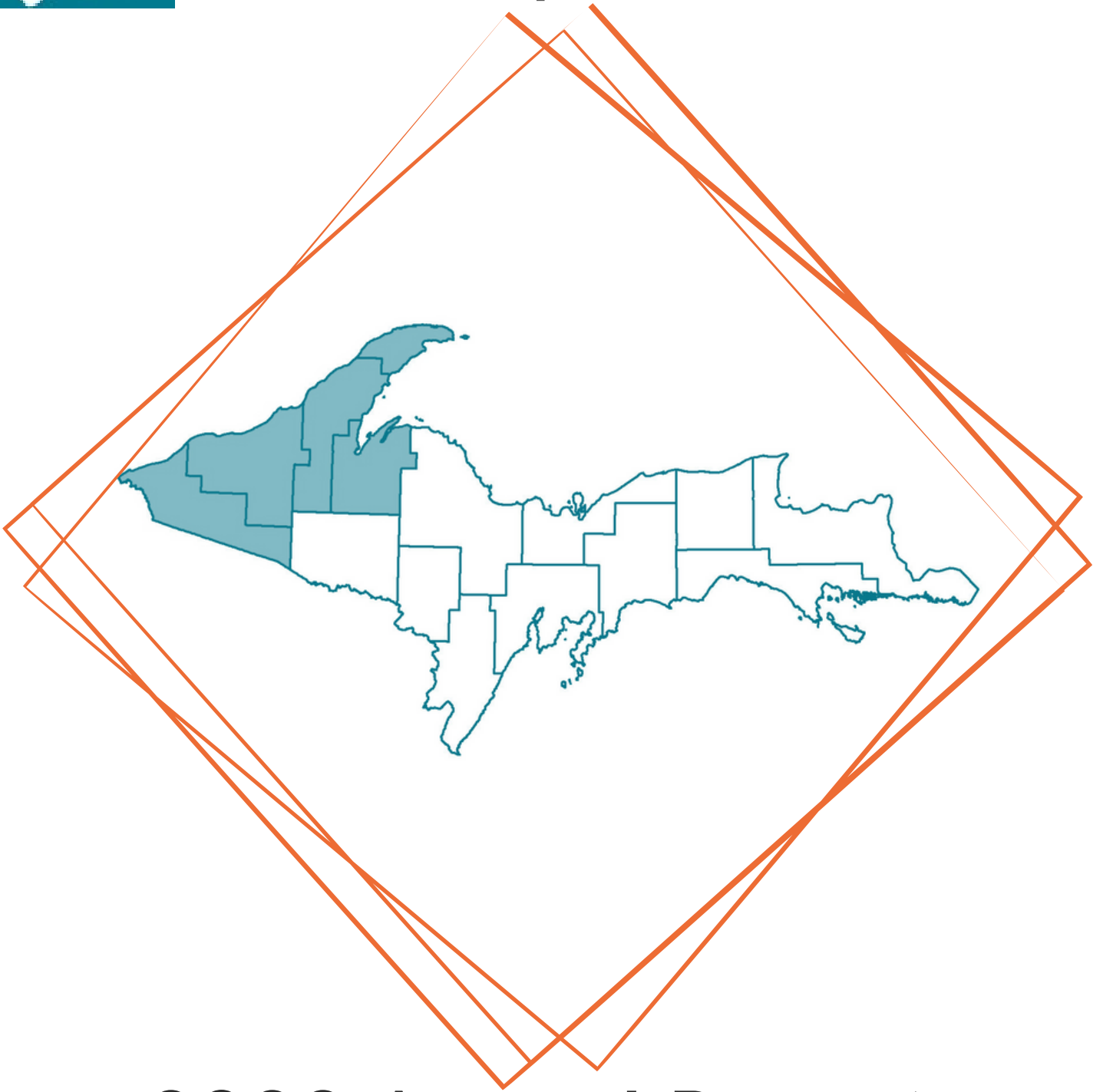




Western Upper Peninsula Health Department



2022 Annual Report

Western Upper Peninsula

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VISION

Western U.P. Health Department will set the standard for community health agencies, as we perform our role within the healthcare system in a manner that reflects our core values. We will be recognized as the expert in community health protection and improvement, as a model of effective and responsive government, and as the regional leader for public health.

