



**St. Croix HEALTH**

# **2025 Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA)**



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# Executive Summary

## Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) 2025–2027

St. Croix Health | Polk County (WI), Burnett County (WI), and Chisago County (MN)

## Introduction

The Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) is a vital tool for understanding the health status, challenges, and priorities of our community. Conducted every three years in compliance with the Affordable Care Act and IRS requirements, this assessment gathers input from diverse community voices and partners to identify key health needs, disparities, and social determinants impacting residents' well-being.

The 2025 CHNA highlights the most pressing health concerns in Polk County (WI), Burnett County (WI), and Chisago County (MN), providing a data-driven foundation for strategic planning. By identifying these challenges, we can develop targeted solutions that improve health outcomes, enhance equity, and guide collaborative efforts over the next three years.

## Purpose of the CHNA

The 2025 Community Health Needs Assessment systematically evaluates the health status and needs of our community, identifies key health disparities, and establishes data-driven priorities. This assessment informs strategic planning, enhances service coordination, and promotes equity, resilience, and community collaboration across Polk County (WI), Burnett County (WI), and Chisago County (MN). By partnering with community stakeholders, healthcare providers, and residents directly impacted by health challenges, the CHNA ensures that initiatives align with the needs and aspirations of the community.

## Key Findings

The 2025 CHNA identifies the following critical health challenges impacting our community:

- **Chronic Disease & Mortality Rates** – Heart disease, cancer, and diabetes remain leading causes of death. Burnett County has higher diabetes prevalence and cancer mortality than state averages.
- **Mental Health & Substance Misuse** – Suicide rates in all three counties exceed state averages. High rates of alcohol and drug use, particularly opioids and methamphetamines, highlight the need for prevention, early intervention, and accessible treatment. Youth mental health concerns, including anxiety and depression, continue to rise.
- **Access to Care & Workforce Shortages** – Rural healthcare challenges persist, including shortages of primary care providers, mental health professionals, and substance use treatment

facilities, delaying access to critical services. Gaps in maternal health, dental, and vision care contribute to disparities.

- **Social & Economic Drivers of Health** – High child poverty rates, food insecurity, workforce shortages, limited access to affordable housing, and transportation barriers deepen health disparities, particularly in Burnett and Polk Counties. Limited broadband access affects telehealth availability and healthcare connectivity.
- **Health Behaviors & Preventable Hospitalizations** – High rates of smoking, obesity, sleep deprivation, and preventable hospitalizations point to the need for better health education, preventive care, and coordinated health management. Alcohol-related hospitalizations are increasing, and teen birth rates are high in Burnett County.
- **Community Safety & Environmental Health** – Burnett County has the highest crime rate in the region, with increasing reports of domestic violence and drug-related incidents. Rural law enforcement faces staffing shortages, impacting response times. Water contamination concerns, including elevated nitrate levels, pose long-term health risks.

## From Finding to Action: Community Health Priorities (2025–2027)

### Access to Care & Healthcare Sustainability

Ensure individuals receive timely, affordable, and high-quality care. Strengthen a healthcare system that adapts to community needs.

Example action items may include (final action items detailed in the Community Implementation Strategy):

- Invest in workforce training, recruitment, and retention, with a focus on increasing mental health and substance use treatment providers.
- Secure funding for modern facilities, up-to-date medical equipment, and essential community services, including behavioral health and addiction treatment centers.
- Build or upgrade healthcare infrastructure and digital systems to expand access to telehealth and patient navigation services.
- Improve coordination among healthcare providers, organizations, and community partners to deliver seamless, accessible, and integrated care.

### Social & Economic Drivers of Health

Address social and economic conditions that shape health outcomes. Ensure individuals and communities have the resources and opportunities needed to support overall well-being.

Example action items may include (final action items detailed in the Community Implementation Strategy):

- Strengthen community-based solutions for housing, food security, employment, and childcare.
- Improve access to transportation and essential services.
- Partner with local organizations to address financial security, legal assistance, and workforce development.

- Align organizational goals with community partners to enhance local solutions and leverage resources for a coordinated, comprehensive approach to improving health-related social and economic conditions.

## Empowerment & Coordinated Health Management

Help individuals understand, access, and manage their health through education, resources, and coordinated care. Support prevention, treatment, and ongoing management of health challenges.

Example action items may include (final action items detailed in the Community Implementation Strategy):

- Provide health education, digital tools, and resources that help individuals make informed decisions and manage their well-being.
- Enhance coordinated care between healthcare providers, community organizations, and other resources to ensure seamless, accessible, and integrated health services.
- Expand access to services that support individuals in preventing, treating, and managing health challenges, including mental health and substance misuse treatment.
- Support individuals through transitions of care, such as hospital discharge or rehabilitation programs, to prevent setbacks and ensure recovery.
- Reduce stigma and promote awareness around mental health and addiction, creating an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages individuals to seek help.

## Conclusion

The 2025–2027 CHNA reflects a comprehensive, data-driven approach to understanding and addressing the evolving health needs of our community. By actively engaging community members, healthcare providers, and stakeholders, we have ensured that strategic priorities are not only evidence-based but also community-informed.

While challenges in capacity and resources may limit full implementation, St. Croix Health remains committed to improving community health, promoting equity, and strengthening well-being across Polk County (WI), Burnett County (WI), and Chisago County (MN).

Together, we can create a healthier, more resilient community.

# Service Area & Community Definition

This assessment focuses on the distinct communities within Polk County (WI), Burnett County (WI), and Chisago County (MN). Each county presents unique demographic, economic, and social characteristics that shape the health landscape. Understanding these factors enables us to develop targeted, data-driven initiatives that meet residents' evolving needs while ensuring equitable access to healthcare and essential services.

## Demographics at a Glance

Category	Polk County, WI	Burnett County, WI	Chisago County, MN	Comparison
Total Population	45,327	16,741	57,434	119,502 residents total
Land Area (sq mi)	917.57	822.54	410.71	2,150.82 total
Population Density	50/sq mi	20/sq mi	138/sq mi	MN: 72/sq mi WI: 109/sq mi U.S.: 94/sq mi

### Key Insights:

- Polk and Burnett Counties are rural, with low population density impacting access to services, transportation, and economic opportunities.
- Chisago County's higher density supports more infrastructure, but rural areas within the county still face access challenges.

### Planning for the Future:

- Expand transportation solutions to connect residents with essential services.
- Strengthen strategies for addressing rural healthcare and service access.
- Support workforce growth and sustainable economic development in lower-density areas.

## Age Distribution & Community Needs

County	Children (0-17)	Working-Age (18-64)	Seniors (65+)	Key Considerations
Polk County, WI	9,143 (20.2%)	26,249 (57.9%)	9,935 (21.9%)	Balanced population, but aging trend emerging
Burnett County, WI	2,701 (16.1%)	8,726 (52.1%)	5,234 (31.3%)	Oldest population, declining workforce
Chisago County, MN	12,967 (22.6%)	30,951 (60.8%)	9,516 (16.6%)	Youngest county, strong workforce growth

### Key Insights:

- Burnett County’s aging population increases demand for senior healthcare, transportation, and caregiver support.
- Chisago County’s younger demographic highlights the need for childcare, education, and family resources to support a growing workforce.
- Polk County has a balanced age distribution but must prepare for increasing senior care needs while sustaining a strong workforce.

### Planning for the Future:

- Strengthen senior care services and caregiver support in aging communities.
- Expand access to childcare, education, and youth mental health resources.
- Address workforce challenges through job training and healthcare workforce development.

## Racial & Ethnic Diversity

Category	Polk County, WI	Burnett County, WI	Chisago County, MN	Comparison
White	94.3%	90.7%	91.7%	MN: 78.3%, WI: 81.3%, U.S.: 63.4%
Black	0.3%	0.8%	1.2%	MN: 6.8%, WI: 6.1%, U.S.: 12.3%
Asian	0.4%	0.4%	1.4%	MN: 5.1%, WI: 2.9%, U.S.: 5.8%
American Indian	0.6%	3.5%	—	MN: 1.4%, WI: 1.2%, U.S.: 1.3%
Multiple Races	3.9%	4.2%	4.3%	MN: 6.2%, WI: 6.5%, U.S.: 10.7%
Hispanic/Latino	2.2%	1.9%	2.7%	MN: 6.2%, WI: 7.8%, U.S.: 18.9%

### Key Insights:

- Less diverse than state and national averages, which may impact cultural representation, workforce diversity, and the need for inclusive community programming.
- Burnett County has the highest percentage of American Indian residents, highlighting the importance of tribal health and outreach services.
- Hispanic/Latino populations are small but growing, emphasizing the need for bilingual services and culturally relevant programs.

## Population Growth (2010-2020)

County	2010 Population	2020 Population	Growth Rate	Comparison
Polk County, WI	44,205	45,327	+1.75%	MN: +7.59%, WI: +3.63%, U.S.: +7.13%
Burnett County, WI	15,457	16,741	+6.92%	Above state & national average
Chisago County, MN	54,025	57,434	+5.07%	Consistent with regional trends

### Key Insights:

- Polk County’s slow growth suggests a need for workforce retention and economic development strategies to attract younger residents and working families. Without intervention, an aging population and workforce shortages could pose long-term challenges.
- Burnett County is growing faster than both state and national averages, likely due to an influx of retirees and second-home owners. This increases demand for senior housing, healthcare services, and long-term care support.
- Chisago County’s steady population growth reflects ongoing residential and economic development, requiring investment in infrastructure, schools, and workforce training to support a growing labor force.

## Urban vs. Rural Population

County	Urban Population	Rural Population	Comparison
Polk County, WI	0%	100%	MN: 71.88% urban, WI: 67.08% urban, U.S.: 80% urban
Burnett County, WI	0%	100%	Entirely rural—greater transportation & healthcare challenges
Chisago County, MN	34.34%	65.66%	More urbanization compared to neighboring counties



## Key Insights

- Polk & Burnett Counties are entirely rural, meaning limited healthcare access, transportation barriers, and fewer economic hubs.
- Chisago County has more urban areas, offering better infrastructure and economic opportunities, but still serves a majority-rural population.
- Rural-focused solutions, like expanded broadband, telehealth, and regional transportation, are key to addressing service gaps.

## Conclusion

Understanding the demographic, economic, and social characteristics of Polk, Burnett, and Chisago Counties is critical for developing effective strategies that enhance community well-being. While all three counties share some rural challenges, their unique population dynamics—such as Burnett County’s aging demographic, Chisago County’s workforce growth, and Polk County’s balanced but shifting population—necessitate tailored approaches. Addressing healthcare access, transportation, workforce sustainability, and infrastructure development will be essential in ensuring long-term resilience and equitable service delivery. By leveraging data-driven planning and community collaboration, we can foster healthier, more connected, and thriving communities across the region.

# Methodology, Data Collection, & Prioritization Process

## How 2025 Community Health Priorities Were Chosen

The 2025 community health priorities were selected through a collaborative, data-driven process that emphasized community involvement, continuity with previous assessments, and strategic alignment with organizational goals. Grounded in established public health frameworks, this process integrated both objective data (e.g., quantitative health statistics, economic indicators, housing quality) and subjective data (e.g., community perceptions, individual health experiences, self-reported well-being) to ensure a comprehensive understanding of community needs.

### Building on the 2022 CHNA

The 2022 Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) served as the foundation and stepping-off point for the 2025 priorities. It provided a comprehensive understanding of key community challenges through a blend of quantitative data and qualitative insights. The 2022 CHNA utilized public health records, U.S. Census data, community surveys, and listening sessions to capture a full picture of health disparities and social determinants. This approach was guided by established health models that recognize how social, economic, and environmental factors influence well-being.

