

Columbia County Public Health 2025 Annual Report



About Us

Columbia County Public Health (CCPH) is charged with protecting and improving the health of the community through education, promoting healthy lifestyles, and preventing injuries. Our Public Health staff works to limit health disparities by advocating for health care equity, quality, and accessibility.

Mission:

Promoting health, safety, and well-being for all residents through education, outreach, and community partnerships.



PREVENT•PROTECT•PROMOTE

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2025 Health and Human Services Board

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THANK YOU



Columbia County Public Health extends sincere appreciation to the Columbia County Health and Human Services Board for their continued leadership, guidance, and support. The Board's commitment to public health enables the department to protect and promote the well-being of all residents through prevention, education, and community partnerships. The progress and accomplishments highlighted in this annual review are made possible through the board's trust and collaboration, which strengthen our shared mission to build a healthier Columbia County

Our Team



Ellen Ellingsworth
Health Officer



MiKayla Olson
Nurse
Supervisor



Mackenzie Bush
WIC Director



Melissa Smith
WIC Diet
Tech



Shania Blader
Public
Health Aide



Taylor Kittleson
Public Health
Nurse



Melissa Abel
Public Health
Nurse



Ceree George
Public Health
Nurse



Rhiannon Kuske
Health Educator

2025 staff no longer with the division:

Chelsey Wendt (Community Health Worker), Marie Darling-Ellis (Health Educator/Community Health Worker), Tia Dorshorst (Health Educator) & Emily Seltzner (WIC Director)

Programs & Services

- Blood pressure checks
- Car seat checks
- Childhood lead poisoning education & case management
- Communicable disease follow-up
- CPR education
- Fentanyl/Xylazine test strip distribution
- Fluoride varnish
- Growing great families/ Growing great kids
- Health Checks
- Hygiene/diaper distribution
- Immunizations
- Narcan training & distribution
- Overdose fatality review (OFR)
- Prenatal care coordination
- Radon test kits
- Reproductive clinic
- Safe sleep education
- TB skin testing
- Transient non-community program
- Well water testing
- WIC



A Year in Review



Grants

Annual Grants

Each year CCPH is awarded annual grants which come from state or federal funding. Some of these funds are used to help support a small percentage of public health mandated services.



Immunization (Federal)

CCPH is expected to administer vaccines primarily to children from birth through 18 years of age. We assure the development and maintenance of a jurisdiction-wide immunization infrastructure necessary to raise immunization levels for universally recommended vaccines.

Lead (Federal)

CCPH provides services that support the elimination of childhood lead poisoning and the early detection and treatment of children with lead poisoning.

Prevention (Federal-ending 2026)

The prevention block grant supports capacity building and core service development in various areas. CCPH focused on mental health work.

Maternal Child Health Grant (Federal)

CCPH, in collaboration with community partners, implemented and evaluated strategies to improve social connections in our community among families with children.

Annual Grants Cont.

Communicable Disease (State)

Funds are used to help prevent communicable disease; this helps individuals and entire populations. Prompt identification and control of communicable diseases reduce illness and premature deaths, health costs, and absenteeism.

Fit Families (Federal-ended in 2025)

The Fit Families program addresses both food and nutrition security and adopts all approaches to deliver evidence-based nutrition education and obesity prevention activities with an equity lens.

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) (Federal)

Funding is used to improve the overall health and nutrition of women, infants, and children through nutrition and breastfeeding assessment and education, referrals to health and social services, and supplemental foods to eligible individuals

Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) (Federal)

CCPH used funds to strengthen the capacity and capability of the public health system to prepare for, respond to, and recover from public health threats and emergencies.

Child Passenger Safety-Department of Transportation (Federal)

CCPH used funds to be able to provide eligible families with car seats.



Sauk Prairie Healthy Life Grant

4,597

hygiene products provided

1,590

feminine hygiene products provided

542

prep packs distributed

In 2025, CCPH wrote for the Sauk Prarie Health Life Grant that would allow us to provide education and resources to students within Columbia County schools, focusing on helping adolescents access hygiene education and hygiene products. Having access to these resources is crucial for both physical and emotional health.

Prep packs were created for students to keep at school and utilize as needed. Each prep pack

contained:

Toothbrush

Toothpaste

Floss

Deodorant

Body wipe

Pads

Tampons

School Participation

9

public school districts who participated



School Participation in Hygiene Education



School Requests for Further Items

Communication

In 2025, CCPH launched its own Facebook page, which has proven to be an excellent platform for disseminating information to our community.