MISSION

It is the mission of the Western U.P. Health Department to lead the community toward better health through education, advocacy, and disease prevention. To achieve this mission, the health department works to prolong life and promote community health through control of environmental health hazards and attention to the health needs of vulnerable population groups.

Agency Details

Human Resources

Staff by Department

Administration: 8
 Ancillary Services: 5
 Community Planning: 4
 Environmental Health: 9
 Healthy Connections: 5
 Public Health: 24

Total Agency Staff: 55
Full Time Equivalents: 48

Staff by County

Baraga: 2
 Gogebic: 8
 Houghton/Keweenaw: 39
 Ontonagon: 6

Financial Information

Funding Sources	2019	2020	2021	2022	Expenditures	2019	2020	2021	2022
Fees and collections	1,597,235	1,378,263	1,370,230	1,713,175	General Public Health	2,180,525	2,493,205	1,886,449	2,125,305
Federal grants	1,046,555	1,416,814	3,687,095	2,738,647	Environmental Health	879,003	889,704	1,426,240	1,352,907
State grants	118,384	153,913	571,254	368,267	Community Health	377,305	361,673	551,159	547,229
Other grants	198,829	102,617	158,560	260,501	Regional Laboratory	-	-	1,182,527	1,170,121
State public health funding	466,536	661,787	669,646	556,601	Administration	513,161	527,538	1,828,115	939,743
County appropriations	544,970	555,031	555,000	554,888	Change to Fund Balance	22,515	-3,695	137,295	56,774
Total Funding	3,972,509	4,268,425	7,011,785	6,192,079	Total Expenditures	3,972,509	4,268,425	7,011,785	6,192,079

FROM THE MEDICAL DIRECTOR

In the past century, vaccination programs have had an incredibly positive impact on community health. Diseases that once commonly killed and crippled children are now rarely seen. Despite the availability of highly effective vaccines, many in our local communities have elected not to be vaccinated. During the COVID-19 pandemic, limitations on face-to-face medical encounters interrupted vaccine delivery. Unfortunately, vaccination rates have not returned to pre-pandemic levels. This decrease in the vaccination rates for diseases that were once on the cusp of extinction is worrisome. Outbreaks of measles, pertussis (whooping cough), and other vaccine-preventable illnesses can have devastating consequences. Our region has one of the lowest childhood vaccination rates in State of Michigan, so we are in the process of gearing up for the inevitable local outbreaks of these illnesses.

When the COVID-19 vaccine became available, the high levels of vaccination in individuals 65 years of age and older was not a surprise. These people can recall the calamitous sequelae of illnesses like polio and diphtheria and the miraculous impact of the vaccination programs.

Over the span of my medical career, the rates of serious, life-threatening infections from *Haemophilus influenzae type b*, such as epiglottitis, meningitis, and sepsis, dropped precipitously once an effective vaccine was developed. The vaccine for pneumococcus not only reduced the risk for pneumonia and meningitis in children, but also decreased the rate of ear infections by 60%. Meningococcal meningitis, which has a 10% fatality rate, is also disappearing thanks to vaccination programs.

In the past, enough people were vaccinated to protect the few who could not be vaccinated through "herd immunity." The more contagious an infection, the higher the vaccination rate needed to provide herd immunity. For measles, which is highly contagious, 95% of the population needs to be vaccinated to secure herd immunity. Locally, the measles vaccination rate is not sufficient to protect those who have not been vaccinated. A measles outbreak is likely to be our next serious public health emergency, so I call on our communities to take action to help prevent this outbreak.

ROBERT S. VANHOWER MD, MS, FAAP

FROM THE HEALTH OFFICER

The COVID-19 pandemic has made a profound impact on our lives and the future of the public health system in our nation. It underscored the need for a local public health infrastructure capable of handling a crisis, particularly to halt the ill effects of that crisis on vulnerable populations within our communities.