The County Health Rankings Model highlights that social determinants (e.g., education, income, and the physical environment) account for 50% of health outcomes, emphasizing the importance of systemic interventions. Research from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation indicates that zip code is more predictive of health than genetic code, reinforcing the need to address place-based disparities. Additionally, the Social-Ecological Model demonstrates that health is influenced by multiple layers—individual, relationship, community, and societal factors—which shaped how data was collected and interpreted.

By integrating these theoretical foundations with real-time community feedback, the 2025 CHNA process built upon the previous assessment while refining priorities to align with the region's most pressing and actionable needs. While the 2022 CHNA provided valuable insights, the 2025 process introduced new data collection efforts, additional engagement opportunities, and an updated approach to assessing community needs.

## Key Findings and Priorities from 2022

### Primary Data Findings

The 2022 CHNA identified several key challenges impacting the community:

- Employment and Income
- Transportation
- Reliable Internet and Cellular Service
- Access to Care
- Family & Social Support
- Housing

### Emerging Community Health Themes from 2022 Listening Sessions

Through extensive listening sessions conducted in 2022, six critical themes emerged that highlighted pressing community health concerns:

- 1. Unmet Basic and Safety Needs**
  - a. Essential needs such as food, housing, and safety were not being met.
  - b. **Barriers:** Income, employment, education, transportation, childcare, financial security, and broadband access.
- 2. Lack of a Comprehensive Community Support System**
  - a. The community lacked strong social networks, coordinated care, and sufficient resources.
  - b. **Barriers:** Limited volunteer opportunities, fragmented support services, and lack of coordinated communication among organizations.
- 3. Inequitable Access to Care, Services, and Opportunities**
  - a. Disparities in medical care, transportation, social connections, early childhood development, and digital inclusion.
  - b. **Barriers:** Income, employment, education, broadband access, diversity, and health equity challenges.
- 4. Urgency of Mental & Behavioral Health Needs**
  - a. Substance use, chemical dependency, and mental health challenges required immediate attention and intervention.
  - b. **Barriers:** Limited access to behavioral health services, stigma surrounding mental health, and lack of providers in rural areas.
- 5. Lack of Strategic Collaboration Among Community Leaders**
  - a. Leadership fragmentation hindered unified, effective solutions to health challenges.
  - b. **Barriers:** Lack of cross-sector coordination, inconsistent leadership engagement, and insufficient long-term planning.

## 6. Inconsistent Communication & Resource Awareness

- a. Residents and leaders struggled to find clear, reliable information about available support.
- b. **Barriers:** Limited awareness of existing programs, lack of centralized resource directories, and inconsistent outreach strategies.

## 2022 Health Priorities

Based on these findings, the 2022 CHNA established three key health priorities to guide community health improvement efforts:

1. **Access:** Ensuring every community member, regardless of socioeconomic status, has equitable access to care, services, and opportunities.
2. **Support:** Strengthening collaboration among healthcare, social service agencies, community organizations, and other stakeholders to develop a more effective and responsive health system. This includes improving resource navigation, expanding outreach efforts and fostering partnerships that enhance community well-being.
3. **Inclusion:** Creating a strong sense of belonging within the community by ensuring all individuals feel valued, respected, and empowered to participate in their health journey. This includes expanding culturally responsive care, increasing representation in decision-making, and fostering community-led solutions that enhance engagement and well-being.

## 2022 Summary Statement

St. Croix Health (SCH) is passionate about delivering our community the care and services they need (**Access**), with the help that they deserve (**Support**), in an environment where they feel they belong (**Inclusion**).

We will work together fluidly to acquire, promote, and protect well-being across the lifespan. Our overarching strategy will be to build systemic community infrastructure that drives health equity and social justice for all. SCH will focus on multi-sectoral policy and action, integrated services, and empowering people and communities through collaboration.

# A Strengthened Approach to Data Collection and Community Engagement

As a CHNA workgroup, **St. Croix Health, Polk County Public Health, Amery Hospital and Clinic, and Osceola Medical Center** collaborated closely throughout 2024, increasing the frequency of meetings to enhance coordination and collaboration. Together, we collected qualitative data through community listening sessions and surveys, ensuring alignment in methodology and interpretation. Each organization contributed its analysis and trend interpretations, working collectively to validate findings and identify consistent patterns in community health needs.

The data collection process was designed to be inclusive and community-informed. In the summer of 2024, seven targeted community listening sessions were held with approximately 60 participants, including those directly affected by health challenges. Additionally, 328 community survey responses were gathered during two major community events, providing additional qualitative insights and strengthening the overall analysis of community needs. By integrating these multiple data sources, the CHNA workgroup ensured a well-rounded and representative assessment of community needs.

## Prioritization Criteria

The selection of the 2025 community health priorities was informed by a blend of quantitative data, qualitative insights, and well-established public health frameworks. These priorities were determined based on the following key factors:

- **Listening Sessions and Community Feedback Insights:** Key themes from the summer of 2024 listening sessions and community feedback survey responses, ensuring that community voices were central to the prioritization process.
- **Quantitative Data Analysis:** Trends and disparities identified through a rigorous analysis of public health records.
- **Continuity and Growth:** The 2025 CHNA builds on the extensive work conducted in 2022, ensuring a seamless progression in addressing persistent challenges.
- **Theoretical and Evidence-Based Models:** Established frameworks—including the County Health Rankings Model, Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, the Health Impact Pyramid, and the Social-Ecological Model—provided a foundation for understanding community health dynamics and shaping priorities. These models reinforced the importance of addressing social determinants, system-level interventions, and multi-layered health influences.
- **Strategic Potential for Impact:** Focusing on areas where St. Croix Health and its partners aim to make the greatest impact, recognizing both opportunities and capacity challenges.

## Leadership Review and Feedback

Once the draft priorities were developed, they were shared with the St. Croix Health leadership team for input and feedback. Recommended changes were incorporated, and the priorities were adjusted as needed to reflect both community input and organizational alignment.

## Conclusion

The 2025 CHNA builds upon the foundation established in 2022 while incorporating targeted insights and refined strategies. By leveraging community input, data-driven analysis, and established public health frameworks, the assessment ensures that identified priorities are both actionable and aligned with the most pressing health needs.

This comprehensive approach will guide strategic efforts for the 2025–2027 cycle, ensuring sustainable improvements in community health.

# 2025–2027 Community Health Priorities

Based on the insights from the prioritization process, the following community health priorities have been identified to address the most pressing health challenges facing our community over the next three years. The action strategies for the priorities outlined below are sample strategies, intended to offer an overview of potential approaches. The full action plans, which will provide more specific steps and details, can be found in the 2025 Community Implementation Strategy.

## Access to Care & Healthcare Sustainability

**This priority aims to ensure that individuals can receive timely, affordable, and high-quality care while building a strong, adaptable healthcare system that meets the needs of the community now and in the future.**

*Potential action strategies may include (details in Community Implementation Strategy):*

- Investing in workforce training, recruitment, and retention.
- Securing funding for modernized facilities, up-to-date medical equipment, and essential community services.
- Building or upgrading healthcare infrastructure and digital systems to support enhanced service delivery.
- Improving access to healthcare through telehealth, patient portals, and digital tools.
- Enhancing coordinated care between healthcare providers, organizations, and community partners to ensure seamless, accessible, and integrated care.

## Social & Economic Drivers of Health

This priority focuses on addressing the social and economic conditions that shape health outcomes, ensuring individuals and communities have the resources and opportunities needed to support overall well-being. This includes strengthening community-based solutions and aligning organizational goals with local partners to ensure a sustainable, coordinated approach to improving social and economic conditions that impact health.

*Potential action strategies may include (details in Community Implementation Strategy):*

- Strengthening community-based solutions for housing, food security, employment, and childcare.
- Improving access to transportation and essential services.
- Partnering with local organizations to address financial security, legal assistance, and workforce development.
- Aligning strategic organizational goals with community partners to enhance local solutions and leverage resources, ensuring a coordinated, comprehensive approach to improving health-related social and economic conditions.

# Empowerment & Coordinated Health Management

This priority focuses on supporting individuals in understanding, accessing, and managing their health through education, resources, and coordinated care. This includes prevention, treatment, and ongoing management of health challenges, empowering individuals to make informed decisions and take control of their health.

*Potential action strategies may include (details in Community Implementation Strategy):*

- *Providing health education, digital tools, and resources that empower individuals to make informed decisions and manage their well-being.*
- *Enhancing coordinated care between healthcare providers, community organizations, and other resources to ensure seamless, accessible, and integrated care across all aspects of an individual's health journey.*
- *Expanding access to services that support individuals in preventing, treating, and managing health challenges, including mental health, substance misuse, and chronic conditions.*
- *Supporting individuals through transitions of care, such as hospital discharge, to prevent setbacks and ensure smooth recovery.*
- *Addressing stigma and promoting awareness around various health conditions, creating an inclusive and supportive environment.*
- *Encouraging individuals to participate in advance care planning, including documenting advance directives, and ensuring their health preferences are clearly communicated for future care.*



# Understanding the Data Behind the 2025-2027 Community Health Priorities

Now that we have outlined the key priorities for addressing the community’s most pressing health challenges, it is important to examine the data that provides a broader context for these issues. The following section will present secondary and quantitative data highlighting key factors such as social and economic conditions, health behaviors, the physical environment, and health outcomes, providing a data-driven foundation for our community health priorities and further guiding the development of action plans.

## Social & Economic Factors: The Foundation of Community Well-being

Social and economic factors play a crucial role in shaping the overall well-being and life expectancy of a community. These factors—including education, employment, income, community safety, and social support—affect access to essential resources such as healthcare, housing, and nutritious food. Communities that offer strong educational opportunities, stable employment, and financial security tend to experience better health outcomes and lower rates of chronic diseases. However, challenges like poverty, limited job opportunities, and social isolation can have a detrimental impact on both physical and mental health. Addressing these disparities is critical to fostering healthier, more resilient communities.

### Education

Education plays a key role in shaping an individual’s future health and financial stability. Higher education levels are linked to better job opportunities, higher earnings, and healthier lifestyles. However, disparities in educational access and attainment can create long-term challenges for individuals and communities.

#### Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education is crucial for laying the foundation for future academic success and life outcomes. Preschool enrollment rates vary across counties, and disparities in these rates can have long-term effects on children’s educational and health prospects. This section highlights the enrollment trends and disparities in access to preschool programs, with a focus on Burnett and Polk counties.

### Preschool Enrollment Rates by County

This table displays the percentage of children ages 3-4 enrolled in preschool in each of the counties, compared to state and national averages. Rural communities such as Polk and Burnett counties tend to have lower enrollment rates due to factors like limited resources, fewer preschool options, and higher costs.

County	Enrollment Rate	State Average		National Average
Chisago County, MN	62.3%	Minnesota: 72.5%		59% (2022)
Polk County, WI	51.2%	Wisconsin: 68.9%		—
Burnett County, WI	48.9%	—		—

#### Key Insights:

- Children who attend preschool are more likely to succeed in school, graduate high school, and earn higher wages as adults.
- Preschool enrollment in Burnett and Polk counties is significantly lower than state and national averages.
- Rural communities often face fewer preschool options and higher costs, making access more difficult for families.
- Expanding affordable early education programs could help close this gap and ensure that all children have access to quality early education.

### Preschool Enrollment by Race (3-4-year-olds)

This table breaks down preschool enrollment by race, providing insight into enrollment disparities among different racial groups. The data illustrates how Hispanic, Black, and other groups may experience different challenges in accessing preschool programs due to factors like population size, cultural considerations, and the availability of resources.

County	White	Black	Asian	American Indian / Alaska Native	Multiple Races
Polk, Burnett, Chisago	1,277	22	16	15	100
Chisago County, MN	725	0	16	0	34
Burnett County, WI	125	22	0	8	24
Polk County, WI	427	0	0	7	42

#### Key Insights:

- Hispanic and Black populations in Polk and Burnett counties are smaller compared to the White population, so the enrollment figures for these groups may reflect lower demand for preschool programs rather than systemic barriers.
- For example, in Burnett County, only 4.07% of Hispanic children are enrolled in preschool. With a small Hispanic population, this may not indicate significant barriers.

