

# **PUBLIC HEALTH SAUK COUNTY STRATEGIC PLAN**

**2026 – 2030**



**PUBLIC HEALTH  
SAUK COUNTY  
WISCONSIN**

**Together we thrive**

# Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Message from the Health Director</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>About Public Health Sauk County</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Our Strategic Planning Methodology</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Vision, Mission, and Values</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Our 25-Year Vision</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>What We Learned</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Our Priorities for 2026-2030</b>	<b>9</b>
Strategic Direction 1: Increase Our Presence in the Community	<b>10</b>
Strategic Direction 2: Strengthen Relationships with Leaders	<b>11</b>
Strategic Direction 3: Change Policies, Systems, and Environments	<b>12</b>
<b>Making It Happen</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Get Involved</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Acknowledgments</b>	<b>15</b>

# Strategic Plan Executive Summary

2026 – 2030

*Everyone in Sauk County lives their healthiest life possible.*



PUBLIC HEALTH  
SAUK COUNTY  
WISCONSIN  
Together we thrive

Public Health Sauk County protects and promotes the health of everyone in our community. We inspect restaurants, support new parents, respond to disease outbreaks, test wells, connect people to resources, and work to make Sauk County a healthier place to live.

In late 2025 and January 2026, we engaged in a strategic planning process to envision where we want our community to be in 2050. We then operationalized that long-term vision into a five-year plan. This strategic plan guides our work from January 1, 2026, through December 31, 2030.

Our planning process was grounded in consensus-based facilitation, ensuring that every voice was heard. We gathered input from all staff, conducted workshops with a cross-section of employees, held sessions with community partners, and brought it all together in a two-day retreat. We employed the SOAR methodology, focusing on Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results, to build upon a foundation of what is working well.

**We heard a clear message: people want to see us in the community, they want to understand what we do, and they want us working alongside local leaders to address the conditions that shape health.**

## Three Priorities for 2026-2030

### 1 Increase Our Presence in the Community

We will attend community events, build relationships with trusted community members who can be champions for public health, and make it easier for residents to connect with us outside of our office.

### 2 Strengthen Relationships with Local and State Leaders

Health is shaped by decisions about housing, transportation, economic development, and more. We will work with elected officials and other decision-makers to ensure health is considered when policies are made.

### 3 Change Policies, Systems, and Environments

Individual choices matter, but so do the conditions around us. We will work to make the healthy choice the easy choice in Sauk County.

**We invite you to learn more about our work and [connect with us](#).  
Together, we can build a healthier Sauk County.**

## What Public Health Sauk County Does

### Support Families & Children

Home visiting programs like Nurse-Family Partnership, WIC nutrition support, and school dental sealants through Seal-A-Smile.

### Keep Food & Water Safe

Restaurant and food establishment inspections, private well testing, and investigation of environmental health concerns.

### Prevent & Respond to Disease

Disease outbreak investigation and containment, immunizations, and connecting people to treatment.

### Connect People to Resources

Help residents navigate health and social services, connecting them to care, insurance, and food assistance.

### Bring Community Together

Convene coalitions focused on substance use, mental health, and other priorities. We believe that improving health requires many organizations working together.

### Educate & Inform

Provide accurate health information to residents, businesses, and community organizations.

### Connect With Us

Visit our office or find us at community events throughout Sauk County.

**Phone:** (608) 355-3290  
[publichealth@saukcountywi.gov](mailto:publichealth@saukcountywi.gov)  
[www.co.sauk.wi.us/publichealth](http://www.co.sauk.wi.us/publichealth)

# Message from the Health Director

The past several years have tested public health in ways we never anticipated. Through a global pandemic, shifting priorities, and evolving community needs, our team continued to show up for Sauk County.

This strategic plan represents a new chapter for Public Health Sauk County. We challenged ourselves to think big, imagining what our community could look like in 25 years, and then worked backward to determine what we must do today to get there.