Posts are typically shared Monday through Friday and highlight the department's programs/services along with community safety information and tips. In our first year we gained 377 followers, had 14,850 reactions, clicks, comments, shares and saves, and had a total of 315,800 views.

377

Followers



315800

Views

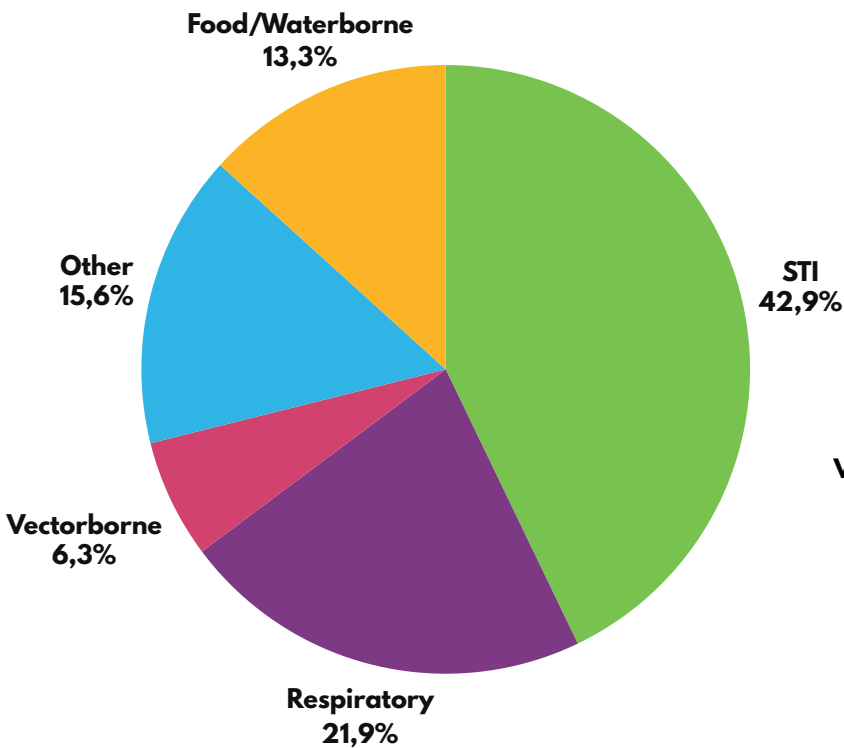


Communicable Disease

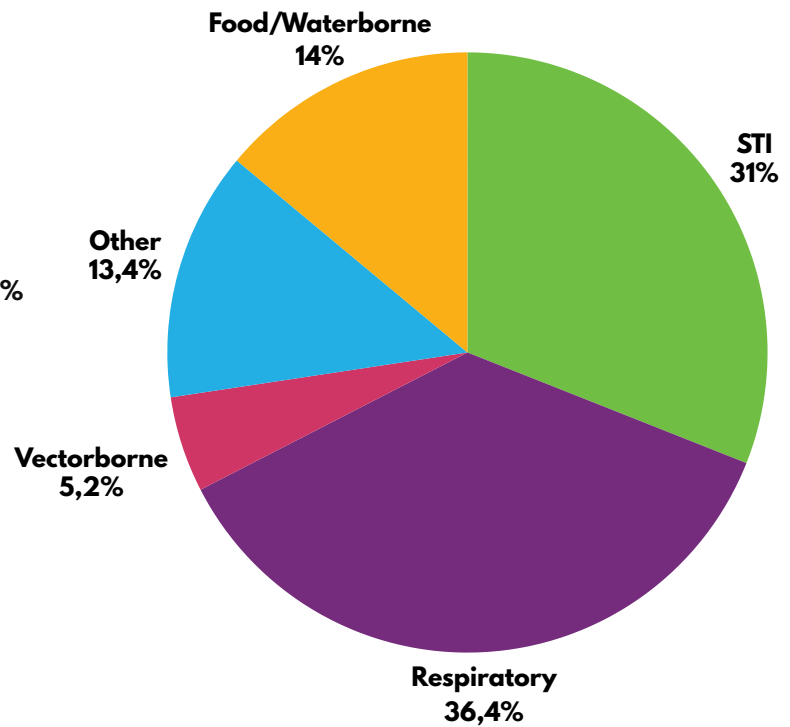
CCPH follows up on all reportable communicable diseases in conjunction with Chapter 252 of Wisconsin statutes.