- As these populations grow, ensuring the availability of more targeted and culturally inclusive programs will be essential to address future needs and ensure equal access to early education.

**Preschool Enrollment by Ethnicity (3-4-year-olds)**

This data further breaks down preschool enrollment by ethnicity, focusing on Hispanic and Non-Hispanic children in the region.

Report Area	Total Enrolled	Hispanic Enrolled	Hispanic Enrollment %	Non-Hispanic Enrollment %
Polk, Burnett, Chisago	945	109	11.53%	88.47%
Chisago County, MN	520	54	10.38%	89.62%
Burnett County, WI	123	5	4.07%	95.93%
Polk County, WI	302	50	16.56%	83.44%
Minnesota	62,136	7,658	12.32%	87.68%
Wisconsin	56,261	7,371	13.10%	86.90%
United States	3,615,142	1,012,510	28.01%	71.99%

**Key Insights:**

- Hispanic and Non-Hispanic enrollment percentages show a disparity in the availability and use of preschool programs.
- In Burnett County, the Hispanic enrollment rate is 4.07%, which is significantly lower than the state and national averages. This points to potential challenges in access, but it’s also important to consider the small population size.
- As Hispanic populations grow, it will be crucial to develop more culturally inclusive preschool programs and bilingual education options to support the evolving demographic needs of the region.

**High School Graduation Rates & Racial Disparities**

High school graduation rates serve as a crucial indicator of future economic opportunities and overall well-being. While Polk, Chisago, and Burnett counties boast high graduation rates compared to national averages, disparities remain, especially among Black, Hispanic, and Native American students. Given the predominantly White populations in these areas, it’s important to consider how these racial and ethnic disparities can affect future opportunities for students of color.

**Graduation Rates by County**

The following table compares high school graduation rates in Polk, Chisago, and Burnett counties with state and national averages. Although these counties have relatively high graduation rates, the disparities among racial and ethnic groups suggest that additional support is needed for Black, Hispanic, and Native American students.

County	Graduation Rate	State Average	National Average
Polk County, WI	96.9%	Wisconsin: 87.6%	~85%
Chisago County, MN	94%	Minnesota: 83.6%	—
Burnett County, WI	83.9%	Wisconsin: 85.5%	—

**Key Insights:**

- Burnett County's graduation rate of 83.9% is below both state and national averages.
- Racial and ethnic disparities in graduation rates, particularly for Black, Hispanic, and Native American students, highlight the challenges faced by these groups in completing high school.
- Lower graduation rates are linked to higher unemployment, lower lifetime earnings, and reduced access to higher education.
- Addressing these disparities through targeted interventions is necessary to provide equal educational opportunities for all students.

**Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity (County Data)**

This table shows graduation rates by race for each county, with a focus on disparities among Black, Hispanic, and Native American students. The lower graduation rates for these groups, particularly in Burnett and Polk counties, point to the need for additional resources and support.

County	White Students	Black Students	Hispanic Students	Native American / Alaska Native	National Average (2021)
Polk County, WI	95.9%	No Data	50.0%	50.0%	White: 95.1%, Black: 90.3%, Hispanic: 74.2%
Chisago County, MN	89.6%	No Data	50.0%	No Data	White: 95.1%, Black: 90.3%, Hispanic: 74.2%
Burnett County, WI	88.7%	75.0%	75.0%	70.0%	White: 95.1%, Black: 90.3%, Hispanic: 74.2%

**Key Insights:**

- Black, Hispanic, and Native American students in Polk, Burnett, and Chisago counties experience lower graduation rates than White students.
- Lower graduation rates are correlated with higher unemployment, lower earnings, and reduced access to healthcare.
- Addressing these disparities through mentorship, tutoring, and academic support programs is essential to ensure that all students have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

## Higher Education & Workforce Readiness

Post-secondary education significantly improves job opportunities and economic stability. However, educational attainment rates in Burnett and Polk counties are lower than state and national averages, which limits workforce readiness and economic growth. Increasing access to higher education and workforce training will help address these gaps.

### Adults with a Bachelor’s Degree or Higher (By County)

This table compares the percentage of adults with a Bachelor’s degree or higher in Chisago, Polk, and Burnett counties with state and national averages. The data reveals that the region lags behind state and national averages in higher education attainment, which affects workforce growth and economic stability.

County	Bachelor’s Degree or Higher	State Average	National Average (2021)
Chisago County, MN	20.1%	Minnesota: 38.83%	41.9%
Polk County, WI	16.3%	Wisconsin: 30.5%	—
Burnett County, WI	13.2%	—	—

#### Key Insights:

- Burnett and Polk counties have relatively low rates of higher education attainment, which impacts economic growth, workforce readiness, and health outcomes.
- Without sufficient access to higher education, these counties face barriers to attracting high-paying jobs and supporting a diverse workforce.
- Increasing access to scholarships, community colleges, and vocational training can help close these gaps and provide critical opportunities for residents.

### Educational Attainment Overview (County Data)

This data provides an overview of the highest level of education achieved by adults aged 25 and older in the region. While many adults have completed high school or some college, the lack of higher education attainment limits job opportunities and economic growth.

Educational Attainment	Polk County, WI	Burnett County, WI	Chisago County, MN	Minnesota	Wisconsin	United States
No High School Diploma	6.4%	7.2%	4.4%	6.2%	6.6%	10.6%
High School Only	34.0%	37.2%	32.3%	23.5%	29.7%	26.2%
Some College	22.2%	22.2%	23.8%	19.8%	19.8%	19.4%
Associate's Degree	13.7%	11.4%	15.5%	11.7%	11.2%	8.8%
Bachelor's Degree	16.9%	15.0%	16.7%	25.3%	21.6%	21.3%
Graduate Degree	6.8%	7.0%	7.3%	13.6%	11.1%	13.7%

**Key Insights:**

- Educational attainment is linked to better economic outcomes and health.
- The region's relatively low percentage of adults with a Bachelor's degree or higher limits job opportunities and workforce growth.
- Expanding access to higher education, vocational training, and scholarships is necessary to help residents access better-paying jobs and improve their overall well-being.

## Youth Employment & Educational Engagement

The percentage of youth aged 16-19 not enrolled in school and not employed is an important indicator of potential workforce gaps and educational challenges. In Polk, Burnett, and Chisago counties, 3.29% of youth are neither in school nor working, with Burnett County showing the highest percentage at 4.46%. This is a critical issue as disengaged youth may face long-term economic instability and limited future employment opportunities.

Report Area	Population Age 16-19	Not in School & Not Employed	Percent Not in School & Not Employed
Polk, Burnett, Chisago	5,739	189	3.29%
Chisago County, MN	2,978	80	2.69%
Burnett County, WI	650	29	4.46%
Polk County, WI	2,111	80	3.79%
Minnesota	298,654	13,658	4.57%
Wisconsin	310,257	16,311	5.26%
United States	17,415,920	1,187,439	6.82%

## Trend Analysis for Education

The following trends are critical to understanding the challenges facing the region’s educational landscape:

### Early Childhood Education Gaps:

Preschool enrollment rates in Burnett and Polk counties are lower than both state and national averages, reflecting limited resources and fewer options in rural communities.

### Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Graduation Rates:

While graduation rates in the counties are generally high, significant disparities exist, particularly for Black, Hispanic, and Native American students. These disparities point to systemic barriers that hinder academic success for these groups.

### Higher Education Attainment:

The region's relatively low percentage of residents with a bachelor’s degree or higher limits economic opportunities, especially in attracting high-paying jobs and developing a skilled workforce.

### Youth Employment & Educational Engagement:

A notable portion of youth in Polk, Burnett, and Chisago counties, particularly in Burnett County, are neither in school nor employed. This trend points to potential gaps in youth engagement and future workforce readiness, with Burnett County showing the highest rate of youth not participating in school or work (4.46%).

## Employment: A Critical Driver of Economic Stability

Stable employment is essential for financial security, mental well-being, and access to key services like healthcare and education. While Polk, Burnett, and Chisago counties offer a variety of employment opportunities, challenges such as job availability, workforce shortages, and long commutes impact the potential for financial stability in these rural regions.

### Unemployment Trends

Although unemployment rates in the region are relatively low, they do not fully reflect underemployment—where workers hold jobs that do not match their qualifications or provide sufficient wages and benefits.

#### Unemployment Rates (Most Recent Data)

County	Unemployment Rate	State Average	National Average (2024)
Burnett County, WI	4.6%	Wisconsin: 3.4%	3.7%
Polk County, WI	3.8%	Wisconsin: 3.4%	3.7%
Chisago County, MN	3.1%	Minnesota: 3.2%	3.7%

**Key Insights:**

- Low unemployment rates can be misleading, as many workers in the region are underemployed, meaning they hold jobs that do not pay livable wages or offer essential benefits like health insurance and paid leave.
- Seasonal employment, especially in tourism-driven Burnett County, creates income instability for many workers.
- Supporting local business growth and investing in workforce development can help create more stable, higher-paying jobs.

## Job Market & Local Business Growth

The region has seen varying trends in business growth, which affects job availability.

**Business Growth Over the Last Decade**

County	Business Growth
Polk County, WI	+44 new businesses
Burnett County, WI	-4 businesses
Chisago County, MN	Modest economic growth, but workforce gaps remain

**Key Insights:**

- Burnett County’s decline in businesses suggests economic stagnation and fewer job opportunities for residents.
- Polk County has experienced growth, but workforce shortages remain in key industries, further impacting the availability of good-paying jobs.
- Many residents commute to urban centers for work, leading to higher transportation costs and less time with their families.
- Investing in local business incentives, entrepreneurship programs, and job training initiatives could help strengthen local economies and create more job opportunities.

## Workforce Shortages & In-Demand Jobs

Many industries in the region struggle with workforce shortages, which can limit economic growth and access to services.

**Industries with the Highest Workforce Shortages:**

- **Healthcare** – Shortages of nurses, primary care providers, and mental health professionals.
- **Education** – Lack of qualified teachers and childcare workers.
- **Skilled Trades** – High demand for electricians, mechanics, and construction workers.

**Key Insights:**

- Workforce shortages in healthcare lead to longer wait times and reduced access to medical services, particularly in rural areas.
- Schools that struggle to hire teachers and childcare providers negatively impact children’s education and development.



- Encouraging vocational training, apprenticeship programs, and loan forgiveness for healthcare and education workers can help address these shortages.

## Commuting & Transportation Barriers

Long commutes reduce workers' quality of life, increase financial strain, and can negatively affect mental health. The region faces high rates of workers who spend over an hour commuting each day, with particularly high rates in Polk and Burnett counties.

### Percentage of Workers with Commutes Over 60 Minutes

County	Commute Over 60 Minutes	State Average
Polk County, WI	14.53%	Wisconsin: 9.5%
Burnett County, WI	13.75%	Wisconsin: 9.5%
Chisago County, MN	11.96%	Minnesota: 9.8%

### Mode of Transportation

76-79% of residents commute alone by car, highlighting a lack of public transit options in rural areas.

#### Key Insights:

- Long commutes lead to increased stress, less time with family, and higher transportation costs, which are particularly difficult for low-income workers.
- The lack of public transportation in rural areas makes it harder for residents without vehicles to access employment opportunities.
- Expanding public transit, promoting carpooling, and increasing telecommuting options can improve job accessibility and reduce the strain on workers.

## Trend Analysis for Employment

The following trends are critical to understanding the challenges facing the region's employment and economic well-being:

### Unemployment & Underemployment:

While unemployment rates are low, many workers are underemployed, meaning they hold jobs that do not match their qualifications or offer sufficient wages and benefits.

