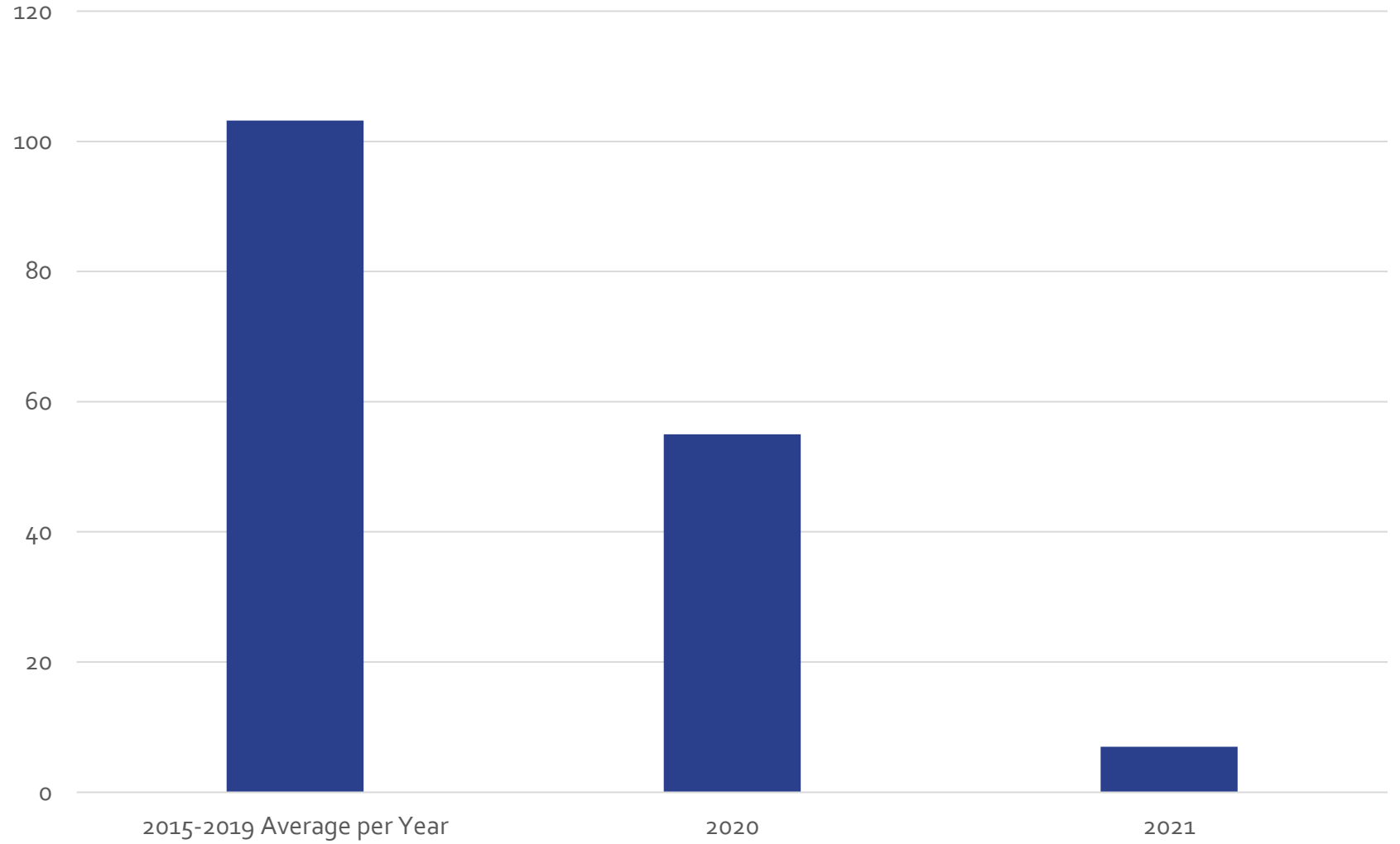
# Immunizations

## Annual Immunizations and Individual Clients



# Immunizations

## Routine Childhood Immunizations Given by BCPH Annually



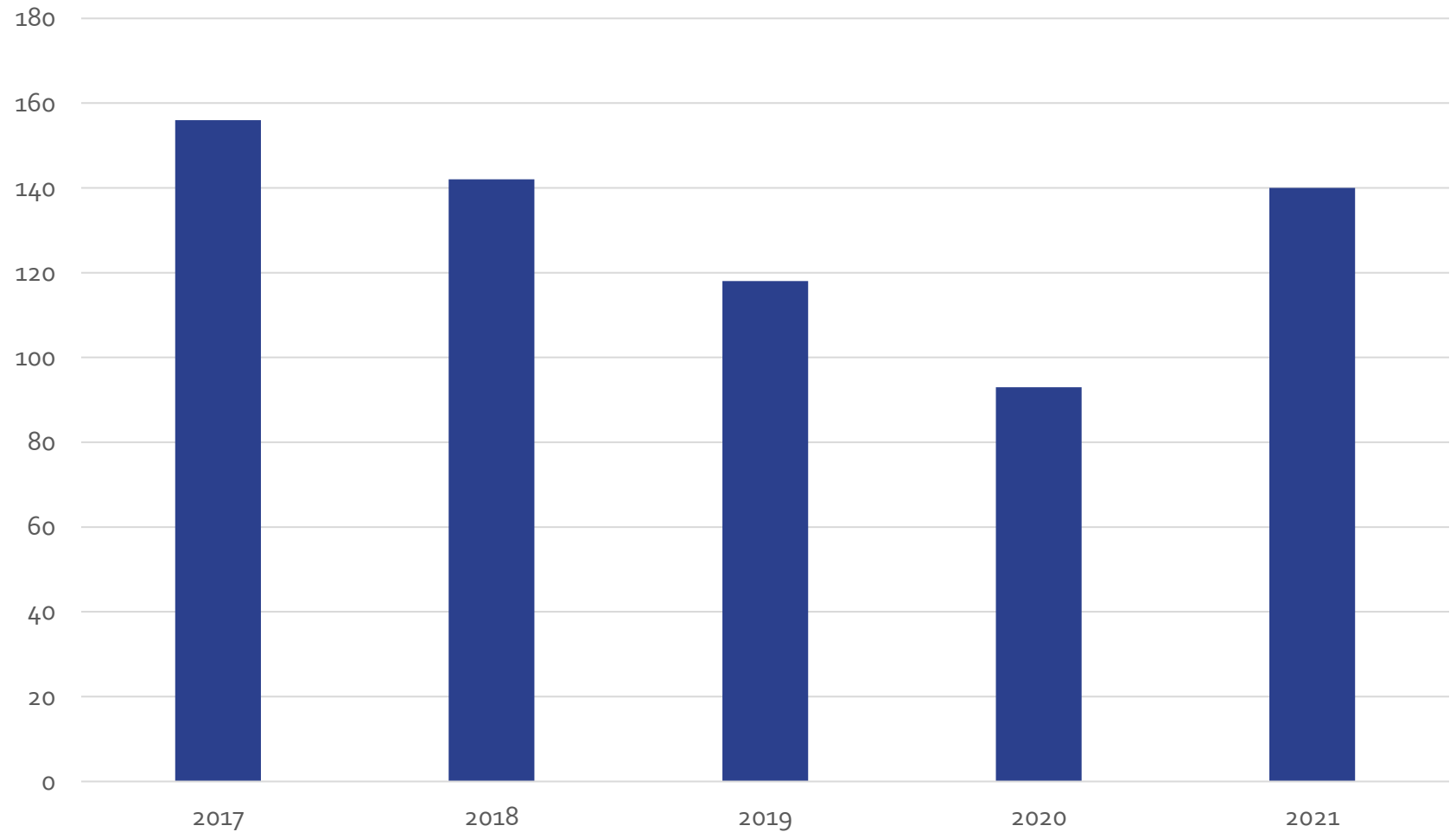
# Communicable Disease Prevention & Control

- BCPH Health Educators, PHN, EHS, and health officer investigate all reportable diseases in Buffalo County community members.
- Wisconsin has communicable disease reporting requirements that support public health's responsibilities to control the incidence and spread of communicable disease.
- The top reported communicable diseases in Buffalo County during 2021 included COVID-19, chlamydia, gonorrhea, tickborne illnesses, and food and waterborne illnesses.