The Western Upper Peninsula Health Department provided guidance and leadership throughout the pandemic. Our employees navigated the daily “unknown” with professionalism, agility, and, above all, concern for their fellow community members. We are grateful to the vast number of service agencies and volunteers within our community who assisted with the response.

The Agency came through the pandemic fiscally sound, but tired. Core programs were significantly reduced as resources were focused on combatting an ever-changing virus. We are now beginning to rebuild these programs and strengthen relationships with the community we serve. We are also expanding services in areas of identified need, including the establishment of a regional public health laboratory and substance use treatment services.

CATHRYN A. BEER MPA, CFPH, CPA, CGMA

Public Health

Public Health is the science of protecting and improving the health of families and communities through promotion of healthy lifestyles, disease and injury prevention, and the detection, research, and control of infectious diseases.

Public Health Programs

- Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention
- Children's Special Healthcare Services
- Communicable Disease
- Family Planning
- Healthy Families
- Hearing and Vision
- HIV/Sexually Transmitted Infection
- Immunizations
- Maternal and Infant Health (MIHP)
- Tuberculosis Control Program
- Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

Did You Know?

In 2022 our Maternal and Infant Health team, located in Hancock, Ontonagon, and Bessemer, became certified Child Passenger Safety (CPS) technicians. CPS technicians ensure car seats are installed correctly, teach parents/guardians how to use and install a car seat, and, under certain circumstances assist with obtaining new car seats.

While this service was initially provided to help serve our MIHP clients better, we are expanding it to the general public in 2023. Our staff care deeply about our community's children and want to make sure they are safe on every ride.

Program Output 2022

276 individual family planning clients

585 Tuberculosis skin tests

137 sexually transmitted disease/HIV clinic visits

10,968 vaccine doses administered

53 international travel immunization consultations

1,625 immunization clients

400 school immunization waivers processed

Public Health

501 Maternal & Infant Health Program home visits

1,255 Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) clients served

25 dental varnish clients served

3,478 children screened for hearing and vision

87 capillary blood lead tests conducted

11,277 communicable disease cases documented in 2022

Selected Reportable Disease Data

Reportable Condition	2020	2021	2022
Animal Bite	45	63	58
Chlamydia	124	126	97
Hepatitis C (Acute & Chronic)	19	17	17
Gonorrhea	3	11	9
Pertussis	0	0	0
Vector-borne/ Lyme Disease	15	24	13
Food-borne Illness	37	31	41
Varicella (Chickenpox)	1	2	0
Tuberculosis	0	1	0
Flu-like Illness	1,051	595	1,497
Gastrointestinal Illness	436	194	611

Environmental Health

Environmental Health is the science and practice of preventing human injury and illness and promoting well-being by identifying hazards and limiting exposures through air, water, soil, food, and other settings that may adversely affect human health.

2022 Environmental Health Program Output

Food Program:

- 386 Licensed Establishments
- 661 Inspections
- 137 Temporary Permits Issued
- 21 Complaints Investigated
- 19 Construction Plans Reviewed
- 161 Certified Food Managers Trained

Septage:

- 19 Licensed Septage Haulers
- 7 Licensed Receiving Facilities
- 26 Routine Inspections

Non-Community Water Supplies:

- 118 Water Supplies Regulated
- 21 Sanitary Surveys Conducted

In 2022, 47 individuals reported foodborne illness to WUPHD

Drinking Water Contamination Monitoring:

- 13 Affected Water Supplies

Sewage:

- 366 Site Evaluations
- 290 Permits Issued
- 54 Existing System Inspections
- 46 Failed System Evaluations
- 245 Final Inspections
- 24 Complaints Investigated

Water Wells:

- 276 Site Evaluations
- 192 Drilling Permits Issued
- 57 Final Inspections
- 4 Complaints Investigated

Alternative Sewage System Monitoring:

- 134 Engineered Alternative Systems
- 48 Sewage Lagoons
- 15 Holding Tanks
- 44 Annual Maintenance Inspections

Did You Know?

Environmental Health Specialists provide emergency response at mercury spills, illegal methamphetamine drug manufacturing houses, and other chemical spills that can threaten public health.