### Workforce Shortages:

Key industries like healthcare, education, and skilled trades face workforce shortages, limiting access to essential services and economic growth.

### Business Growth & Job Opportunities:

While Polk County has experienced business growth, Burnett County has seen a decline, indicating economic stagnation.

**Commuting & Transportation:**

Long commutes and limited transportation options reduce access to jobs and essential services, particularly for residents in rural areas.

## Family and Social Support

Family and social support systems are essential for emotional well-being, mental health, and economic stability. Strong support networks contribute to lower stress levels, better health outcomes, and improved quality of life. Conversely, social isolation, lack of access to childcare, and financial insecurity can negatively impact both individuals and communities.

Polk, Burnett, and Chisago counties face challenges related to family stability, mental health access, childcare affordability, and community engagement. Strengthening these support systems can lead to healthier, more resilient communities.

### Family Structure & Childcare Accessibility

**Single-Parent Households**

County	Percentage of Single-Parent Households
Burnett County, WI	21%
Polk County, WI	18%
Chisago County, MN	14%
State Averages	Minnesota: 12.4%, Wisconsin: 13.2%
National Average	15%

**Key Insights:**

- Single-parent households are more vulnerable to financial instability, food insecurity, and lack of access to quality childcare.
- Children in single-parent households are more likely to experience economic hardship, which can affect academic achievement and long-term well-being.

### Childcare Costs as a Percentage of Household Income

County	Percentage of Household Income
Polk County, WI	27%
Burnett County, WI	26%
Chisago County, MN	25%
State Averages	Minnesota: 24.5%, Wisconsin: 23.8%
National Average	21.3%

**Key Insights**

- High childcare costs strain family budgets, limiting access to other essential needs like housing, food, and healthcare.
- Many families rely on informal or unlicensed childcare, which may lack oversight and quality standards.
- Expanding affordable childcare options and subsidies can help parents remain in the workforce and provide stable environments for children.

**Childcare Deserts & Accessibility**

**Burnett County:** Only 9 licensed childcare centers, making it a childcare desert.

**Polk County:** Moderate shortages, forcing families to juggle work schedules or rely on informal care.

**Chisago County:** More licensed providers but higher costs, making childcare unaffordable for some families.

**Key Insights:**

- Lack of childcare options forces many parents, especially mothers, to reduce work hours or leave the workforce entirely.
- Early childhood education is crucial for cognitive development, school readiness, and long-term academic success.
- Expanding childcare subsidies and incentivizing providers in rural areas can help close gaps in access.

**Social Support & Mental Health**

**Social Isolation Rates**

- Burnett County reports the highest levels of social isolation, particularly among elderly residents and low-income households.
- Polk and Chisago Counties also face challenges related to rural geographic isolation and limited community engagement opportunities.

**Key Insights:**

- Social isolation is linked to increased risks of depression, anxiety, and chronic illness.
- Older adults in rural areas face transportation barriers and limited access to social programs, worsening feelings of loneliness.
- Strengthening community-based programs and senior engagement initiatives can reduce isolation and improve mental well-being.

**Mental Health Indicators**

County	Poor Mental Health Days per Month	Suicide Rates (per 100,000 residents)
Burnett	5.0	17.2
Polk	4.8	18.7
Chisago	4.4	15.9
State Averages	Wisconsin: 16.8	Minnesota: 14.2

**Key Insights:**

- Rural areas have fewer mental health professionals, leading to long wait times for care.
- High suicide rates indicate inadequate mental health services and limited crisis intervention programs.
- Increasing funding for mental health resources, telehealth services, and community-based support can improve access to care.

**Food Insecurity**

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a federal program that provides nutrition benefits to low-income individuals and families for food purchases. Here is the data on the percentage of the population receiving SNAP benefits:

Report Area	Total Population	SNAP Beneficiaries	Percent Receiving SNAP
Polk, Burnett, Chisago	118,124	8,996	7.6%
Chisago County, MN	56,621	2,522	4.5%
Burnett County, WI	16,526	2,231	13.5%
Polk County, WI	44,977	4,243	9.4%
Minnesota	5,706,494	457,493	8.0%
Wisconsin	5,893,718	703,895	11.9%
United States	331,449,281	41,975,381	12.7%

**Key Insights:**

- Burnett County has the highest percentage of its population receiving SNAP benefits (13.5%), indicating a higher level of food insecurity in the region compared to state and national averages.
- Chisago County has the lowest percentage of SNAP recipients (4.5%), suggesting a lower level of food insecurity relative to other counties.
- Polk County's SNAP participation rate of 9.4% is below the state average of 11.9% and still below the national average of 12.7%.
- There has been a general decrease in SNAP participation over the past decade across most counties, with the exception of Burnett County, where the reduction is minimal.
- Food insecurity remains a pressing issue, especially in rural areas, and is higher in areas like Burnett County, where SNAP participation rates remain persistently high.

**Trend Analysis for Family and Social Support**

**Single-Parent Households & Financial Strain:**

Burnett County (21%) has the highest rate of single-parent households, exceeding state and national averages. These families face higher risks of financial instability, food insecurity, and childcare challenges.

**Childcare Access & Affordability:**

Childcare costs in the region (25-27% of household income) exceed national averages. Burnett County is a childcare desert, while Polk and Chisago counties struggle with affordability. More licensed providers and financial assistance programs are needed.

**Social Isolation & Mental Health:**

Burnett County has the highest rates of social isolation, particularly among seniors and low-income households. Suicide rates, especially in Polk County (18.7 per 100,000), highlight the need for more mental health resources and crisis support.

**Food Insecurity & SNAP Participation:**

Burnett County has the highest SNAP participation (13.5%), indicating greater food insecurity than regional and national averages. Expanding food assistance programs and improving rural food access can help address this issue.

**Health Literacy & Advance Care Planning Gaps:**

Over 40% of adults in Burnett & Polk Counties struggle with health literacy, impacting their ability to manage medical care. Advance directive completion rates remain low, particularly in Burnett County (14%). Community health education and provider engagement can improve decision-making.

## Community Education, Health Literacy, & Advance Planning

**Health Literacy & Understanding of Care**

- Over 40% of adults in Burnett & Polk Counties struggle to understand medical instructions, leading to higher rates of missed treatments and emergency visits.
- Regional Average: 36% of adults report difficulty comprehending health information.
- Chisago County: Slightly higher literacy rates, but gaps remain, especially among low-income and elderly populations.

**Key Insights:**

- Low health literacy contributes to worse chronic disease management, increased hospitalizations, and reduced preventive care participation.
- Community education programs focused on health literacy, telehealth navigation, and medication management can improve healthcare outcomes.

## Advance Directives & End-of-Life Planning

County	Advance Directive Completion Rates
Burnett County	28%
Polk County	31%
Chisago County	35%

**Provider Engagement in Advance Directives:**

- Patients are 65% more likely to complete an advance directive if recommended by a doctor.
- However, only 20% of physicians regularly discuss advance care planning.

**Residents who have discussed advance directives with a doctor:**

County	Percentage
Chisago County	22%
Burnett County	14%
Polk County	17%

**Key Insights:**

- Without advance directives, family members are forced to make difficult medical decisions under stress.
- Increasing physician-led conversations about advance care planning can improve participation rates and reduce unwanted medical interventions.

## Disparities in Healthcare Decision-Making

**Financial & Insurance Barriers**

- Low-income residents are significantly less likely to complete advance directives.
- Burnett County has the greatest financial barriers to advance care planning due to higher poverty rates.

**Racial & Ethnic Disparities**

- Hispanic residents in Chisago County have the lowest advance directive completion rates (<20%) due to cultural and language barriers.
- Mistrust in the healthcare system and lack of culturally competent providers contribute to lower participation.

**Key Insights:**

- Limited access to advance planning resources worsens healthcare disparities.
- Expanding culturally tailored education and increasing provider outreach can improve participation among underserved populations.

## Trend Analysis for Community Education, Health Literacy & Advance Planning

**Health Literacy Challenges:**

More than 40% of adults in Burnett & Polk Counties struggle with understanding medical instructions, leading to higher emergency visits and poorer health outcomes. Expanding health education programs can improve chronic disease management and preventive care participation.

**Limited Advance Care Planning:**

Advance directive completion rates are low across all counties, with Burnett County at just 14%. Encouraging physicians to discuss end-of-life planning can help families make informed medical decisions.

**Disparities in Access & Participation:**

Low-income and Hispanic residents face financial and cultural barriers to completing advance directives. Increasing provider outreach and culturally tailored education can improve participation and reduce healthcare disparities.

## Community Safety

Community safety plays a vital role in the overall well-being and quality of life of residents. Low crime rates contribute to a stable and supportive environment, which in turn supports economic growth, public health, and a higher standard of living. This section provides an overview of property and violent crime rates in the region, highlighting key safety challenges.

### Property Crime Rates

Property crimes include offenses like burglary, theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson. This section looks at the rate of property crimes per 100,000 residents in the region and compares it to state and national averages.

**Property Crime Rates by County**

This table shows property crime rates for each county, along with state and national comparisons.

County	Annual Property Crimes	Property Crime Rate (Per 100,000 Pop.)	State Average (WI/MN)	National Average
Polk, Burnett, Chisago	1,520	1,351.2	1,982.7 (WI) / 2,207.8 (MN)	2,466.1
Chisago County, MN	639	1,182.2	2,207.8 (MN)	2,466.1
Burnett County, WI	423	2,786.8	1,982.7 (WI)	2,466.1
Polk County, WI	458	1,058.4	1,982.7 (WI)	2,466.1

**Key Insights:**

- **Burnett County** has a significantly higher property crime rate compared to both state and national averages, particularly with a rate of 2,786.8 per 100,000 residents.
- **Chisago County** has a lower rate of property crime (1,182.2), making it safer compared to the state average in Minnesota.
- **Polk County** has a moderate property crime rate at 1,058.4, which is still lower than Burnett County’s rate but could be further reduced.

## Violent Crime Rates

Violent crimes include serious offenses like homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. This section compares the region’s violent crime rates to state and national averages, revealing how the community fares in terms of violent offenses.

### Violent Crime Rates by County

This table compares violent crime rates across counties, alongside state and national averages.

County	Total Violent Crimes (3-Year)	Violent Crime Rate (Per 100,000 Pop.)	State Average (WI/MN)	National Average
Polk, Burnett, Chisago	595	159.40	238.10 (MN) / 304.60 (WI)	416.00
Chisago County, MN	174	89.40	238.10 (MN)	416.00
Burnett County, WI	106	232.60	304.60 (WI)	416.00
Polk County, WI	315	236.90	304.60 (WI)	416.00

#### Key Insights:

- **Chisago County** has the lowest violent crime rate in the region at 89.4, far below both state and national averages.
- **Burnett County** and **Polk County** have relatively higher violent crime rates, with **Polk County** having a rate of 236.9 and **Burnett County** at 232.6.
- The region’s overall violent crime rate is lower than the state and national averages, but disparities between counties suggest areas where additional focus is needed, especially in Burnett and Polk counties.

## Trend Analysis for Community Safety

The following trends provide insight into the region’s safety challenges:

### Property Crime:

Property crime rates are notably higher in **Burnett County** compared to other counties in the region. The data suggests a need for targeted crime prevention measures, particularly in Burnett County.

### Violent Crime:

While the region overall fares better than state and national averages, **Burnett** and **Polk Counties** experience higher rates of violent crime. Further resources and community programs may be needed to address these issues, particularly in areas with the highest crime rates.

### General Crime Trends:

The region’s crime rates are relatively low overall, but disparities between counties highlight areas in need of more focused safety interventions, particularly in **Burnett** and **Polk Counties**.



# Health Behaviors: Lifestyle Choices That Shape Community Health

Health behaviors significantly influence the overall health and well-being of individuals and communities. Lifestyle choices such as tobacco use, diet, physical activity, sleep, substance use, and sexual health all contribute to the risk of chronic diseases and mental health challenges. Understanding the patterns of these behaviors in Polk, Burnett, and Chisago counties can guide interventions to improve health outcomes and reduce the burden of preventable conditions.