Throughout this planning process, we heard from staff across our organization and from community partners who know Sauk County well. The message was clear: our community needs us to be visible, trusted, and connected.

The priorities in this plan reflect what we heard. We will get out into the community more. We will build relationships with leaders who make decisions that affect health. And we will work to change the conditions that shape whether people in Sauk County can live healthy lives.

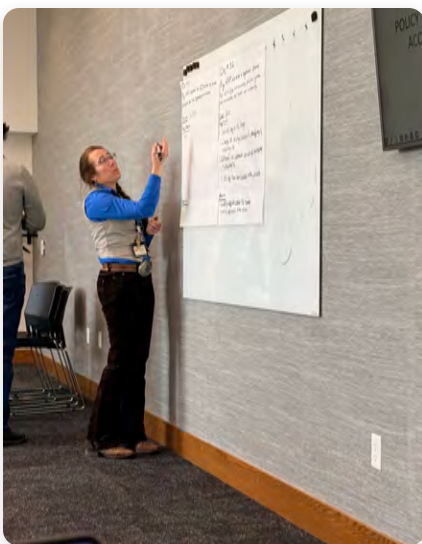
I am proud of the team at Public Health Sauk County and grateful for the community we serve. This plan gives us a clear direction, and I am confident that together we will make progress toward our vision of a Sauk County where everyone can live their healthiest life.

## **Dr. Jennifer Weitzel**

*Health Officer/Director*

*Public Health Sauk County*

*January 23, 2026*



# About Public Health Sauk County

**Our work touches many aspects of daily life in Sauk County. Here is what we do:**

---

## **We support families and children.**

Our public health nurses visit new parents at home through programs like Nurse-Family Partnership, providing support during the critical early years. We run WIC, which provides nutrition education and food assistance to pregnant women, new mothers, and young children. Our Seal-A-Smile program brings dental sealants to kids in schools to prevent cavities.

## **We keep food and water safe.**

Our environmental health team inspects restaurants, food trucks, and other establishments to prevent foodborne illness. We test private wells for contamination and help homeowners understand their results. We investigate complaints about housing conditions, lead paint, and other environmental hazards.

## **We prevent and respond to disease.**

When communicable diseases like tuberculosis, hepatitis, or foodborne outbreaks occur, we investigate, contain the spread, and connect people to treatment. We provide immunizations and help residents understand how to protect themselves and their families.

## **We connect people to resources.**

We help residents navigate the complex world of health and social services, connecting them to care, insurance, food assistance, and other support. We serve as a bridge between people and the help they need.

## **We bring the community together.**

Convene coalitions focused on substance use, mental health, and other priorities. We believe that improving health requires many organizations working together.

## **We educate and inform.**

We provide accurate health information to residents, businesses, and community organizations. We help people make informed decisions about their health.

## **We advocate for health.**

We work with policymakers and community leaders to ensure that health is considered in decisions about housing, transportation, economic development, and other issues that shape wellbeing.

**Learn more about our work at [www.co.sauk.wi.us/publichealth](http://www.co.sauk.wi.us/publichealth)**





# Our Strategic Planning Methodology

Our strategic planning process adhered to established best practices and was designed to be inclusive, data-driven, and actionable. We partnered with Flourish and Thrive Labs to facilitate a comprehensive strategic planning process from September 2025 through January 2026.

## What is SOAR and Why Use It?

**SOAR** (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results) is a strategic planning framework that focuses on positive possibilities rather than problems. Unlike traditional SWOT analysis that emphasizes weaknesses and threats, SOAR builds from what's already working well. This approach energizes teams, recognizes existing capacity, and creates momentum by celebrating strengths while identifying realistic opportunities for growth.



## Our Approach

We used a consensus-based facilitation approach that ensures every voice is heard and valued equally, regardless of position or seniority. We employed the SOAR methodology (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results) for our organizational assessment, building from a foundation of what is working well. We also employed a 25-year visioning approach because health strategies often require years or decades to yield meaningful results.