[Disease Reporting | Wisconsin Department of Health Services](#)

# Communicable Disease Prevention & Control Cont.

Confirmed, Probable, and Suspect Communicable Disease Reported \*Does not include COVID-19



# Rural Farms Clinical

- BCPH partners with UW-Eau Claire College of Nursing to provide clinical services to migrant farm workers.
- Purpose:
  - Reduce the burden of Tuberculosis and prevent spread within the community and dairy farms
  - Reduce the spread of some vaccine-preventable communicable diseases by providing influenza, Tdap, and COVID-19 vaccines
  - Provide basic health care services including evaluating body mass index (BMI), cholesterol, blood pressure, blood glucose, and A1C.
  - Educate about different topics including worker safety, mental health, chronic illness, exercise, and nutrition.
  - Coordinate referrals when further care is needed.

# Rural Farms Clinical

- In spring, BCPH and UW-Eau Claire provided COVID-19 vaccine clinics for dairy farm workers at a central location on four occasions.
  - 158 individuals received their COVID-19 vaccines during these clinics.
- In fall, BCPH and UW-Eau Claire visited 11 Buffalo County dairy farms.
  - Influenza Vaccines: 33
  - COVID-19 Vaccines: 50
  - Tuberculosis Screenings: 16

# Lead Poisoning Prevention

- During 2021, one home with a lead-poisoned child was given a lead risk assessment, lead-safe renovations, and a clearance inspection.
- In August, the Environmental Health Specialist, Jamie Weaver, completed training to become a certified lead risk assessor. This allows Buffalo County Public Health to complete lead risk assessments rather than contracting this service to a neighboring county.
- In October, Buffalo County DHHS became a certified Lead Company, enabling the agency to provide lead risk assessments and clearance inspection.

# Human Health Hazards

- 10 human health hazard investigations.
- Common health hazards included accumulations of waste, damaged/decayed structures in danger of collapsing, and unhealthy/unsanitary conditions.
- The purpose and intent of human health hazard investigation and response include protecting the public health, safety and general welfare and to maintain and protect the environment for the people of Buffalo County.



# Animal Bites

- During 2021, the EHS, PHN, and Health Officer investigated 21 animal bites to ensure the biting animal was not infected with rabies.
- During the investigation, animals are monitored for signs and symptoms of rabies by a veterinarian. If after 10 days since the bite the animal is not exhibiting signs or symptoms, it is found to be negative for rabies.
- If the animal develops signs or symptoms or is deceased, the animal is sent to the WI State Lab of Hygiene for testing.
- If the animal is unable to be found, the person undergoes post-exposure prophylaxis – a series of medications to prevent rabies.
- Through these investigations, no cases of rabies were found.

# Water Testing

- BCPH has a WI DATCP Certified water lab. We offer testing for bacteria, nitrate, and arsenic. Private wells should be tested for routinely.
- Bacteria: Coliform bacteria are the most common contaminants found in private water systems. They don't generally cause illness but indicate a breach in the water system. E. Coli are a type of coliform bacteria. Most strains are harmless and live in the intestines of healthy humans and animals. However, one strain, O157:H7, produces a powerful toxin that can cause severe illness.
- Nitrate: Nitrate is a compound that is formed naturally when nitrogen combines with oxygen. Nitrogen is essential for all living things, but high levels of nitrate in drinking water can be dangerous to health, especially for infants and pregnant women. Nitrates come from fertilizers, manure, naturally occurs in plants and vegetables, septic systems, and municipal sewage sludge.
- Arsenic: Arsenic is a natural element found in soil and bedrock throughout Wisconsin. High levels of arsenic can negatively affect your health.
- 2021 Water Samples
  - Bacteria: 116 samples
  - Nitrate: 52 samples
  - Arsenic: 27 samples

