



2022 ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY

EAU CLAIRE CITY-COUNTY
HEALTH DEPARTMENT

MESSAGE

FROM THE HEALTH OFFICER

I'm proud to share with you the work of the Eau Claire City-County Health Department in this 2022 Annual Report Summary. The stories in this report highlight a small subset of the many public health issues we addressed this year through our programs and services. If you want to know more about the many things we do, please check out our website at ehealthdepartment.org.

This past year was a challenging one for the Health Department as we focused on a broad range of emerging and ongoing public health issues. Despite those challenges, it's also important to us that we celebrate our wins, and honor the staff and community that help us get there.

A few of our department's wins this year:

- We developed a new three-year Strategic Plan, which will guide our priorities and goals from 2023 to 2026.
- We reconnected with many community partners to work on critical public health issues.

- We reflected on what we learned from the pandemic and transitioned our COVID-19 response work to our Communicable Disease division.

As I reflect on this last year, I'm grateful for our dedicated, caring, and skilled team and all our community partners, whose hard work and commitment were critical to our successes this last year. Thank you to the individuals and organizations in the community who are willing to lean into the hard work of prevention with us.

In 2023, a couple of key areas of focus will include addressing our Strategic Plan goals and activities, building community relationships following the COVID-19 pandemic, developing a clear plan to address challenging funding issues, and addressing health equity, particularly connected to child health outcomes.

Let me know how we can continue to improve our work at the Health Department. You can reach us at ehealth@eauclairecounty.gov.

Respectfully,



Lieske (Elizabeth) Giese
Health Officer / Director
Eau Claire City-County Health Department



Photo credit: Volume One

BY THE NUMBERS:

EAU CLAIRE COUNTY HEALTH DATA

Data gives us a snapshot of the health of our community. It shows us that health is influenced by many factors, including our everyday surroundings.

Accurate data helps us to:

- Understand current and potential health problems
- Provide reliable information to our partners and the public
- Evaluate if our programs, policies, and environmental changes are making a difference.

106,452

Eau Claire County
population
U.S. Census

\$64,777

Median household
income in the county
U.S. Census

12.5%

Percentage of
county residents
living in poverty
U.S. Census

23%

Eau Claire County
residents living in
rural areas
*County Health
Rankings*

79.4

Average life
expectancy, in years,
of county residents
County Health Rankings

9.5%

Percentage of population
who are African American,
Asian, American
Indian/Alaskan Native,
Hispanic, Latino, or Native
Hawaiian/other Pacific
Islander
U.S. Census

39%

Households in
poverty or who
qualify as ALICE
(Asset Limited, Income
Constrained, Employed)
households
United Way

\$21,204

Minimum yearly
household income
needed to support
a single adult in
Eau Claire County
United Way

1,018

Food facility
inspections done

Learn how we're keeping food
establishments safe on [page 6](#)

632

Doses of Narcan
distributed to partners
& community members

Learn how we're responding
to opioids in our community
on [page 7](#)

495

Seasonal flu shots
administered

Learn how we get flu shots
and other vaccines to the
public each year on [page 8](#)

62

Pap smears
administered by the
Family Planning Clinic

Learn how our Family
Planning Clinic serves the
public on [page 9](#)

OUR YEAR IN: ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

The Environmental Sciences division works to enhance and protect our environment, and educate about how the environment affects our community's health.

Keeping local drinking water safe

To monitor the health of the county's water, we test private wells, municipal wells, and other places that supply water to the public – restaurants, hotels, gas stations, bars, churches, campgrounds, and more.

In the Health Department laboratory, our microbiologists and chemist routinely run tests on local water samples. They commonly look for nitrates, heavy metals, lead, and bacteria.

Testing well water is voluntary, not required, for Eau Claire County homeowners. But staff recommend homeowners with private wells get a yearly bacteria and nitrate test every 15 months, and an arsenic test at least once.

WHY IT MATTERS:

Testing the water is the only way to find contaminants in a well. It may not be possible to tell if water is safe to drink from its taste, smell, or appearance.

We ran a successful weeklong promotion offering discounted bacteria and nitrate tests in September 2022. That week yielded 283 water samples from the community, up from 76 samples during the same week in 2021.

Testing beaches for algae, bacteria

Our team spearheads a significant project between Memorial Day and Labor Day each year: Testing water at seven Eau Claire County public beaches, looking for harmful bacteria or dangerous algae blooms that can make people and pets sick.