In 2025, CCPH followed up on a total of 300 communicable disease cases, 128 of those cases were sexually transmitted infection (STI) cases.

2025 Communicable Disease Follow up



2024 Communicable Disease Follow ups



Tuberculosis, including latent tuberculosis infection (LTBI), is one of the many communicable diseases that CCPH follows up on. CCPH helped 9 people receive treatment for LTBI in 2025. There were no cases of active TB in Columbia County.

People with latent TB do not have any symptoms and cannot spread TB. If they do not get treatment, however, they may develop active TB disease in the future, spread the disease to others, and feel quite ill.



Reproductive Health

CCPH offers reproductive health education, STI testing and treatment, and pregnancy testing through the reproductive clinic. This ensures all community members have access to screening for common STIs (chlamydia, gonorrhea, trichomonas) and treatment for low or no cost. Education on prevention of STIs is provided regardless of result.

CCPH surpassed its goal of reproductive clients by

27%

11

STI specimens collected through Columbia County Jail

Columbia County residents provided with reproductive health education

139

Immunizations

CCPH provides immunizations to both children and adults that reside in Columbia County. Immunization appointments are offered in office or as a home visit. Vaccines are made available through the Vaccines for Children and the Vaccines for Adults program.

The Vaccines for Children Program provides vaccines to children who are uninsured, on Badgercare, or are Native American/Alaskan Native.

The Vaccines for Adults Program provides vaccines to adults who are uninsured or underinsured. These programs, along with our flexibility for visits, help bridge the gap to access vaccinations and help keep our communities healthy.

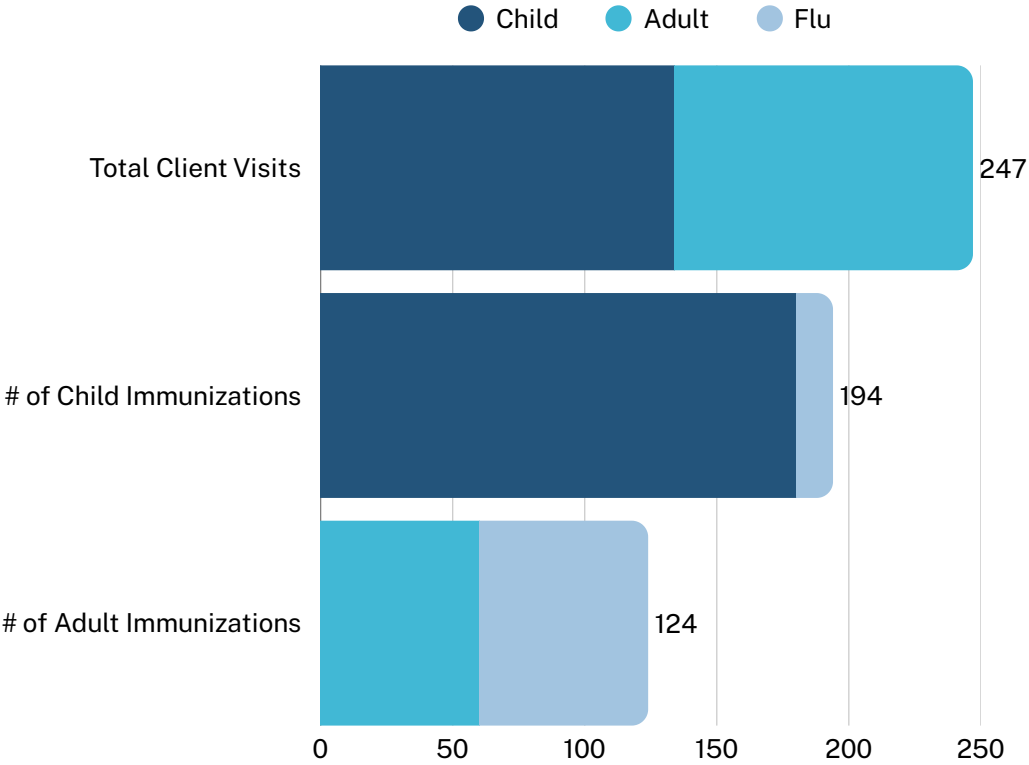


In 2024, only 69.3% of Columbia County 2-year-olds were up to date with their immunizations. That percentage has decreased to 66.4% in 2025. In an attempt to increase the county's vaccine rate percentage, CCPH sent quarterly postcards to families whose children are behind schedule for recommended childhood vaccines. These postcards share information on the importance of staying up to date on childhood vaccines to reduce the risk of spread of communicable diseases in the community, as well as information on contacting their child's provider or contacting Public Health to see if their child qualifies for vaccines through the Vaccines for Children Program.