# Transient Non-Community Public Water System (TNC)

- The federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) requires public water systems to monitor the quality of the drinking water they serve to the public to ensure protection of public health and safety. A Transient Non-Community Public Water System is defined as a public water system that serves at least 25 persons daily; at least 60 days per year. Examples of transient non-community water systems include taverns, motels, restaurants, churches, campgrounds, and parks.
- BCPH has been contracted by the Wisconsin DNR for the purpose of assuring compliance with Wisconsin Code requirements. As part of the contract, BCPH staff conduct annual site visits, collect drinking water samples, conduct assessments and required follow up in response to sample results, and at least once every five years, perform a complete sanitary inspection of the well and entire water system.
- Transient Non-Community Water System Samples
  - Routine sampling (bacteria and nitrate): 52 facilities
  - Follow-up: 7 facilities
  - Sanitary Surveys: 17 facilities

# Environmental Health Inspections

- Public Facility Health & Sanitation Inspections
  - Food: 94 inspections
  - Lodging: 50 inspections
  - Follow-up: 6 inspections
  - Complaint: 3 inspections
  - Pre-inspection: 22 inspections

# Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

- WIC is a federally funded program that provides preventative health and nutrition services to eligible families.
  - Eligible individuals include pregnant or breastfeeding women, new mothers, infants, children under the age of 5, individuals living in Wisconsin and meet income eligibility requirements.
- WIC provides monthly food benefits such as milks, eggs, peanut butter, whole grains, fruits and vegetables, cheese, yogurt, baby formula, and more.
- We are seeing decline in enrollment, in the beginning of 2021 we had 140 individual clients, and at the end we had 118.
- WIC services remained online, but in-person appointments were available upon request.

# Community Health Assessment (CHA)

# Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)

- In 2021, a community health needs assessment (CHA) was completed to identify health concerns and potential priority areas for the 2021-2025 community health improvement plan (CHIP).
  - [2021 CHA](#)
- In October 2021, a data presentation was held to share the findings of the Compass Now 2021 Community Needs Assessment. After the presentation, attendees developed a list of top community needs and resources to address the needs.
  - [2021 Data Presentation](#)
- Mental health was selected as the top health priority in Buffalo County for the community health improvement plan (CHIP) for 2021-2025. The community came to this decision through data collection, household surveys, and community meetings.
  - [Buffalo County CHIP 2021-2025](#)

# Botvin *LifeSkills*

- The PHE, Mickey Ganschow, offered Botvin *LifeSkills* program to 3rd-5th graders in all four Buffalo County public schools.
- This highly effective curriculum has been proven to help increase self-esteem, develop healthy attitudes, and improve their knowledge of essential life skills – all of which promote healthy and positive personal development and mental health.
- Botvin *LifeSkills* Training is comprehensive, dynamic, and developmentally designed to promote mental health and positive youth development.
- Program Learning Objectives:
  - **Personal Self-Management Skills**  
Students develop skills that enhance self-esteem, develop problem-solving skills, help them reduce stress and anxiety, and manage anger.
  - **General Social Skills**  
Students gain skills to meet personal challenges such as overcoming shyness, communicating clearly, building relationships, and avoiding violence.
  - **Drug Resistance Skills**  
Students build effective defenses against pressures to use.