Beaches with unsafe bacteria levels or harmful toxins from an algae bloom may be closed for community safety, or a water quality advisory sign may be posted.

At closed beaches, staff keep testing the beach daily, Monday through Thursday, until the water quality improves or after the algae bloom dissipates.



In 2022, based on updated guidance, the Health Department adopted an additional guideline for closing a beach: In addition to closing if high levels of harmful bacteria were detected in the water, we closed a beach if there was a visible algae scum in the swimming area. (Previously, beaches with algae blooms only had an advisory posted.)

The updated guidance seems to have heightened public awareness of harmful algae blooms and their health effects on people and pets. This change also seems to have prompted an uptick in attention to the status of beaches within the county.

BY THE NUMBERS:

6,407

Drinking water tests conducted

103

Days of active monitoring for harmful algae at local beaches

108

Permits issued for well installation, replacement, and reconnection

OUR YEAR IN: HEALTHY BEGINNINGS

The Healthy Beginnings division works to support families, especially maternal and child health, by facilitating a wide variety of programs and services.

Three decades of supporting a local Amish community

As the Health Department, our goal is to build relationships with and support every community in our county. For the last 32 years, one of our public health nurses, Tammy Raeder, has helped the department build and strengthen a relationship with the Amish community in the Augusta area.

Tammy supports the community with a wide variety of services: Prenatal checkups for moms; tests and physicals for newborns; administering immunizations; helping Amish clients navigate the wider health care system; and other day-to-day situations.

When it's needed, Tammy works with a health care partner in Augusta to help the Amish community access emergency care and a pharmacy.

For Tammy, working with the community of around 1,500 to 2,000 people since 1991 has been a privilege and an exercise in trust.

"There's so much history there," she says. "It's great seeing these kids grow up, get married, become parents themselves. There's a huge amount of trust."

Improving knowledge of healthy relationships for NFP families

In 2022, the Nurse-Family Partnership team added a new element to their regular visits with new mothers and their children: A new resource to guide conversations about healthy relationships.

About NFP:

The NFP program provides care and support to expecting mothers and their children, both during and after pregnancy. Health Department nurses do regular in-home visits with mothers in the program, starting early in their pregnancy and lasting until their child's second birthday.

Starting in early 2022, the Health Department's NFP team began giving families resource cards with information about healthy relationships, navigating conflict, difficult childhoods, and more. Instead of jumping into tough questions about intimate partner violence without context, the NFP team wanted to first educate, build trust, and offer resources.

Due to this project, now their first step is having empathetic conversations with NFP parents about healthy relationships with their partners and kids. Distributing the cards and having these conversations, NFP nurses say, have helped parents voice their concerns, realize they're not alone, and know there's support out there.

The project started in June 2022. By September 2022, 90 percent of NFP clients in Eau Claire County had received information about healthy relationships. We believe it's made a difference for the families, and it's now a permanent part of the NFP process.

For this project, NFP partnered with the Home Visiting Collaborative Improvement and Innovation Network and nonprofit Futures Without Violence.

**BY THE
NUMBERS:**

2,051

WIC clients

1,188

NFP visits

165

NFP clients

OUR YEAR IN: REGULATIONS & LICENSING

Helping homeowners test for radon

Our division operates a radon program that sells radon test kits to homeowners, educates community members about radon, and serves as a western Wisconsin hub for radon resources.

Radon is a colorless, odorless gas that occurs naturally, can leak into homes, and can cause lung cancer. Most people don't test their homes for radon until they sell the house, but test kits are affordable and easy to use. About 40% of homes in Eau Claire County have radon levels higher than the EPA's recommended benchmark.

The Health Department serves as a regional Radon Information Center for several surrounding counties in addition to Eau Claire (Buffalo, Chippewa, Clark, Jackson, Pepin, and Trempealeau counties). The two members of our team who facilitate our radon program often field radon-related questions from residents of those counties too: People looking to buy a test kit, people with questions about radon mitigation and hiring a contractor, and more.

Our team also visits local events to discuss radon testing with the public and provide information. In 2022, the department sold 224 radon test kits. Of those, 41%—or 92 of the tests—detected radon levels higher than the EPA's recommended benchmark.