## Timeline and Activities



We conducted internal and external assessment activities to understand our current position as a health department. This included an activity at our all-staff retreat where every team member contributed through a structured reflection activity. Approximately 20 staff members participated in a series of SOAR workshops. We also held two external stakeholder sessions with business leaders, elected officials, and residents. Members of the Amish community were engaged through an existing trusted relationship.

We built on data already collected through our 2024 Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan, allowing us to incorporate resident voices without overburdening the community. Additionally, we reviewed documents including budgets, grants, and legislation to develop a list of mandates. This enabled us to think about what PHSC must continue to do, what we are not allowed to do, and what we could pursue.

In January 2026, we held a two-day strategic planning retreat, during which participants developed a 25-year vision, identified barriers, established strategic directions, and created initial action plans.

# Vision, Mission, and Values

A clear vision, mission, and set of values provide the foundation for everything we do. They help us make decisions, set priorities, and stay focused on what matters most. They also help our community understand who we are and what we stand for.

Public Health Sauk County's vision, mission, and values were established through previous planning processes and were reaffirmed as part of this strategic planning effort. They remain the foundation of our work.

## Our Vision

Everyone in Sauk County lives their healthiest life possible.

## Our Mission

Enhance the conditions that support optimal health and well-being for all people in Sauk County.

## Our Values

### Equity

Programs, policies, practices, and operations will align to be inclusive of all Sauk County residents and work to achieve health equity.

### Empathy

We strive to understand other's perspectives and circumstances so we can better connect with the people in our community, meet them where they are at, and work together to find solutions.

### Knowledge

We value knowledge, increasing the expertise and skillsets of our staff, utilizing data to drive decision-making, and implementing evidence-based practices.

### Dedication

We are dedicated and passionate about improving the health and well-being of our community.

# Our 25-Year Vision

To guide our strategic planning, we developed a detailed vision of what we want Sauk County to look like in 25 years. This long-term perspective helps us think beyond immediate constraints and ensures that our short-term decisions move us toward the future we want to create.

*In 2050, Sauk County is a place where all people are healthy, happy, and empowered to shape their own futures. Community members are comfortable being themselves, embracing the diverse backgrounds, languages, and cultures that make our county vibrant. Farmers continue to work the land with new tools and innovations, while neighbors move freely between communities using accessible public transportation and safe, complete sidewalks. Health means more than the absence of illness: people play with their children and grandchildren, access the care they need in a timely manner, feel supported, and live in homes and workplaces that protect their safety. Trust flows naturally between residents and the institutions that serve them because Public Health Sauk County has earned it by listening, showing up with cultural sensitivity, and consistently acting in the community's best interest. PHSC operates as a valued resource, educator, and convener, meeting families where they are and addressing multiple needs at once so no one falls through the cracks.*





# What We Learned

Through our planning process, we gathered insights into where we are strong and where we have opportunities for growth.

## Our Strengths

- We communicate in ways that meet people where they are, adapting our approach for different audiences and situations.
- We have a clear sense of who we are as an organization, shaped by the unique character of Sauk County.
- We are resilient, our team has adapted and continued to deliver services.
- We meet people where they are.
- We practice evidence-based public health.
- We recognize that we both influence and are influenced by larger systems.

## Opportunities From Staff

- Bring services directly to the community.
- Invest in staff development, mentorship, and learning.
- Build relationships with community members who can serve as ambassadors for PHSC.
- Work more effectively across programs to serve people with multiple needs.
- Improve our communication methods so that every resident can access information.

## Opportunities From Partners

- Clarify what Public Health Sauk County does and how it differs from other organizations and Sauk County Departments.
- Help residents navigate services and find the resources they need.
- Bring organizations together around shared health goals.
- Expand specific programs to meet community needs.

## What We Aspire To

- Sustainable funding that allows us to plan and maintain services.
- A community that understands what we do and trusts us.
- Influence at local, state, and even national levels on policies that affect health.
- All residents of Sauk County will have improved health outcomes across the lifespan.
- Sauk County has a robust Community Information Exchange led by PHSC.