## Tobacco Use

Tobacco use remains a leading cause of preventable death, increasing the risk for diseases such as cancer, heart disease, and respiratory illnesses. Despite the national decline in smoking rates, rural communities often experience higher tobacco use rates, coupled with lower rates of successful cessation.

### Smoking & Vaping Rates/Prevalence (Adults)

County	Smoking Rate	State Average	National Average
Polk County	16%	—	—
Burnett County	18%	Wisconsin: 16.5%	Minnesota: 14.1%
Chisago County	14%	—	—

### E-cigarette/Vaping Use Among High School Students

County	Vaping Rate	State Average	National Average
Polk County	14%	—	—
Burnett County	16%	Wisconsin: 19%	Minnesota: 14.1%
Chisago County	13%	—	—

#### Key Insights:

- Tobacco use remains a health risk factor, contributing to lung cancer, heart disease, and respiratory conditions.
- Youth vaping is rising, increasing the potential for nicotine addiction and future tobacco use.
- Tobacco cessation programs and stricter regulations on vaping can help reduce long-term health risks.

## Diet & Exercise

Access to nutritious food and regular physical activity are essential for maintaining a healthy weight, reducing the risk of chronic diseases, and promoting mental health.

### Obesity Rates (Adults)

County	Obesity Rate	State Average	National Average
Polk County	34%	—	—
Burnett County	36%	Wisconsin: 32.3%	Minnesota: 30.7%
Chisago County	32%	—	—

### Access to Exercise Opportunities

County	Exercise Access
Polk County	72%
Burnett County	58%
Chisago County	81%

### Food Insecurity Rates

County	Food Insecurity Rate
Polk County	7.8%
Burnett County	13.5%
Chisago County	4.5%

#### Key Insights:

- Obesity is a risk factor for diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease.
- Limited access to healthy food and exercise spaces exacerbates obesity and related conditions.
- Community initiatives to promote healthy eating and physical activity are vital to improving health outcomes.

## Sleep & Mental Health Indicators

Sleep is crucial for cognitive function and emotional regulation, while mental health challenges contribute to an increased risk of chronic disease, substance use, and lower productivity.

### Average Poor Mental Health Days Per Month

County	Poor Mental Health Days	State Averages
Polk County	4.8 days	Minnesota: 4.1
Burnett County	5.0 days	Wisconsin: 4.3
Chisago County	4.4 days	—

### Suicide Rates (Per 100,000 Residents)

County	Suicide Rate	State Averages
Polk County	18.7	Minnesota: 14.2
Burnett County	17.2	Wisconsin: 16.8
Chisago County	15.9	—

### Sleep Deprivation (Adults Reporting Less Than 7 Hours of Sleep Per Night)

County	Sleep Deprivation Rate	State Averages
Polk County	33%	Minnesota: 29%
Burnett County	36%	Wisconsin: 31%
Chisago County	31%	—

#### Key Insights:

- Sleep deprivation is linked to a variety of health conditions, including obesity, diabetes, and heart disease.
- Mental health challenges, including higher suicide rates, reflect a need for more accessible services in rural areas.
- Expanding mental health services and promoting good sleep hygiene can lead to better overall well-being.

## Alcohol & Drug Use

Substance use, including excessive drinking, opioid misuse, and methamphetamine use, is a growing concern, especially in rural areas with limited access to treatment services. These behaviors contribute to increased crime rates, health conditions, and preventable deaths.

### Excessive Drinking Rates

County	Excessive Drinking Rate	State Averages
Polk County	19%	Minnesota: 21.4%
Burnett County	21%	Wisconsin: 24.2%
Chisago County	17%	—

### Opioid & Methamphetamine Use

- Opioid-related hospitalizations have increased by 39% over the past decade in Wisconsin.
- Methamphetamine-related arrests have surged, particularly among young adults in rural areas.
- Youth Risk Behavior Survey Findings (Wisconsin)
- 8% of high school students report misusing prescription opioids.
- 4.2% of youth report using methamphetamine at least once.

#### Key Insights:

- Substance use disorders contribute to crime, homelessness, and preventable overdoses.
- Alcohol-related injuries and car accidents place a significant burden on families and healthcare systems.
- Expanding treatment services and harm reduction strategies can mitigate the impact of substance use.

## Sexual Activity & Reproductive Health

Access to reproductive healthcare and sexual health education influences teen pregnancy rates, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and overall maternal health outcomes.

### Teen Birth Rates (Per 1,000 Females Age 15-19)

County	Teen Birth Rate	State Averages
Polk County	14.5	Minnesota: 12.1
Burnett County	17.8	Wisconsin: 15.3
Chisago County	10.9	—

### Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) Rates (Chlamydia Cases Per 100,000 Residents)

County	STI Rate (Chlamydia)	State Averages
Polk County	201	Minnesota: 251
Burnett County	238	Wisconsin: 276
Chisago County	187	—

**Key Insights:**

- Limited access to contraception and sexual health education increases unintended pregnancies and STI rates.
- Burnett County’s higher teen birth rate suggests gaps in reproductive health services.
- Expanding reproductive health education and access to contraception can improve overall health outcomes.

### Trend Analysis for Health Behaviors

The following trends are critical to understanding the health behaviors that impact the region's health outcomes:

**Tobacco and Vaping Use:**

Smoking rates are higher in Burnett County, while youth vaping is on the rise, contributing to nicotine addiction and future tobacco-related diseases.

**Obesity and Physical Activity:**

Obesity rates are higher than state averages in Burnett and Polk counties, and access to exercise opportunities is limited, particularly in Burnett County.

**Mental Health and Sleep:**

Mental health challenges, including higher suicide rates, reflect a need for more accessible mental health services. Sleep deprivation continues to be a health concern, impacting overall well-being.

**Substance Use:**

Alcohol use and opioid/methamphetamine misuse continue to grow, contributing to health and social challenges. Increased access to prevention and treatment services is needed.

**Sexual Health:**

Burnett County shows higher teen birth rates and STI rates, signaling gaps in sexual health education and services.

# Clinical Care: Access, Quality, & Rural Healthcare Challenges

Access to high-quality healthcare is essential for improving health outcomes, preventing chronic diseases, and reducing disparities, particularly in rural communities. While St. Croix Health provides a full continuum of care, challenges related to provider availability, insurance coverage, infrastructure, and rural healthcare sustainability continue to impact access.

## Access to Care

### Health Insurance & Coverage Gaps

Health insurance plays a critical role in determining whether individuals seek preventive care, manage chronic conditions, or delay treatment due to cost concerns.

### Uninsured Rates by County

County	Uninsured Rate	State Averages
Burnett County	6.33%	Wisconsin: 5.9%
Polk County	6.07%	Minnesota: 4.2%
Chisago County	3.99%	—

### Key Insights:

- Uninsured individuals are more likely to delay care, leading to higher rates of preventable illness and emergency department visits.
- Expanding access to affordable insurance options and financial assistance programs can help reduce disparities in care.
- Medicaid and Medicare enrollment is significant, especially among the elderly and low-income residents, requiring sustainable reimbursement models to support rural healthcare systems.

## Provider Availability & Workforce Challenges

### Primary Care & Specialist Shortages

Rural communities often face shortages in healthcare providers, leading to longer wait times, delayed diagnoses, and a higher reliance on emergency care.

### Primary Care Provider Ratios (Residents per One Physician):

County	Providers per Physician	State Averages
Burnett County	1:5,580	Wisconsin: 1:1,150
Polk County	1:1,260	Minnesota: 1:1,020
Chisago County	1:2,050	—

**Key Insights:**

- Lower provider availability increases wait times for routine visits and chronic disease management.
- Recruiting and retaining rural healthcare professionals requires competitive compensation, loan forgiveness programs, and strong community partnerships.
- St. Croix Health offers access to a wide range of specialty services, ensuring that most patient needs can be met locally without the need to travel to urban centers.

## Preventive Care & Chronic Disease Management

Preventive healthcare reduces long-term costs by identifying diseases early and improving patient outcomes. However, rural areas often lag behind in screening rates compared to state and national averages.

### Cancer Screening Rates

Routine screenings for breast and colorectal cancer help detect diseases early, improving survival rates.

#### Mammogram Screening Rates (Women 50-74)

County	Screening Rate	State Averages
Burnett County	65.2%	Wisconsin: 75.9%
Polk County	71.8%	Minnesota: 78.1%
Chisago County	74.4%	—

#### Colorectal Cancer Screening Rates (Adults 50-75):

County	Screening Rate	State Averages
Burnett County	63.5%	Wisconsin: 71.9%
Polk County	67.1%	Minnesota: 74.5%
Chisago County	70.2%	—

**Key Insights:**

- Delayed cancer diagnoses result in worse treatment outcomes and higher mortality rates.
- Expanding mobile screening units, improving insurance coverage, and providing patient education can improve screening rates and early detection.

### Hospital & Emergency Care Access

Emergency services are essential for reducing preventable deaths from trauma, heart attacks, strokes, and other time-sensitive conditions.

**Hospitals & Emergency Services**

St. Croix Health serves as a critical access hospital, providing emergency care, inpatient services, and specialized treatments to the region.

**Hospitals per County:**

County	Number of Hospitals
Burnett County	1 Critical Access Hospital
Polk County	3 Critical Access Hospitals
Chisago County	1 Hospital

**Key Insights:**

- Longer EMS response times in rural areas increase risks for stroke, cardiac arrest, and trauma-related deaths.
- Many specialty services require transfers to larger hospitals, delaying care for critical patients.
- Expanding telemedicine options and strengthening regional partnerships can improve emergency care access, potentially saving lives in rural areas.

**Healthcare Infrastructure & Rural Sustainability**

Rural healthcare systems face significant challenges due to rising costs for medical equipment, facility upgrades, and technology. These financial struggles make it harder to sustain healthcare infrastructure, and many rural hospitals are finding it increasingly necessary to build upon philanthropic relationships to support rising healthcare expenses.

**Rural Healthcare Challenges:**

**Aging hospital infrastructure** requires costly upgrades and new investments.

**Recent closures of rural hospitals** in Wisconsin highlight the financial difficulties faced by rural healthcare systems:

In March 2024, **Hospital Sisters Health System (HSHS)** permanently closed **HSHS Sacred Heart Hospital** in Eau Claire and **HSHS St. Joseph's Hospital** in Chippewa Falls. These were the first major hospital closures in Wisconsin in over a decade.

The hospitals cited **financial issues** related to the **COVID-19 pandemic** and **inflation** as key reasons for the closures, with the hospitals not having enough funds to continue operating.

**Key Insights:**

- Rural hospitals face financial pressures due to insufficient reimbursement rates and escalating healthcare costs, making it difficult to maintain operations and invest in new technology or expand services.
- As seen with the closure of HSHS Sacred Heart and HSHS St. Joseph's, when financial sustainability is not met, rural hospitals are forced to close, reducing access to critical healthcare services.



- Hospitals must seek ways to maintain and grow their infrastructure while managing these financial burdens, including partnerships with philanthropic organizations to help bridge the funding gap.

## Trend Analysis for Clinical Care

The following trends are critical to understanding the challenges and opportunities in clinical care across Polk, Burnett, and Chisago counties:

### **Health Insurance & Coverage Gaps:**

Uninsured rates are lower in Chisago County, but remain high in Burnett and Polk counties. Expanding access to affordable insurance options could improve healthcare access across the region.

### **Provider Availability & Workforce Challenges:**

Burnett County has the lowest number of primary care providers per person, which impacts timely access to healthcare. Addressing recruitment and retention in rural areas is key to reducing wait times and improving patient care.