Food inspections cover wide variety of vendors and venues

Four of our team members work as food inspectors, focusing on keeping local retail food establishments safe.

The Regulations & Licensing division inspects and educates facilities that provide food, housing, or other necessities to the public. The division also inspects lodging, recreation, and body art facilities.

They don't only work with restaurants, but also grocery stores, gas stations, caterers, coffee shops, and other places where food and beverages are sold to the public.



Two Health Department food inspectors take a quick break from working at Country Jam to say hello to a familiar face — country singer and Barron native Chris Kroeze.

Our team licenses and inspects hundreds of retail food establishments throughout the county. Most businesses are inspected twice per year: one unannounced inspection in the later half of the year, then a scheduled inspection during the first half of the year.

Our inspectors work with new food businesses – from answering initial questions to helping them obtain their license. They also follow up on complaints from the public.

Building relationships with business owners and employees is one of the most valuable and rewarding parts of the job, our team says: "When something comes up, we hope people will be comfortable calling us and talking it through...we all take an educational approach to our inspections."

**BY THE
NUMBERS:**

224

Radon test
kits sold

1,018

Food facility
inspections
completed

918

Housing
inspections
completed

OUR YEAR IN: COMMUNITY HEALTH PROMOTION

The Community Health Promotion division provides education, coordinates programs, and promotes policies and practices to impact community health priorities. Those priorities include chronic disease, mental health, healthy relationships, alcohol, tobacco, and other drug misuse.

Responding to community-wide impact of opioids

From holding workshops to collecting medication, our division continued to respond to the impact of opioids on our community in 2022.

Our team partnered with many local organizations to present 19 workshops about opioids and overdoses. Nearly 400 people attended those workshops, and 632 doses of Narcan nasal spray were distributed to community members and professionals. (Narcan is a medicine that can stop an overdose on opioid medications, including heroin and fentanyl).

Aiming to help people safely dispose of unused medication, our team also distributed 1,250 medication lockboxes, lock bags, and at-home medication disposal bags.

A vital part of our opioid response is the twice-yearly Drug Take-Back Day. In 2022, community members dropped off 3,021 pounds of unused or expired medication to be safely disposed of.

Another of our key strategies to combat opioid misuse is educating our community and spreading awareness. Our team developed three new videos promoting new safe medication disposal sites, located at Hy-Vee and two local Mayo Clinic Health System campuses. Versions of the video were produced in English, Spanish, and Hmong. Two opioid educational videos – one explaining what opioids are, and one spreading awareness about the signs an overdose – aired on two local television stations between January and March.

Students get involved in peer health

Focusing on getting students talking about healthy relationships, alcohol use, tobacco and vaping, other drug misuse, and mental health, several of our team members hosted a training day for high school students at the Pablo Center in Eau Claire in October 2022.

Around 50 students attended the October training day, all of whom belong to school SAFE groups (Students Advocating for Excellence) at schools in Altoona, Augusta, Fall Creek, and Eau Claire. Two middle schools in the county – Regis Middle School and Augusta Middle School – also started SAFE groups in 2022.



At the training, students connected with peers from other schools, discussed and learned how to advocate for issues they're passionate about, and learned about the obstacles and issues facing teenagers in our county. By the end of the day, students left with ideas for how to be active and make change in their schools on health issues important to them.

BY THE NUMBERS:

19

'What Do You Know About Opioids' workshops held

632

Doses of Narcan provided to partners & community members

131

County youth who received healthy relationship education

OUR YEAR IN: COMMUNICABLE DISEASE

The Communicable Disease division works to prevent and control outbreaks of communicable disease, and to prepare to respond to public health emergencies.

A third year of COVID-19 operations

In spring 2022, the Health Department folded its COVID-19 operations into the Communicable Disease division.

It was a significant shift: Since 2020, staff from all eight divisions had been working together to respond to the pandemic.

The Communicable Disease team continued to track COVID cases, educate the community, and give treatment resources to people who tested positive.

Staff also continued to administer COVID vaccines and monitor wastewater data—an important part of our surveillance efforts.

In 2022, the Health Department administered more than 4,500 COVID vaccines to community members of a range of ages, from 6 months to 101 years old.

Local demand for COVID vaccines decreased from early 2022 to late 2022, so we cut down on the number of large-scale vaccination clinics we were offering.

Staff continue to run monthly COVID vaccination clinics at our offices.