Over the past year, CCPH has continued partnering with O’ Connell Pharmacy out of Sun Prairie to offer vaccine clinics at schools and community buildings in an effort to increase vaccine rates. Our partnership allows us to offer vaccines to a wider range of individuals at locations around the county that are convenient and easy for individuals to access.

2025 Immunization Rates

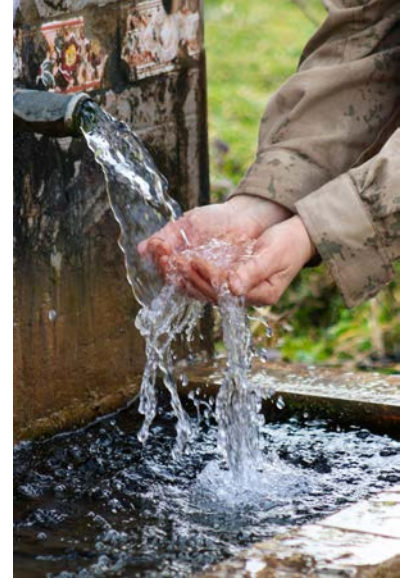


In 2025, CCPH had a total of 247 immunization visits. 134 of those visits were children and 113 of those visits were adults. CCPH administered 194 immunizations, consisting of 180 routine childhood immunizations and 14 flu immunizations. CCPH administered 124 adult immunizations, consisting of 60 adult immunizations and 64 flu immunizations.

Environmental Health

TNC Contract

In 2025, Columbia County became a contract county for the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Transient Non-Community (TNC) Program. This contract requires CCPH staff to complete well water samples and inspections of TNC public water systems (PWS). Columbia County currently has 86 PWS. In 2025, all 86 systems were inspected which included 98 site visits and 217 water samples that were completed.



Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program

CCPH provides case management services to all families of children with a blood lead level above 3.5ug/dL. Case management services include lead education, lead exposure prevention information, and nutrition counseling. In 2025, CCPH provided case management to 19 children in 2025. Healthy Homes Kits were purchased and will be given to families of children with an elevated blood lead level. These kits include a HEPA vacuum, wet mop and reusable pads, vinegar, dish soap, spray bottle for cleaning, and paper towels.

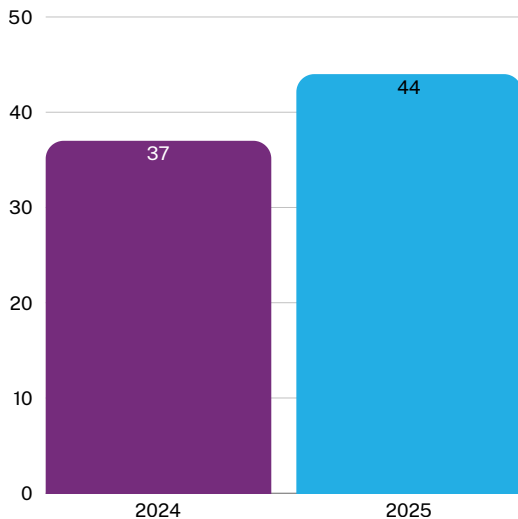


Hydroponic Garden

In 2025, CCPH received a donation from Aspirus Divine Savior of a Fork Farms Flex Farm hydroponic garden. This garden will help provide fresh produce to any community members. Only lettuce was planted in 2025 and there are plans to plant many more types of plants in 2026.

Well Water Testing

Kits Given Out



CCPH participates in the WellTAP program offered by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS). This program offers free well water testing kits to those who qualify. Qualifications include having a child 12 or under, a pregnant or immunocompromised person in the home, and having a burden that prevents someone from testing on their own. Of the 55 people who inquired about well water testing, 12 people or 21% did not qualify for WellTAP and were referred to a lab.

Environmental Complaints

CCPH is responsible for investigating possible human health hazard complaints as well as providing education, assistance, or referrals on other topics such as mold, restaurant licensing and complaints, landlord/tenant complaints, bugs, etc. In 2025, staff followed up on 138 complaints and concerns.



Radon Testing

Radon is an odorless and invisible radioactive gas naturally released from rocks, soil, and water. Radon can get into homes or buildings through small cracks or holes and build up to higher levels. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer deaths in the United States after cigarette smoke. In 2025, 60 test kits were given out to community members.