### **Preventive Care & Chronic Disease Management:**

Screening rates for cancer and chronic diseases such as diabetes are lower in Burnett County, which reflects challenges in access to primary care and preventive health services.

### **Hospital & Emergency Care Access:**

The closure of key hospitals in nearby areas, such as the HSHS facilities, highlights the vulnerability of rural healthcare systems. Continued investment in telemedicine and regional care partnerships could alleviate access issues.

### **Healthcare Infrastructure & Rural Sustainability:**

Rural hospitals continue to face financial pressure, requiring increased attention to infrastructure improvements and sustainable care models to ensure long-term access to care.

## Physical Environment: The Impact of Surroundings on Health and Stability

The physical environment significantly impacts public health, economic stability, and quality of life. Factors such as air and water quality, housing conditions, transportation infrastructure, and access to recreational spaces influence long-term health outcomes. Poor environmental conditions can lead to chronic disease, respiratory illnesses, and limited access to essential services. Addressing these challenges is crucial for enhancing community well-being in Polk, Burnett, and Chisago Counties.

# Air & Water Quality

## Air Quality

County	Risk Level
Burnett County	Moderate risk (higher wildfire smoke exposure)
Polk County	Low risk
Chisago County	Low risk

**Recorded Days Exceeding National Air Quality Standards:** Zero (all three counties)

### Key Insights:

- Poor air quality is linked to higher rates of asthma, COPD, and cardiovascular diseases.
- Wildfire smoke exposure is an increasing concern, particularly in Burnett County.
- Reducing vehicle emissions and enforcing industrial pollution controls can help maintain clean air quality.

## Water Quality

County	Nitrate Levels	Impact
Burnett & Polk Counties	Elevated nitrate levels exceeding 10 mg/L	Poses risks for infants (blue baby syndrome) and pregnant women.
Chisago County	Lower nitrate levels, but some arsenic contamination in private wells	—

County	Percentage of Households Using Private Wells
Burnett County	61%
Polk County	47%
Chisago County	32%

### Key Insights:

- Contaminated water can cause neurological, gastrointestinal, and developmental issues, especially in children and older adults.
- Burnett and Polk residents relying on private wells need regular water testing and filtration assistance.
- Groundwater protection programs and rural water infrastructure upgrades can ensure long-term water safety.

## Housing & Built Environment

Safe and stable housing is essential for economic security, mental health, and chronic disease prevention. Inadequate housing conditions can contribute to lead poisoning, respiratory illnesses, and financial instability.

### Housing Affordability & Quality

County	Percentage of Households Facing Severe Housing Problems
Burnett County	14%
Polk County	13%
Chisago County	10%

### Lead Exposure Risks (Homes Built Pre-1978)

County	Percentage of Homes Built Pre-1978
Burnett County	54%
Polk County	48%
Chisago County	32%

#### Key Insights:

- Older housing stock increases risks of lead exposure, mold growth, and high heating costs, contributing to respiratory illnesses and developmental issues in children.
- Overcrowding leads to increased rates of infectious diseases and mental health stress.
- Expanding home repair programs, lead remediation assistance, and affordable housing initiatives can improve community health outcomes.

## Access to Parks & Recreation

Recreational spaces promote physical activity, mental well-being, and reduced obesity rates. However, access to parks and fitness facilities varies across the counties.

County	Percentage with Access to Exercise Opportunities
Burnett County	58%
Polk County	72%
Chisago County	81%

County	Percentage Living Within a 10-Minute Walk to a Park
Burnett County	32%
Polk County	48%
Chisago County	67%

**Key Insights:**

- Regular physical activity reduces risks for obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and mental health disorders.
- Rural areas with fewer parks experience higher rates of physical inactivity.
- Expanding green spaces, improving pedestrian/bike trails, and increasing funding for public park maintenance will encourage outdoor activity and community engagement.

## Transportation & Transit Accessibility

Transportation infrastructure affects access to healthcare, job opportunities, and overall mobility. Rural counties often face longer commute times, limited public transit, and transportation barriers for seniors and low-income residents.

County	Percentage of Households Without a Vehicle
Burnett County	4.33%
Polk County	3.91%
Chisago County	2.87%

County	Percentage of Workers Commuting 60+ Minutes to Work	State Average (Minnesota & Wisconsin)
Burnett County	13.75%	9.5-9.8%
Polk County	14.53%	9.5-9.8%
Chisago County	11.96%	9.5-9.8%

**Key Insights:**

- Limited transportation access affects job retention, healthcare access, and economic stability.
- Seniors and low-income families face challenges getting to medical appointments, work, and grocery stores.
- Expanding public transit options, ride-sharing programs, and telehealth access can help bridge transportation gaps.

## Environmental Health & Climate Risks

Climate change and extreme weather events impact air and water quality, infrastructure stability, and community health. The region faces increasing risks from severe weather, which can exacerbate existing health challenges and disrupt local systems.

County	Key Extreme Weather Events Affecting the Region
Burnett County	Increased flooding and severe storms, impacting agriculture and home stability.
Polk County	Rising storm intensity, leading to power outages and road closures.
Chisago County	More frequent heatwaves, increasing air pollution and respiratory issues.

**Key Insights:**

- Flooding increases risks of mold exposure, waterborne diseases, and home displacement.
- Severe weather disrupts emergency services, strains local infrastructure, and increases stress-related health conditions.
- Investing in disaster preparedness, improving stormwater drainage systems, and promoting sustainable land-use planning can enhance climate resilience.

## Trend Analysis for Physical Environment

The following trends are critical to understanding the environmental challenges facing Polk, Burnett, and Chisago counties:

**Air & Water Quality:**

Burnett and Polk counties have higher nitrate levels in groundwater, with potential risks to infants and pregnant women. Chisago County, while facing lower nitrate levels, has issues with arsenic contamination in some private wells.

Although air quality is generally good across the counties, Burnett County faces higher risks from wildfire smoke, reflecting the increasing impacts of climate change on air quality.

**Housing & Built Environment:**

Housing affordability and quality remain a concern in all three counties, with significant portions of the population facing overcrowding, cost burdens, or poor conditions. Additionally, older housing stocks, particularly in Burnett and Polk counties, increase the risks of lead exposure and respiratory illnesses.

**Access to Recreation:**

While access to parks and exercise opportunities is high in Chisago County (81%), Burnett County lags behind with only 58% of residents having access to exercise opportunities and only 32% of residents living within a 10-minute walk to a park. Polk County shows moderate access levels but still faces challenges.

**Transportation & Transit:**

Transportation barriers are a concern, particularly for rural counties like Burnett and Polk. Although both counties have a significant percentage of workers commuting over 60 minutes (13.75% and 14.53%, respectively), Chisago County shows a lower rate (11.96%). All counties face challenges with transportation for low-income and senior populations.

**Climate Risks:**

Extreme weather events are becoming more frequent, impacting infrastructure and community health. Burnett County faces increased flooding, Polk County experiences rising storm intensity, and Chisago County is experiencing more frequent heatwaves. These changes are exacerbating existing environmental health risks, such as respiratory issues and water contamination.

## Health Outcomes: Measuring the Community’s Well-Being

Health outcomes provide a comprehensive measure of overall community health by examining chronic disease prevalence, mortality rates, maternal and infant health, and mental well-being. These factors highlight disparities in healthcare access, lifestyle behaviors, and social determinants of health in Polk, Burnett, and Chisago counties. Understanding health outcomes helps guide targeted interventions to improve long-term well-being and reduce preventable diseases.

### Chronic Disease & Mortality Rates

Chronic diseases, such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes, are leading causes of death and disability in the region. Many chronic conditions are preventable through lifestyle changes and early interventions.

**Leading Causes of Death (Age-Adjusted Mortality per 100,000 Residents)**

Cause of Death	Polk County	Burnett County	Chisago County	State Averages
Heart Disease	108.3	102.6	91.2	Wisconsin: 99.1, Minnesota: 85.3
Cancer	221.7	243.2	198.4	Wisconsin: 211.5, Minnesota: 189.6
Diabetes	9.8%	11.4%	8.1%	—

**Key Insights:**

- Heart disease and cancer are the leading causes of death in all three counties, with cancer mortality rates being particularly higher in Burnett County.
- Diabetes prevalence is higher in Burnett County, suggesting that further attention is needed for diabetes care in this region.
- These chronic conditions, if not addressed through early detection and effective management, contribute significantly to mortality rates in the region.

### Mental Health & Suicide Rates

Mental health is a critical component of overall well-being, yet rural areas face difficulties in accessing mental health services, contributing to high suicide rates and increasing poor mental health days.

### Mental Health Indicators

Indicator	Polk County	Burnett County	Chisago County	State Averages
Poor Mental Health Days (per month)	4.8 days	5.0 days	4.4 days	Wisconsin: 4.3, Minnesota: 4.1
Suicide Rate (per 100,000 residents)	18.7	17.2	15.9	Wisconsin: 16.8, Minnesota: 14.2

**Key Insights:**

- Suicide rates in all counties exceed the state averages, signaling a need for mental health services in the region.
- A higher number of poor mental health days suggests significant mental health challenges, which may be exacerbated by rural settings where access to care is more limited.
- Mental health services are an important focus for improving overall well-being, especially in rural areas.

## Preventable Hospitalizations & Healthcare Utilization

Preventable hospitalizations are those that could have been avoided with proper outpatient care. These rates serve as an indicator of healthcare access, chronic disease management, and the effectiveness of primary care.

### Preventable Hospitalizations

County	Hospitalization Rate (per 100,000 residents)	State Averages
Burnett County	2,159	Wisconsin: 1,936
Polk County	2,151	Minnesota: 1,721
Chisago County	1,827	—

**Key Insights:**

- Higher-than-average preventable hospitalization rates suggest that there may be a need for improvement in managing chronic diseases and providing access to timely outpatient care.
- These higher rates could reflect an opportunity for targeted interventions to reduce preventable conditions.

## Health Disparities & At-Risk Populations

Certain populations in the region experience higher health risks due to socioeconomic barriers, transportation challenges, and lower healthcare literacy.

**At-Risk Populations**

Population	Health Risks
Rural Residents	Higher rates of heart disease and diabetes due to limited access to specialty care.
Tribal Populations	Disparities in chronic diseases and maternal health outcomes, often facing additional barriers to culturally competent care.
Low-Income Individuals	Greater difficulty accessing medical services, increasing their risk for preventable complications.

**Key Insights:**

- Addressing health disparities through targeted healthcare services, transportation access, and health literacy programs is crucial for improving health equity in these populations.
- Rural, tribal, and low-income populations face distinct challenges that need to be addressed to reduce these disparities.

**Trend Analysis for Health Outcomes**

**Chronic Disease & Mortality Rates:**

Heart disease and cancer remain the leading causes of death, with mortality rates exceeding state averages in all three counties. Burnett County has the highest cancer mortality rate, while diabetes prevalence is notably higher in Burnett County (11.4%), indicating potential challenges in disease prevention and management.

**Mental Health & Suicide Concerns:**

Suicide rates surpass state averages across the region, with Polk County reporting the highest rate (18.7 per 100,000 residents). Burnett County has the highest number of poor mental health days (5.0 per month), reflecting ongoing struggles with mental health access and rural service limitations.

**Preventable Hospitalizations & Healthcare Access:**

Preventable hospitalizations are higher than state averages in Polk and Burnett Counties, suggesting barriers to outpatient care, early intervention, and chronic disease management. These trends may indicate limited healthcare accessibility and gaps in primary care utilization.

**Health Disparities & At-Risk Populations:**

Rural, tribal, and low-income populations face higher health risks due to limited access to medical services, transportation barriers, and lower health literacy. These disparities contribute to poorer health outcomes and increased rates of preventable conditions.