Report sums up pandemic response

Staff took on a significant project in 2022: Recapping the ins and outs of our response to the pandemic.

We created a comprehensive report, titled RECAP (Reflective Evaluation of COVID-19 Activities and Performance).

Staff began working on the RECAP report in spring 2022, about two years after the pandemic and emergency response efforts began.

Staff created a timeline to document significant events, record the steps we took to respond to the pandemic, and evaluate feedback from department staff and local partners.

While creating the RECAP report, our team interviewed and gathered feedback from local organizations, groups of community members, local media, and more.

In developing this report, we hoped to learn about how these various groups experienced the pandemic, document the lessons we learned, strengthen our strategies for future emergencies, and hear from our partners about how we can work together to recover as a community.

We presented the RECAP report to the Board of Health in December 2022.

Monitoring amid Ebola outbreak

During the Ebola outbreak in Uganda in September 2022, people returning or traveling to the U.S. from Uganda were funneled through one of five U.S. airports, assessed for Ebola symptoms, and monitored by public health for 21 days after their arrival.

Wisconsin public health departments monitored a total of 100 travelers for Ebola symptoms. In Eau Claire, our team monitored one individual.

BY THE NUMBERS:

890

Immunizations given (non-COVID)

4,558

COVID immunizations given

495

Seasonal flu shots given

30%

Percentage of Eau Claire County residents immunized for the flu by end of 2022

OUR YEAR IN: CLINICAL SERVICES

The Clinical Services division provides reproductive health services, including testing and treating diseases and infections. This division also educates and raises awareness about less-risky sexual behavior.

Mpox vaccines deployed to region

Our response to the mpox (formerly monkeypox) outbreak in summer 2022 was spearheaded by the Communicable Disease division and the Clinical Services division. All six team members at the Health Department's Family Planning Clinic led vital work to roll out mpox vaccines to eligible people in 2022.

Following state and federal guidelines, the clinic team adopted an internal process to screen people for eligibility, schedule vaccine appointments, and administer the two-dose vaccine.

The clinic team administered the mpox vaccine to 84 people in 2022. About one-third of those people lived outside Eau Claire County. (A limited number of organizations in the state were allotted mpox vaccines to administer to eligible people, so some members of the public traveled to other counties to receive the vaccine.)

Our team is proud of the department's quick response to the mpox outbreak, from screening people for possible symptoms to vaccinating people who are at higher risk. The clinic is still offering the mpox vaccine to eligible people in 2023.

Wisconsin had 87 cases of mpox, but Eau Claire County had no confirmed cases in 2022. The Health Department was notified of 24 county residents who were tested for mpox, and conducted follow-up with those people while they waited for final test results. The department's mpox response team also worked closely with the Wisconsin DHS, the CDC, local health care partners, and community organizations.

More counties to join shared nurse practitioner model

In 2018, we began meeting with Dunn, Pierce, St. Croix, and Pepin counties to discuss a proposal: Hiring a nurse practitioner who would "share" hours among all five counties.

Nurse practitioners perform vital family planning services at health departments – providing long-acting contraceptives and performing colposcopies, among many other services – but some counties don't have enough need to support a full-time nurse practitioner.

The shared services model was implemented and has been a success. Our Family Planning Clinic hired a full-time nurse practitioner in 2020, who shares time across all five counties. But since then, some of the participating counties needed additional time from the nurse practitioner as more patients came in seeking service.

Three additional counties—Chippewa, Clark, and Barron—requested to participate in the model, creating a need for our division to add an additional half-time nurse practitioner. This position is held by a full-time Health Department employee who graduated with a nurse practitioner degree in 2022. She also acts as a Nursing Practice Supervisor in a half-time capacity as well.

The Clinical Services team has been working to bring the three additional counties fully into the shared service arrangement since September 2022, when our newest nurse practitioner received her license. Though some of the additional counties are still preparing their facilities, the model has worked smoothly.

BY THE NUMBERS:

958

Family Planning Clinic visits

29

Clients who received long-acting contraception

62

Pap tests completed at the Family Planning Clinic

937

Screenings for sexually transmitted infections

OUR YEAR IN: POLICY & SYSTEMS

In 2022, our team worked to sustain, expand, and deepen the department's relationships with the community. As a part of this work, team members also focused on strategically identifying our audiences and improving how the Health Department communicates with partners and the public.