## The Results We Want to See

- Residents trust Public Health Sauk County and feel confident in the services we provide.
- Our community addresses mental health and substance use openly, without stigma.
- We have stable funding to maintain and expand services.
- We have strong, lasting relationships with residents and partners.
- Residents are familiar with us and can easily access information about our services.
- Organizations across Sauk County are connected, so residents do not fall through the cracks.
- Our community is safer, and residents have access to the necessary resources to prevent illness and injury.



# Our Priorities for 2026-2030

Based on what we learned, we will focus on three priorities over the next five years.

## 1 Increase Our Presence in the Community

*25-Year Vision: In 2050, PHSC has cultivated a robust network of community ambassadors who actively champion public health initiatives.*

We heard clearly that residents and partners want to see more of us. We need to be visible, accessible, and present in the places where people live, work, and gather. This might look like staff regularly attending farmer's markets and community festivals, partnering with trusted organizations to share health information, and creating a network of businesses and organizations that help connect people to our services.

## 2 Strengthen Relationships with Local and State Leaders

*25-Year Vision: In 2050, PHSC maintains strong, collaborative relationships with local and state leaders, enabling coordinated approaches to public health policy.*

Health is shaped by decisions that happen far beyond the walls of our health department. When county supervisors make decisions about housing, when state legislators vote on funding, when local officials plan transportation infrastructure, they are making decisions that affect health. We need to be at those tables, providing health data and expertise, and serving as a trusted resource that leaders turn to when health questions arise.

## 3 Change Policies, Systems, and Environments

*25-Year Vision: In 2050, PHSC systematically identifies, evaluates, and influences policies, systems, and environments that impact community health.*

Individual choices matter, but they happen within a context. If healthy food is not available, people cannot eat well no matter how motivated they are. If there are no sidewalks, walking is not a realistic option. We will work to change the conditions that shape health, making the healthy choice the easy choice in Sauk County.

# 01

## Increase Our Presence in the Community

**25-Year Vision:** In 2050, PHSC has cultivated a robust network of community ambassadors who actively champion public health initiatives, extending the organization's reach and visibility throughout Sauk County.

### 5-Year Objectives

**1.1** By 2028: Create the structure for staff to have the capacity and opportunity to develop ambassadors

**1.2** By 2029: Develop a system to continuously scan our environment for potential ambassadors

#### What This Looks Like

Staff regularly attending farmer's markets and community festivals. Partnering with trusted organizations to share health information. Creating a network of businesses and organizations that help connect people to our services.

#### Why This Matters

Public health works best when deeply connected to communities. By developing community ambassadors, we extend our reach, build trust, and ensure health resources are accessible to all residents, particularly in underserved areas.

# 02

## Strengthen Relationships with Leaders

**25-Year Vision:** *In 2050, PHSC maintains strong, collaborative relationships with local and state leaders, enabling coordinated approaches to public health policy and community well-being.*

### 5-Year Objectives

**2.1** By 2028: Create the structure for providing the capacity and opportunity to build relationships with local and state leaders

**2.2** By 2029: Develop a coordinated approach to relationship building across the organization

#### What This Looks Like

Being at the table when county supervisors discuss housing, when state legislators vote on funding, when local officials plan transportation. Providing health data and expertise as a trusted resource.

#### Why This Matters

Health is shaped by decisions about housing, transportation, economic development, and more. Strong partnerships ensure coordinated approaches and position public health priorities in community policy discussions.

# 03

## Change Policies, Systems, and Environments

**25-Year Vision:** In 2050, PHSC systematically identifies, evaluates, and influences policies, systems, and environments that directly impact community health, ensuring public health priorities are embedded in local decision-making.

### 5-Year Objectives

**3.1** By 2027: Expand our quality improvement process to include external PSE

**3.2** By 2028: Develop a systematic process to identify and evaluate policies, systems, and environments that impact our community

#### What This Looks Like

Making the healthy choice the easy choice. Working to ensure healthy food is available, sidewalks are built, and policies support health rather than hinder it.