# Additional Data: Civic Engagement & Community Insights

## Voter Participation: A Measure of Civic Engagement

Voter participation reflects the level of civic engagement within a community and influences policy decisions that impact public resources, healthcare, and social services. High voter turnout often correlates with an informed and engaged population that plays an active role in shaping governance at the local, state, and national levels.

### Voter Participation by County

The following table presents the voter participation rates for the 2020 national elections, reporting the percentage of eligible voters who cast their ballots in Polk, Burnett, and Chisago counties, along with state and national averages.

Report Area	Total Citizens Age 18+	Total Votes Cast	Voter Participation Rate
<b>Polk, Burnett, Chisago</b>	88,832	71,082	80.0%
<b>Chisago County, MN</b>	42,278	34,570	81.8%
<b>Burnett County, WI</b>	12,517	10,141	81.0%
<b>Polk County, WI</b>	34,037	26,371	77.5%
<b>Minnesota</b>	4,069,677	3,277,171	80.5%
<b>Wisconsin</b>	4,366,395	3,297,352	75.5%
<b>United States</b>	230,428,731	158,433,557	68.8%

### Key Insights

- **High Engagement:** Voter turnout in the region (80.0%) is comparable to Minnesota’s (80.5%) and higher than Wisconsin’s (75.5%) and the national average (68.8%), indicating strong civic involvement.
- **Chisago & Burnett Counties Lead:** Voter participation in Chisago (81.8%) and Burnett (81.0%) exceeds state averages, suggesting particularly high levels of political engagement.
- **Polk County Lags Slightly:** Polk County’s turnout (77.5%) is lower than Chisago and Burnett but still above the national average, pointing to a possible engagement gap within the county.
- **Civic Impact:** High voter participation reflects a politically active community with the potential to influence local policies on healthcare, education, and economic development.

## Trend Analysis for Voter Participation

### **High Voter Engagement:**

The region consistently demonstrates strong voter turnout, with a large percentage of eligible voters participating in elections.

### **Regional Variation:**

While Chisago and Burnett counties show higher-than-average participation, Polk County trails slightly behind, suggesting differences in political engagement or access to voting resources.

### **Above National Averages:**

The region's voter participation rates exceed the national average, reflecting an engaged electorate that plays an active role in shaping policies that impact community well-being.

# Resources Available to Address Health Needs

To address the significant health needs identified through the Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA), it is important to recognize some of the existing resources already available within the community. These resources, ranging from healthcare facilities and providers to community organizations, public health initiatives, and educational programs, play a critical role in improving health outcomes. This section will outline the existing resources within Polk, Burnett, and Chisago counties that can help mitigate the health challenges identified in the CHNA. By leveraging these resources, the region can take significant steps toward addressing key health disparities and improving overall well-being for its residents.

## Polk County, Wisconsin

<b>Food Pantries / Shelves</b>	Amery Food Shelf	230 Deronda Street, Amery, WI 54001
	Family Pathways Food Shelf - Frederic	1100 Wisconsin Ave. S., Frederic, WI 54837
	Family Pathways Food Shelf - St. Croix Falls	2000 US Highway 8, St. Croix Falls, WI 54024
	Loaves and Fishes Interfaith Food Pantry	300 N. First Street, Luck, WI 54853
	Ruby’s Pantry at The Congregational Church	201 Harriman Ave N., Amery, WI 54001
	St. Croix Falls Food Shelf	809 Pine Street, St. Croix Falls, WI 54024
	The Open Cupboard Food Shelf	402 2nd Avenue, Osceola, WI 54020
<b>Shelters</b>	Community Referral Agency	Polk County Office: 715-825-4414
	Northwoods Homeless Shelters	Amery and Luck, WI
<b>Fitness Centers</b>	Amery Fitness Center	220 N. Keller Avenue, Amery, WI 54001
	Body Logic (Milltown, WI)	202 Main Street W., Milltown, WI 54858

	Snap Fitness (Osceola & St. Croix Falls, WI)	2388 State Road 35, Osceola, WI 54020
	Snap Fitness (St. Croix Falls, WI)	340 E. McKenney Street, St. Croix Falls, WI 54024
	Sunshine Fitness (Multiple Locations)	Amery, Balsam Lake, Clear Lake, Turtle Lake

## Burnett County, Wisconsin

<b>Food Pantries / Shelves</b>	Burnett County Food Pantry	26356 Lakeland Ave. S., Webster, WI 54893
	Grantsburg Area Food Pantry	320 S. Pine Street, Grantsburg, WI 54840
	Grantsburg Area Food Shelf	320 S. Brad Street, Grantsburg, WI 54840
	Ruby’s Food Shelf	24534 State Highway 35/70, Siren, WI 54872
	St. Croix Chippewa Commodities Distribution	24663 Angeline Ave., Webster, WI 54893
<b>Shelters</b>	Burnett County – Salvation Army Faith House	Siren, WI
	Community Referral Agency	Burnett County Office: 715-349-7272
<b>Fitness Centers</b>	Anytime Fitness (Siren, WI)	24556 State Hwy. 35/70, Siren, WI 54872
	Grantsburg Fitness & Performance	705 WI-70, Grantsburg, WI

## Chisago County, Minnesota

<b>Food Pantries / Shelves</b>	Chisago Lakes Area Family Pathways	10586 Liberty Lane, Chisago City, MN 55013
	Fare For All – Trinity Lutheran Church	38460 Lincoln Trail, North Branch, MN 55056
	Feed the Need Program – Amador Town Hall	37475 Park Trail, Almelund, MN 55012
	Harris Covenant Church	43680 Gates Ave., Harris, MN 55032

	North Branch Family Pathways	6381 Main Street, North Branch, MN 55056
	Ruby’s Pantry – North Branch	Access Church, 4359 392nd Street, North Branch, MN 55056
	Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church Community Meal	28005 Old Towne Road, Chisago City, MN 55013
<b>Shelters</b>	A Place For You	Naloxone Access Point, 220 3rd Ave. SE, Pine City, MN 55063
	Family Pathway’s Black Dog Hill Shelter	651-672-8040
	New Pathways Shelter & Support	310 S. Ashland Street, Cambridge, MN 55008
<b>Fitness Centers</b>	Anytime Fitness (Chisago City, North Branch, MN)	11183 Lake Blvd., Chisago City, MN 55013
	Iron Yard (North Branch, MN)	6459 Ash Street, North Branch, MN 55056
	Kettlebell Gym (North Branch, MN)	4628 Isanti Trail, North Branch, MN 55056
	Snap Fitness (Lindstrom, Wyoming, MN)	12715 Lake Blvd., Linstrom, MN 55045
	Xplode Sports Training (North Branch, MN)	38955 Forest Blvd., North Branch, MN 55056

# Prior CHNA (2022) Impact Summary

This section evaluates the impact of initiatives and actions taken in response to the significant health needs identified in the prior Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) for the period from July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2025. St. Croix Health focused on expanding healthcare access and community programming, improving patient navigation and support, and fostering inclusion. By addressing challenges related to access to care, mental health awareness, and social determinants of health, we aimed to enhance overall community health and well-being. Below is a summary of the actions implemented and the outcomes achieved.

## 1. ACCESS

### Increasing Convenient Opportunities to Visit a Healthcare Provider

- **Telehealth Equipment Upgrades:** Improved telehealth capabilities for tele-hospitalist and tele-behavioral health services to expand virtual care options.
- **Mammography Services Expansion:** Added mammogram screening services at our Webster, WI location to increase access.
- **School-Based Therapy Services:** Provided physical and occupational therapy to students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) at Frederic, Unity, St. Croix Falls, and Clear Lake School Districts.
- **Streamlined Scheduling & Patient Access:**
  - Implemented scheduling staff at check-out locations in primary and specialty care to coordinate follow-up care before patients leave the facility.
  - Improved phone operations with direct department selection, reducing wait times and enhancing patient communication.
- **Increased Appointment Availability:**
  - Introduced same-day primary care appointment availability across all locations.
  - Expanded same-day scheduling for mammograms and ultrasounds to reduce delays in diagnosis.
  - Launched Quick Care services for urgent needs when same-day primary care appointments are unavailable.
  - Enabled MyChart self-scheduling, allowing patients to book their own primary care and mammogram screenings online.
  - Established double-booking accommodations for urgent cases, ensuring timely care for those in need.

## Enhancing Technology to Improve Patient Engagement & Self-Care

- **Luma Health Partnership:**
  - Established a new partnership with Luma Health to create more efficient communication pathways and improve patient engagement.
  - Developed new workflows that enhance patient interactions, improving appointment scheduling, reminders, and rescheduling options.
  - Sent real-time appointment reminders and instructions via text and email.
  - Improved rescheduling communication when provider availability changes.
  - Used mass outreach to patients due for preventive screenings, increasing participation in preventative care.
- **Community Health Awareness:**
  - Utilized local newspapers and social media platforms to inform the public about available health services and important health concerns.
- **Future Healthcare Expansion and Infrastructure Development**
  - Purchased 101 acres for a future healthcare campus, ensuring space for long-term growth and healthcare service expansion.
- **Workforce Development**
  - Recruited additional skilled healthcare professionals, including international candidates, to address staffing shortages and enhance patient care.
  - Began pathway development for employee growth and retention to ensure long-term workforce stability.

## 2. SUPPORT: Strengthening Community Partnerships and Resource Accessibility

### Building Stronger Community Collaborations

- **Active Leadership in Community Organizations:**
  - Member of the Polk County Economic Development Corporation, aligning healthcare services with local economic initiatives.
  - Joined five local Chambers of Commerce: Chisago Lakes, Falls Chamber, Balsam Lake, Frederic, and Webster.
- **Public Health & Resource Partnerships:**
  - Collaborated on a county-wide transportation feasibility study to assess and improve transportation barriers for accessing healthcare.
  - Partnered with United Way St. Croix Valley to distribute diapers and wipes to families in need.
  - Conducted food drives to support local food shelves and address community hunger.
  - Led multiple American Red Cross Blood Drives to contribute to regional blood supply.
  - Introduced RSV preventative products in clinics and pharmacies, ensuring accessibility for infants, pregnant women, and seniors.

## Connecting Vulnerable Populations to Essential Resources

- Hospital staff coordinated patient connections to community organizations for safe discharge planning, homelessness support, and dementia care resources.
- Collaborated with local agencies to provide homeless kits with essential items for those in need.
- Engaged in Dementia Coalition efforts in Polk and Burnett Counties to improve resources for those with memory-related illnesses and their caregivers.
- Began participating in efforts to organize multi-agency care conferences to enhance coordination between community partners and patients in need of additional support.
- Partnered with public health teams to strengthen collaboration in addressing social determinants of health.

## Improving Patient Navigation and Chronic Care Management

- **OB Nurse Navigator Program:**
  - Established a dedicated nurse role to support patients from pregnancy through postpartum recovery.
  - Connected expectant parents to Public Health (WIC, CPS, Family Resource Center in Polk and Burnett Counties).
  - Distributed baby essentials through Second Stork, including diapers, wipes, clothing, and pack-and-plays.
- **Chronic & Transitional Care Management:**
  - Launched Chronic Care Management programs to help patients manage long-term conditions through structured care plans.
  - Began Transitional Care Management services to support patients moving from hospital care to home-based recovery, reducing hospital readmissions.

## 3. INCLUSION: Fostering a Culture of Belonging and Community Engagement

### Mental Health Awareness & Reducing Stigma

- Conducted a Mental Health Awareness campaign during May, educating the community on reducing stigma, seeking help, and supporting those facing mental health challenges.

### Advancing Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Efforts

- **Diversity & Inclusion Initiatives:**
  - Enhanced internal communications and social media to foster a culture of belonging and health equity.
  - Integrated monthly reflective team discussions to encourage open conversations about inclusivity and patient-centered care.