Workgroup focuses on connection

Several of the Policy & Systems team continued to represent the department in a community workgroup in 2022. The workgroup formed in 2020, when several local organizations began meeting regularly to share information about the pandemic, discuss their communities' unique needs and gaps in resources, and work to reduce health disparities and inequalities.



Two members of our team get ready to welcome workgroup members to a meeting in December 2022.

Among other projects, the group worked to improve vaccine access, boost COVID testing, bring Health Department COVID vaccine clinics to various community sites, share COVID information via phone banking and social media, and get translated messages about COVID to local groups and people who speak languages other than English.

The Policy & Systems division works with our partners to identify and communicate about health needs, gaps, resources, and policy and system changes—both inside and outside the department.

Sixteen community organizations participated in the workgroup in 2022. The workgroup may shift its focus in the future: It may work less directly on COVID-19 and instead aim at broader health challenges.

Improving communication, accessibility

Throughout 2022, Policy & Systems staff continued to update and improve our website. A large part of that work is reorganizing and editing our most visited webpages and optimizing them for search engines, making us easier for people to find.

One large project in spring 2022 was updating and overhauling our beach testing webpage, which is heavily used by the public in May through September.

On our social media platforms, we worked on developing potential guidelines for accessibility – for example, deciding when to add alternative text to graphics and closed captions for videos. These guidelines will help people who use screen readers or other accessibility devices get our information online.

Staff also continued to use plain language guidelines to guide our communication. Many federal and state public health organizations also use plain language guidelines.

Why plain language?

We strive for the community to understand our public health goals. Our communication is strongest when we cut down on jargon and explain our message simply and clearly – in other words, when we use plain language.

**BY THE
NUMBERS:**

10,013

Facebook followers

35

Health Department press releases sent

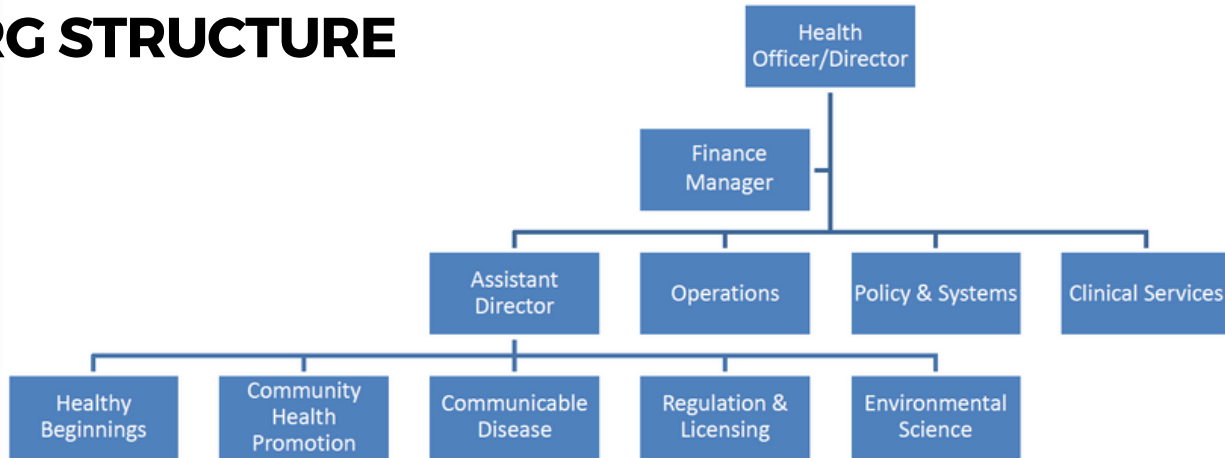
76

Media interviews and quotes given by staff

OUR YEAR IN: OPERATIONS

The Operations division leads, supports, and oversees operations for all divisions, including human resources, finances, and technical support. This division works to keep the Health Department organized and functioning efficiently.