#### Why This Matters

Individual choices happen within a context. Lasting health improvements require upstream changes in policies, systems, and environments that create sustainable improvements across Sauk County.



# Making It Happen

A plan is only useful if it leads to action. We have seen too many strategic plans that sit on shelves and are never used. We designed this plan differently.

We use **90-day action planning cycles**. Every quarter, we identify specific actions we will take, who is responsible, and what we will accomplish. This keeps us focused, creates accountability, and allows us to adapt as circumstances change.

We will track our progress and report regularly to our Board of Health and share updates with the community.

## How Our Plans Connect

Successful public health departments operate with a systems-based approach. This strategic plan does not exist in isolation—it connects to and builds upon other key planning documents:

- **Community Health Assessment** — Provides the data and community input that informs our priorities
- **Community Health Improvement Plan** — Identifies community-wide health priorities that guide our focus
- **Performance Management System** — Tracks our progress toward strategic objectives
- **Quality Improvement Plan** — Ensures we continuously improve how we deliver services
- **Workforce Development Plan** — Builds staff capacity to achieve our goals

These plans work together—progress in one area supports progress in others.

# Get Involved

This strategic plan provides direction for Public Health Sauk County. We invite residents, partners, and community leaders to join us in building a healthier Sauk County.

## Ways to Connect

### Learn About Our Programs and Services

We offer resources for families, businesses, and community organizations. Visit our office or website to learn what is available.

### Connect with Us at Community Events

Look for us at farmer's markets, festivals, health fairs, and other gatherings throughout Sauk County.

### Share Your Perspective

We want to hear from residents about what is working and what could be better. Your input helps us improve.

### Partner with Us

If you represent a business, organization, or community group, we would love to explore how we can work together.

### Become a Champion for Public Health

Help spread the word about health resources and connect your neighbors to support.



## Contact Information

### Public Health Sauk County

505 Broadway St #372, Baraboo, WI 53913

**Phone:** (608) 355-3290

**Web:** [www.co.sauk.wi.us/publichealth](http://www.co.sauk.wi.us/publichealth)

*Together, we can build a Sauk County where everyone has the opportunity to live their healthiest life.*

# Acknowledgments

## Public Health Sauk County Staff

We are grateful to the dedicated PHSC staff members who contributed their time, insights, and expertise throughout this strategic planning process:

Elizabeth McCaulley

Eric Patrow

Haley Siehoff

Heather Rebedew

Jason Bowen

Jennifer Weitzel

Jessie Phalen

Jodie Molitor

Joyce Smidl

Kate Hansen

Katie Royster

Michelle Bauer

Nejama Narvaez Bergman

Sara Jesse

Shelly Beschta

Siobhan Allen

Steve Lisser

Taylor Fish

## Community Partners

We also extend our sincere thanks to the community partners who attended our external focus groups and shared their valuable perspectives. Your input helped shape this plan and ensures our work reflects the needs of Sauk County.



## Flourish and Thrive Labs

This strategic plan was developed with the assistance of and led by **Flourish and Thrive Labs**, a women-owned consulting firm dedicated to empowering local health departments through innovative technology, strategic planning, and sustainable training.

Juliana McMillan-Wilhoit

Jefferson McMillan-Wilhoit

Nebu Kolenchery

Brett Emo

*Together, we are building a healthier future for Sauk County.*



**PUBLIC HEALTH  
SAUK COUNTY  
WISCONSIN**

**Together we thrive**

**PUBLIC HEALTH SAUK COUNTY**

Everyone in Sauk County lives their healthiest life possible.



Created with the assistance of Flourish and Thrive Labs, a women-owned consulting firm dedicated to empowering local health departments through innovative technology, strategic planning, and sustainable training.

[www.fandtlabs.com](http://www.fandtlabs.com)