Rabies



Rabies is a fatal but preventable viral disease. It can spread to people and pets if they are bitten or scratched by a rabid animal. In the United States, rabies is mostly found in wild animals like bats, raccoons, skunks, and foxes. CCPH is responsible for following up on concerns of potential rabies exposure within the county. Staff provide recommendations for testing, post exposure prophylaxis, and follow up to clients to ensure that recommendations are followed. CCPH received 37 calls from community members looking for recommendations on rabies. Of these, 23 animals were tested by the Wisconsin State Lab of Hygiene: 2 animals were unable to be tested, 1 tested positive, and 20 tested negative for rabies.



Injury Prevention

Harm reduction is an evidence-based approach that is critical to engaging with people who use substances and equipping them with life-saving tools and information to create positive change in their lives and potentially save their lives. CCPH offers several harm reduction services that continue to be active.

Narcan Distribution= 375 boxes

CCPH continues to be a part of the Narcan Direct Program offered through the state. The Narcan direct program allows us to provide Narcan education and Narcan free of charge to any Columbia County resident. In partnership with the Prevention and Response Columbia County (PARCC) coalition, Narcan is distributed throughout the county including to local EMS, law enforcement, jails, schools, and a handful of community locations.

Test strips= 75 strip kits

CCPH distributes both Fentanyl and Xylazine test strip kits. These kits are free to the public. They include everything needed for the individual to test for the presence of fentanyl or xylazine in substances.

Recovery App

CCPH, with funding through the opioid abatement settlement funds, launched the “Recover Columbia County” app. This app contains vital information for people seeking recovery resource, such as support groups, peer support and providers. The information also highlights where someone can get Narcan and community resources, like housing,



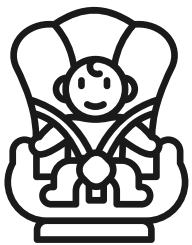
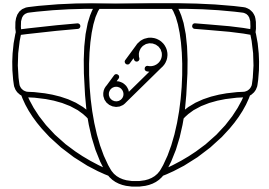
Maternal & Child Health

Maternal Child Health programs improve the health and well-being of mothers, infants and children. Maternal and child health is a crucial public health concern due to the chance to eliminate preventable deaths among women, children, and adolescents while significantly enhancing their health and overall well-being.



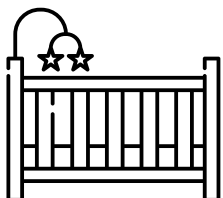
All public health staff completed training on prenatal vehicle safety, in preparation for roll out in 2026.

Our annual diaper drive was successful and allowed us to support 167 families by providing 358 diapers and 285 packs of wipes.



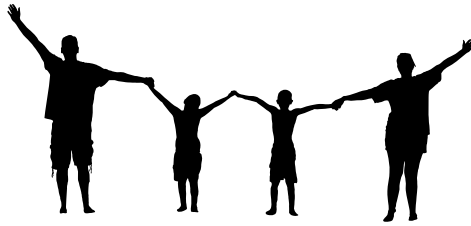
50 car seats were distributed in 2025, and a total of 76 car seat checks were completed.

31 individuals were enrolled in Prenatal Care Coordination Program, an increase from 12 enrolled clients in 2024.



18 clients were given safe sleep education, while 8 sleep sacks, 4 fitted sheets, and 4 portable cribs were distributed to families in need.

Growing Great Kids and Growing Great Families



CCPH initiated the Growing Great Kids and Growing Great Families Program in May 2024 to encourage nurturing, responsive, and stimulating relationships between parents/caregivers and their children during the early years of a child's life when growth and development support is most critical.



How do the Growing Great Kids and Growing Great Families Programs support families in Columbia County?

Both programs provide personalized nurse visits to encourage families to explore topics outlined in the curriculum guides, empowering parents to make choices that align with their family's unique needs and values. These visits are offered at no cost, regardless of participant insurance status, thereby expanding the demographic of families that can participate.

The visiting nurse provides a safe space where parents can discuss their family's needs as well as ask health-related questions, ensuring continuous support, guidance, and connection to local resources. The ultimate goal is to enhance the health and wellbeing of the entire family unit.

The curricula are designed to be interactive, family-driven, and strength-based. Each visit includes engaging activities that not only educate on specific topics but also foster positive interactions among families.



What are the main differences between the Growing Great Kids and Growing Great Families curricula?