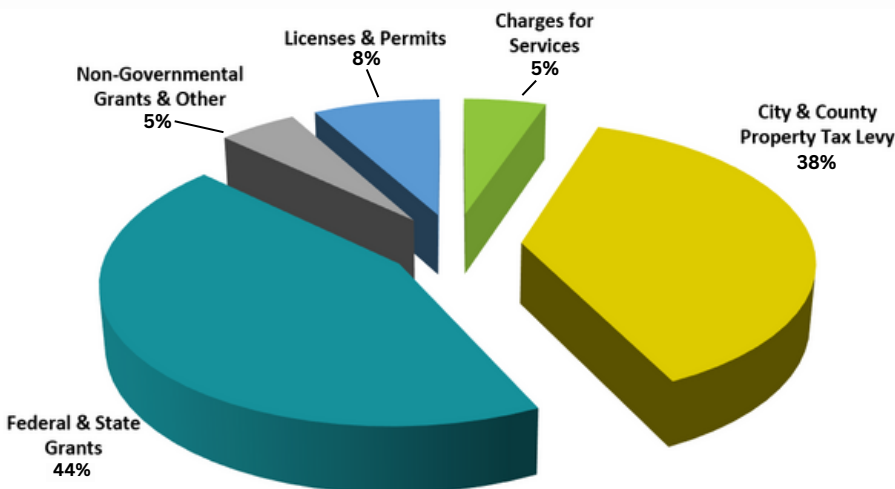
ORG STRUCTURE



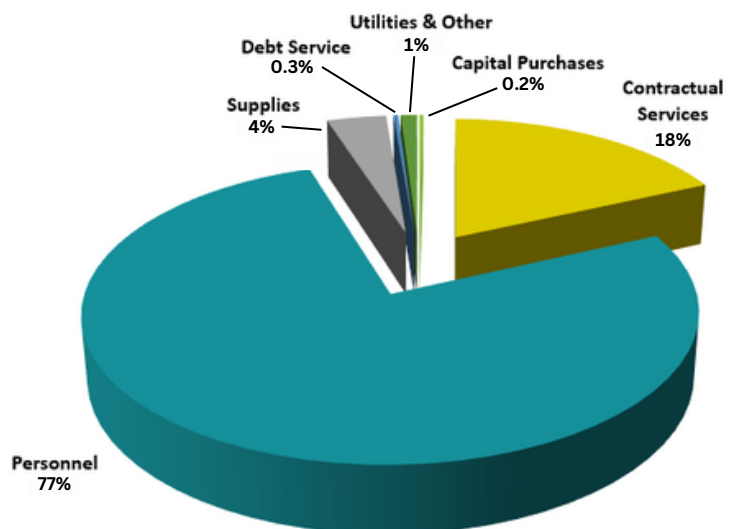
2022 BUDGET

Here is a general review of the 2022 Eau Claire City-County Health Department budget.

Staff represents the largest and one of the most important assets we have. Our staff strives to acquire diverse funders to support the department's work. We are proud of our remarkable staff and the amazing work they do.



2022 Estimated Revenues



2022 Estimated Expenses

MEET OUR MANAGERS

*Assistant
Department Director*



Marisa Stanley

*Environmental
Sciences*



Matt Steinbach

*Community Health
Promotion*



Peggy O'Halloran

*Healthy
Beginnings*



Elizabeth Draeger

*Regulations &
Licensing*



Nicole Kragness

*Clinical Services
(acting) and
Operations*



Tegan Ruland

*Communicable
Disease*



Jacqueline Krumenauer

Policy & Systems



Cortney Sperber

EAU CLAIRE CITY-COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH

The Eau Claire City-County Board of Health (BOH) is an eight-member board appointed by the County Board and City Council.

The BOH advocates for reasonable and necessary public health services. They also provide leadership and foster local involvement and commitment. The BOH is made up of a City Council member, a County Board member, two practicing physicians, one practicing dentist, one registered nurse, and two community representatives.

Members:

Emily Berge (City Council)
Jennifer Eddy, MD
Terry Miskulin, DDS
True Vue
Merey Price (outgoing)

Donald Bodeau, MD
Mark Kaeding
Kimberly Cronk (County Board)
Martha Nieman (County Board, outgoing)

HEALTH DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

Mission

Building a healthier community for all through prevention-focused programs and partnerships.

Vision

A community where everyone can live a healthier life.

Guiding Principles

Our work is guided by five overarching principles:





Eau Claire City-County
Health Department



We are committed to building a safe, healthy community for everyone in Eau Claire County. We're proud to share some of the progress our department made in 2022.

Find our Annual Report:

www.echealthdepartment.org

Get more Health Department news:

www.facebook.com/eauclairehealth