## Ensuring Patient & Community Voices are Heard

- Temporary Patient Advisory Committee established to gather community and patient feedback in preparation for a new campus, ensuring that voices from diverse backgrounds help to make service improvements

## 4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & VOLUNTEERISM

At St. Croix Health, our commitment to the community extends beyond healthcare services. We actively engage in initiatives that promote health, education, and well-being across our service area. Through sponsorships, volunteerism, and collaborative partnerships, we strive to make a meaningful impact on the lives of those we serve.

### Active Community Participation & Support

#### Financial Sponsorships & Health Education Outreach

- Maintaining financial prudence, we carefully dedicate resources to support select 501(c)(3) organizations, prioritizing essential services that directly benefit the community.
- Participated in school career/job fairs, wellness fairs, county fairs, and other community-wide events to engage and educate the public.
- Implemented and hosted Steady As You Go classes twice per week, offering both sitting and standing options to focus on balance, flexibility, and strength training—promoting mobility, reducing fall risks, and encouraging overall wellness among aging adults.
- Partnered with the American Red Cross to host multiple blood drives annually.
- Organized and participated in the United Way Diaper Drive to support families in need.
- Supported childhood literacy through the Reach Out and Read program.
- Hosted Expectant Parents Classes to provide essential education for new families.
- Engaged in strategic planning with local school districts, economic development councils, and public health agencies to align community health priorities.

#### Community Support Groups Available at No Cost

- Grief Support Group – Helping individuals navigate loss with professional guidance and peer support.
- Pain Management Class – Educating community members on managing chronic pain effectively.
- The Latch Weekly Support Group – Offered breastfeeding support and guidance for new mothers.

#### Community Training & Safety Initiatives

- Bike Rodeo – Promoting helmet safety education for children.
- Stroke Education – Raising awareness about stroke prevention and response.
- Stop the Bleed Classes – Equipping community members with lifesaving emergency response skills.
- Water Safety for Elementary Students – Teaching critical drowning prevention techniques.
- Car Seat Safety & Installation Program – Ensuring proper child car seat use through hands-on demonstrations.
- Healthcare Provider Education – Offered rural health education sessions for local healthcare professionals.

- Participated in National Night Out events to engage with the community and promote health and safety awareness.
- Facilitated health screenings and education booths at county fairs and community festivals.

#### **Active Leadership & Membership in Community Organizations**

- Active participation in five local Chambers of Commerce, with staff regularly attending meetings and events to strengthen business and healthcare connections.
- Active membership in a Rotary Club.
- Member of the Polk County Economic Development Corporation, aligning healthcare services with local economic initiatives.
- Engaged in strategic planning with local school districts, economic development councils, and public health agencies to align community health priorities.
- Regular collaboration with public health and other local healthcare systems.

#### **Investing in the Future of Healthcare**

- Coordinated Healthcare Scholarship Programs to support and inspire the next generation of healthcare professionals.
- Provided hands-on career exploration opportunities for students interested in healthcare fields.

#### **Raising Awareness & Advocacy Through Digital Platforms**

- Promoted cancer screenings to encourage early detection and treatment.
- Educated the public on immunization schedules to protect community health.
- Provided resources for mental health awareness.
- Distributed digital and print education materials to make healthcare information more accessible to all.

#### **Community Engagement by the Numbers – 2024**

In 2024, we began formally tracking employee and community involvement to establish a baseline for future measurement. The following reflects our recorded impact to date, with additional data still being compiled:

- **60+ community engagement activities** conducted, strengthening connections with local residents.
- **187 employees actively participated** in community events, demonstrating our commitment to service.
- **591 total employee volunteer hours** dedicated to supporting the health and well-being of our region.

## Conclusion

Through the initiatives outlined in this report, St. Croix Health has taken meaningful steps toward expanding healthcare access, strengthening community partnerships, and fostering inclusion. Efforts to increase appointment availability, improve patient navigation, and enhance virtual care services have helped reduce barriers to care across the region.

Community programs, volunteer initiatives, and strategic collaborations have supported public health priorities, addressed social determinants of health, and deepened engagement with local organizations. Tracking employee and community involvement in 2024 has provided a measurable baseline, offering insight into the impact of these efforts.

Investments in technology, workforce development, and infrastructure have contributed to increasing service capacity, while the purchase of 101 acres for future healthcare expansion reflects a long-term commitment to sustaining and growing healthcare services.

Through these initiatives, St. Croix Health remains deeply woven into the fabric of the communities we serve. Our ongoing efforts in education, advocacy, volunteerism, and support programs continue to strengthen our mission of helping everyone live healthier, happier, and longer lives.

Our commitment to addressing community health needs remains strong, as we continuously improve healthcare delivery and strengthen community support.

# Conclusion: Building a Healthier Future Together

The 2025–2027 Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) provides a data-driven foundation for addressing the most pressing health challenges in Polk County, Burnett County, and Chisago County. Through a collaborative approach, this assessment outlines strategic priorities aimed at improving healthcare access, addressing social determinants of health, and strengthening coordinated health management.

## **Sustaining Access to Care & Healthcare Infrastructure**

Ensuring that individuals receive timely, high-quality, and affordable care remains a priority. Investments in workforce development, healthcare infrastructure, and digital health tools will play a critical role in enhancing service delivery. Expanding telehealth services, strengthening provider networks, and modernizing facilities will help address gaps in care, particularly in rural areas where access remains limited.

## **Addressing Social & Economic Drivers of Health**

Recognizing the impact of social and economic conditions on health outcomes, this CHNA emphasizes housing stability, food security, employment opportunities, and transportation access. Strengthening partnerships among local organizations, policymakers, and healthcare providers will enhance the ability to deliver coordinated, sustainable solutions that improve quality of life and reduce disparities.

## **Advancing Empowerment & Coordinated Health Management**

Supporting individuals in understanding, accessing, and managing their health is key to long-term community well-being. Expanding health education, digital tools, and care coordination efforts will empower individuals to make informed health decisions. Ensuring seamless transitions of care, reducing stigma around mental health and substance use, and promoting advance care planning will further strengthen efforts to provide comprehensive, patient-centered care.

This assessment serves as a guiding resource for improving community health outcomes over the next three years. Ensuring transparency and accessibility remains essential, and the 2025 CHNA Report will support continued decision-making, partnership development, and program implementation.

By aligning efforts across healthcare providers, community organizations, and residents, sustainable progress can be achieved. Through coordinated action, shared responsibility, and a commitment to health equity, the region can build a stronger, healthier future for all.

# Community Health Needs Assessment Report Availability

The 2025 Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) is publicly available to ensure transparency and accessibility for all community members. This report can be accessed through the following channels:

- **Online:** Available for download at [saintcroixhealth.org](https://saintcroixhealth.org)
- **Print Copies:** Hard copies can be requested by contacting [marketing@scrmc.org](mailto:marketing@scrmc.org)

For any questions or additional information, please contact St. Croix Health at [marketing@scrmc.org](mailto:marketing@scrmc.org).

# Adoption of 2025 Community Health Needs Assessment

The 2025 Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) has been formally reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors of St. Croix Regional Medical Center (doing business as St. Croix Health). This CHNA accurately reflects the health needs of the community, and the Board acknowledges its support and endorsement of the findings presented in this report.

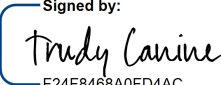
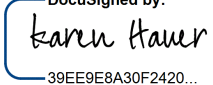
## Board Approval & Signatures

Approved by the Governing Body on:



March 25

, 2025

Position	Name	Signature	Date
<b>Chair of the Governing Body</b>	Trudy Canine	Signed by:  F24F8468A0FD4AC...	3/27/2025
<b>Secretary of the Governing Body</b>	Karen Hauer	DocuSigned by:  39EE9E8A30F2420...	3/27/2025

# Appendix A: Quantitative and Secondary Data Sources for 2025–2027 Community Health Priorities

## Introduction

This appendix contains a comprehensive list of **quantitative and secondary data sources** used in the 2025–2027 Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA). These sources include national, state, and local datasets that inform the community’s health status, socioeconomic factors, environmental influences, and healthcare access. **This appendix does not include qualitative or subjective data** such as focus groups, stakeholder interviews, or community surveys.

### a. National Health & Demographic Data Sources

- **Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)**
- **American Cancer Society**
  - *Cancer Facts & Figures 2024*
- **American College of Emergency Physicians**
  - *Rural Emergency Care Gaps Report*
- **Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) (CDC)**
  - State-level mental health and sleep deprivation data
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**
  - Maternal & Infant Health Data
  - National smoking and vaping trends
  - Obesity and chronic disease impact
  - Social isolation, mental health, and family support trends
  - Preventive Care Measures
- **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)**
  - Enrollment Data Reports
  - Rural Hospital Reimbursement Trends
- **County Health Rankings & Roadmaps**
  - Income, employment, education, and housing data

- Mental health indicators and substance use statistics
- Percentage of residents in Burnett, Polk, and Chisago counties with access to parks and recreational areas
  
- **Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA)**
  - Dental Provider Shortages
  - Physician Shortage Area Designation
  
- **Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF)**
  - Medicaid & Medicare Enrollment Statistics
  
- **National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS)**
  - Birth outcomes and maternal health data
  
- **National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)**
  - Trends in opioid, methamphetamine, and other substance use disorders
  
- **National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)**
  - Social isolation, mental health, and family support trends
  
- **National Rural Health Association (NRHA)**
  - Emergency & Trauma Care in Rural America
  - Rural Hospital Sustainability Report
  
- **National Vital Statistics Reports**

## **b. State & Regional Health Data Sources**

- **Minnesota Department of Health**
  - Dental Workforce Report
  - Primary Care Workforce Report
  - Rural Emergency Medical Services Report
  - Statistics on tobacco use, obesity, food access, mental health, substance use, and reproductive health
  
- **Minnesota Department of Health Services (DHS)**
  - Health Insurance Coverage Report
  - Lead poisoning prevention reports for Burnett and Polk counties
  - Economic and social determinants of health
  
- **Minnesota Hospital Association**
  - Rural Health Care Reports
  
- **Minnesota Perinatal Statistics Report**
  - Maternal & Infant Health Indicators
  
- **Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)**
  - Air pollution monitoring in Chisago County



- **Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS)**
  - EMS Response Time Data
  - Economic and social determinants of health, including employment and poverty trends
  - Lead poisoning prevention reports for Burnett and Polk counties
  - Health Insurance Coverage Report
- **Wisconsin Hospital Association**
  - Financial Challenges in Rural Healthcare
- **Wisconsin Office of Rural Health**
  - Provider Workforce Data
- **Wisconsin Perinatal Quality Collaborative**
  - Low Birth Weight & Infant Mortality Data
- **Wisconsin Rural Health Association**
  - Rural Hospital Closure Data

## c. Social, Economic, & Environmental Data Sources

- **American Community Survey (ACS)**
  - Percentage of households without a vehicle
  - Average commute times for Burnett, Polk, and Chisago counties
- **Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)**
  - Unemployment rates, job growth, and workforce trends
- **Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)**
  - Severe housing problems and home quality indicators
- **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)**
  - Air pollution data and water contamination reports
- **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)**
  - Floodplain mapping and regional storm damage reports
- **Federal Reserve Economic Data (FRED)**
  - Income inequality and economic mobility statistics
- **National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)**
  - College enrollment trends and workforce readiness data
- **National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)**
  - Benefits of green spaces on mental health and obesity prevention
- **U.S. Census Bureau**
  - Racial/ethnic demographics, age distribution, and socioeconomic factors
  - County-level housing affordability and lead exposure risk
  - Small Area Health Insurance Estimates (SAHIE)

- **U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)**
  - Food insecurity statistics and rural food access concerns
- **U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT)**
  - Public transit access and transportation barriers

## **d. Youth & Behavioral Health Data Sources**

- **Minnesota and Wisconsin Departments of Education**
  - High school graduation rates and early childhood education enrollment
- **Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) (Minnesota & Wisconsin)**
  - Adolescent tobacco use, drug use, and sexual health trends