The Growing Great Kids Curriculum can be done from the prenatal period through 36 months of age. This curriculum offers education and support on topics related to child development. Topics include attachment and self-regulation, social and emotional development, cues and communication, brain development, physical development and learning through play, and basic care.

Growing Great Families offers support to the family unit as a whole. Topics include strengthening families, stress management, life skills, building protective buffers, and promoting parental resilience can be done at any time through age 10. Both curricula can be done individually or together.

Enrollment in Growing Great Kids/Growing Great Families grew by 18% in 2025!



Women, Infants and Children (WIC)

Mission of WIC

WIC serves to safeguard the health of low-income pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, infants, and children up to age 5 who are at nutritional risk by providing nutritious foods to supplement diets, information on healthy eating including breastfeeding promotion and support, and referrals to health care.

796 WIC PARTICIPANTS

- 56 Pregnant Participants
- 100 Breastfeeding Participants
- 72 Postpartum Participants
- 131 Infants Participants
- 437 Children Participants



85% of WIC participants spent some or all of their farmer market checks, compared to **78%** in **2024**

Community

Over the summer months in 2025, CCPH held 7 Car Seat Check Events at libraries in the Portage, Poynette, and Lodi communities. Events happened during scheduled library events, such as story time, to promote access to services. 14 car seat checks were done at these events.

Through Maternal-Child Health and WIC grant funding, CCPH held events that promoted social connectedness for parents in our community. During world breastfeeding week in October, a “Mom and Baby Yoga Class” was held to facilitate parent-infant bonding and staff were available to answer breastfeeding questions after the class. CCPH also held events throughout December that encouraged families to decorate cookies and tree ornaments for the holiday season.



Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) is an emergency lifesaving procedure performed when the heart stops beating. Immediate CPR can double or triple chances of survival after cardiac arrest. In 2025, 53 people were trained in CPR by CCPH staff.



CCPH hosted 2 well attended infant and toddler CPR/choking educational sessions in Portage and Columbus. Parents and caregivers learned what to do in the event their child chokes or becomes unresponsive.

Hygiene Support

We were thrilled to host our second annual hygiene drive, and it was a huge success! We collected hundreds of items and received generous monetary donations. The donations went to our Community Hygiene Closet. In 2025, we handed out 3,317 hygiene items and 568 household products to community members in need. We couldn't have done it without the support from our amazing community!

With items received from our hygiene drive we were also able to create and distribute Supportive Help and Resources for Everyone (S.H.A.R.E) Packs. These packs are filled with essential hygiene items and resource materials to help individuals currently unhoused. These packs were designed to support health, dignity, and access to local resources and services.



S.H.A.R.E Packs



Community Health Improvement Plan

The Columbia County Health Improvement Plan is active from 2023 through 2027. Through a comprehensive and collaborative process, the county identified two key health priorities: mental health and substance misuse. These focus areas guide local efforts and partnerships aimed at improving overall community well-being. We continue to work towards completing our community health improvement plans as we gear up to do another assessment in 2027.

Mental Health

Promote, develop and engage with activities that decrease stigma around mental health.

Prevent Suicide created and ran public service announcements in May and September on broadcast TV to help individuals know they are not alone. We also participated in multiple events where mental health resources were shared, we continued to hand out gun locks and safety information, and promoted our mental health resource guide.

Implement Prevent Suicide Walk for Hope

We originally implemented the Walk for Hope in 2023, but continue to hold this event yearly. We had a very successful walk in 2025.

Substance Misuse

Support Youth Programming in schools

PARCC continues to offer PreVenture which is an evidence-based prevention program that uses personality-focused interventions to promote mental health and delay substance use among teens. We continue to support these efforts and helped fund staff get trained.

Increase community education surrounding the misuse of alcohol or other drugs

In January 2025, CCPH developed the “Recover Columbia County” app to enhance community education, with Narcan training on the app and resources to assist with substance use.



Prevent Suicide Coalition

Our mission is to prevent suicide through awareness, education, collaboration, and improved access to mental health care. Our vision is a suicide-free community where people will recognize the warning signs, intervene, and help individuals find hope.

The Prevent Suicide coalition was able to do a handful of activities to help support our mission.

2025 activities: participated in school mental health events, aired a PSA that featured a community member in May and September, provided 3 scholarships to students, hosted and offered multiple QPR trainings, presented on mental health to local community groups, and hosted a very successful 9th annual Walk for Hope.





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