# Signs of Suicide

- SOS Signs of Suicide (SOS) is a universal, school-based prevention program designed for middle or high school students. The Hope 4 U coalition purchased this program to be used in the Buffalo County High Schools. The goals of this program include:
  - Decrease suicide and suicide attempts by increasing student knowledge and adaptive attitudes about depression
  - Encourage personal help-seeking and/or help-seeking on behalf of a friend
  - Reduce the stigma of mental illness and acknowledge the importance of seeking help or treatment
  - Engage parents and school staff as partners in prevention through “gatekeeper” education
  - Encourage schools to develop community-based partnerships to support student mental health
- Through a video and guided discussion, students learn to identify warning signs of suicide and depression in a single class period. At the end of the session, students complete a seven-question screening for depression to further encourage help-seeking and connect students at risk with trusted adults. The curriculum raises awareness about behavioral health and encourages students to ACT (Acknowledge, Care, Tell) when worried about themselves or their peers.



# Tobacco Prevention

- The PHE, Mickey Ganschow, provided a vaping, nicotine, and smoking presentation for all Buffalo County 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders. This presentation included a demonstration of smoker's lungs vs. non-smoker's lungs on real swing lungs.
- The PHE, Mickey Ganschow, and PHS, Kelsa Myszewski, arranged a high school focus group including students from all public schools to discuss how tobacco affects Buffalo County.

# Narcan

- NARCAN, or Naloxone, is a lifesaving drug that can treat opioid overdose in an emergency. NARCAN training and medication is available through the DHHS to anyone interested in carrying it.
- 40 doses of NARCAN were distributed to community members, and 1 new partner was established.
- The PHE, Mickey Ganschow, trained four individuals in NARCAN administration.

# COVID-19 Response

- The 2021 COVID-19 response brought a safe and effective life-saving vaccines, new treatments and testing options, emerging variants of concern, community grief, and community resilience.

## Number of reported confirmed and probable COVID-19 cases by date of symptom onset or diagnosis: Buffalo County

Updated: 5/3/2022 (Total: 3,561)

The most recent two weeks are preliminary and subject to change as more data are submitted (from 4/18/2022 to 5/2/2022)

Select County:

Buffalo County

Move the slider to select a date range:

1/1/2021

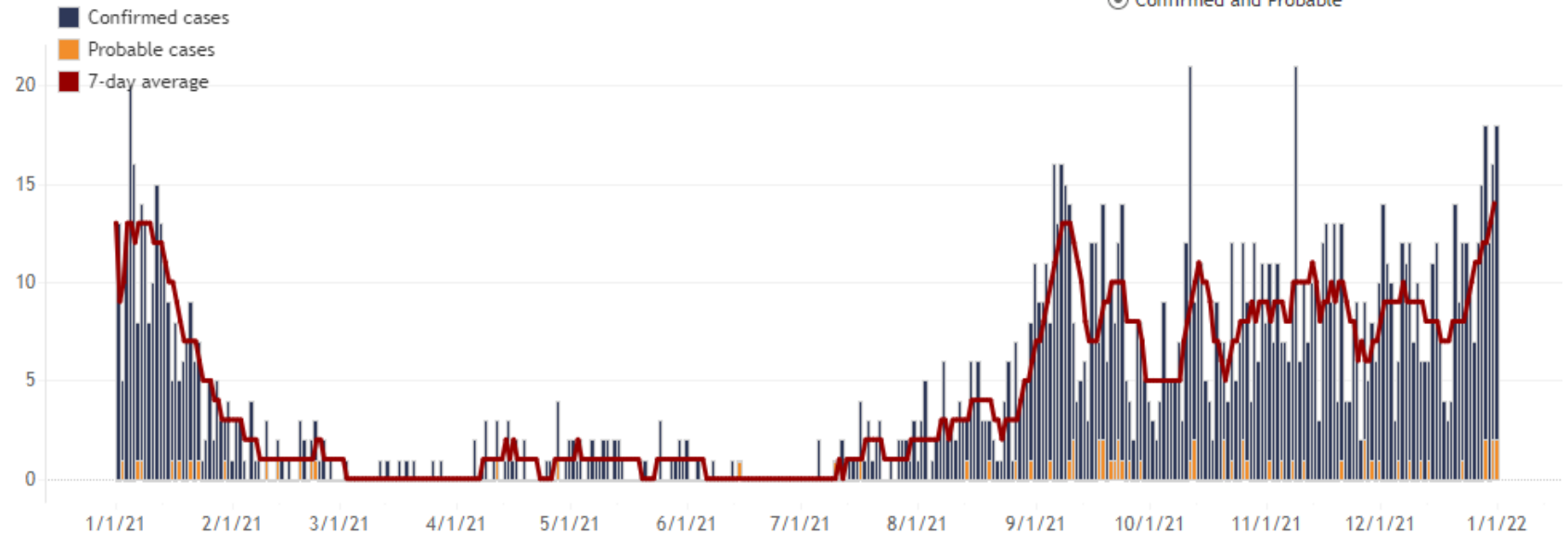
12/31/2021

Select Case Status:

Confirmed

Probable

Confirmed and Probable



# COVID-19 RESPONSE

## January - June 2021 Timeline



### JANUARY

- BCPH assumed assurance role in COVID-19 vaccine eligible groups being able to get vaccinated.
- The 65+ population become eligible for vaccine on 1/25.
- BCPH prepared to give vaccinations and had the first vaccine clinics on 1/28.

### FEBRUARY

- BCPH began hosting drive-thru clinics at the Highway Department.
- BCPH continued vaccine clinics at long term care facilities.

### MARCH

- BCPH continued weekly vaccination clinics.
- 3/22: 71.8% of people aged 65+ have received their first dose.
- 3/22: 27.7% of the Buffalo County community had received their first dose.

### APRIL

- 4/5: all individuals aged 16+ became eligible for vaccine.
- 4/20: 77.5% of people aged 65+ have received their first dose.
- 4/20: 40.8% of the Buffalo County community had received their first dose.
- BCPH continues vaccine clinics.

### MAY

- New guidance: fully vaccinated people no longer have to wear a mask or physically distance when indoors in most settings.
- BCPH hosted the first walk-in vaccine clinic at Beth's Cafe during the 100 Mile Garage Sale. It was a success, vaccinating around 65 people with their first dose!
- 5/13: all individuals aged 12-15 years became eligible for vaccine.

- 5/14: BCPH started hosting vaccine clinics in schools.
- 5/24: 19.3% of 12-15 year olds had received their first dose.
- 5/24: 47.1% of the Buffalo County community had received their first dose.
- 5/24: 81.4% of people aged 65+ had received their first dose.

### JUNE

- BCPH continued to host vaccine clinics at locations including schools, Milton Town Hall, Mississippi Thunder Speedway, and the Buffalo County Courthouse.
- Vaccine rates are slowly climbing but overall stabilizing.

# COVID-19 RESPONSE

## July - December 2021 Timeline



### JULY

- BCPH continued weekly walk-in clinics in the Buffalo County Courthouse.

### AUGUST

- New guidance: fully vaccinated people should wear a mask in indoor settings if in substantial or high transmission.
- Delta variant emerged.
- Additional dose of vaccine recommended for people who are moderately to severely immunocompromised.

### SEPTEMBER

- Buffalo County cases have more than tripled since last month.
- BCPH continued walk-in clinics throughout the county.
- Quarantine orders for the Mondovi School District were initiated after the school board voted to all close contacts to return to school during quarantine period.
- C-FC School District has a mask mandate in place.

### OCTOBER

- Mondovi and C-FC School Districts have mask mandates in place.
- BCPH hosts COVID-19 and influenza vaccine clinics at all four school districts for students, staff, and community members.

### NOVEMBER

- BCPH continued school COVID-19 and influenza vaccine clinics.
- 11/11: 5-11 year olds became eligible.
- Alma and C-FC School Districts started using the Test-to-Stay model to increase school attendance while reducing risk for COVID-19 spread.

### DECEMBER

- 12/24: 60.7% of the Buffalo County community had received their first dose.
- 12/24: 85.2% of people aged 65+ had received their first dose.
- Omicron variant emerges.
- New guidance: shortened quarantine and isolation.

Thank you.