Environmental Health

Body Art:

- 8 Licensed Facilities
- 8 Inspections

Swimming Pools:

- 37 Licensed Pools & Spas
- 75 Inspections

PFAS:

- 2 Known Contamination Zones
- 48 Drinking Water Wells Sampled
- 9 Homes Provided with Filtration

Radon:

- 172 Free Test Kits Dispensed
- 9 Elevated Results

According to the CDC, Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer

Beaches:

- 24 Monitored Beaches
- 11 closures due to E.Coli following rain events

Medical Waste:

- 77 Medical Waste Generators
- 32 Educational Evaluations

Campgrounds:

- 45 Licensed Campgrounds
- 50 Inspections
- 9 Temporary Permits Issued

SARS COV2 Wastewater Surveillance:

- 27 Monitoring Sites
- 849 Samples Analyzed

Did You Know?

In 2022, WUPHD, along with Isle Royale National Park, began participating in the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) testing project. HABs form due to a rapid growth or "bloom" of cyanobacteria in water bodies such as ponds and lakes (local example shown below). Cyanobacteria are naturally occurring; however, they can produce toxins that can be harmful to people and animals. In 2022, WUPHD responded to 6 reports of Algal Blooms throughout the district. One of these reports resulted in a beach closure due to potential exposure to toxins. WUPHD now has the training, equipment, and knowledge to respond to algal bloom concerns. We provide rapid, local testing of samples to assist with making decisions that affect the safety of residents and visitors enjoying our water resources.



Healthy Connections

Healthy Connections is a relatively new program at the Western U.P. Health Department. Since its inception, Healthy Connections has been developing programming to support those entering substance use disorder services and their families. It is centered on establishing relationships within the community to encourage people to make positive changes in their lives and to link them to available services.

With funding from a Rural Community Opioid Response Program (RCORP) grant we conducted a comprehensive 5-county public survey about substance use disorder (SUD). Using data compiled from that survey, key informant interviews, and focus groups of people with lived experience, we were able to identify significant gaps in SUD education, support, and treatment services. We focused our efforts on addressing the lack of jail-based and women's specialty services.

A grant from the Michigan Health Endowment Fund supported the launch of our Positive Steps Together (PST) program. The goal of the program was to improve early intervention for women struggling with alcohol and drug use, and to link women to peer recovery coaches, SUD treatment, and other community resources. A weekly women's support group was developed to focus on healing from trauma, learning healthy coping skills, developing a sober social support network, and recovering from SUD. The support group was also offered to women incarcerated in Houghton and Baraga County jails. The PST program links women to services upon their release which decreases the chance of recidivism and overdose. See more about the PST program on the following page.

Funding from the Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation allowed us to expand our jail-based services to include men. We began offering weekly support and education groups to men in Houghton and Baraga County jails. We provided SUD assessments to inmates to assist in release for treatment.

In November, we completed a site visit from the Commission for Rehabilitative Facilities (CARF) and were awarded accreditation. This accomplishment allows us to bill Medicaid for SUD services we provide and is a significant step toward the sustainability and growth of our department.

Healthy Connections Program Spotlight - Positive Steps Together

Positive Steps Together (PST) is a program designed to improve early intervention to women struggling with alcohol and drug use, and to link women to treatment community resources. Our goal was to have 15 women involved in the program in the first year; we doubled that with 31 participants. We gave Walmart gift cards to women who completed the Alcohol, Smoking and Substance Involvement Screening Tool (ASSIST) and provided diapers to moms with babies and toddlers. The number of attendees at a weekly support group remained small throughout the project but that created a more intimate environment. The sober social support network we aimed for, happened. Women went to meetings together, stayed in touch through calls and texts, and began helping each other with practical matters such as childcare, rides, and moving. One woman summed it up by saying, "This doesn't feel like treatment, it feels like friendship."

When we began making weekly visits to Houghton and Baraga County jails, we were unsure of the numbers of participants we would have because it was a new program. In our first year, we met with 22 women, and 9 of those women went to residential treatment. Four others met with an SUD counselor in outpatient treatment following release. Each woman who completed the ASSIST survey was provided with \$10 in their commissary account.

With permission from jail administration and signed releases from the women, we recorded an interview with group participants in the Houghton County jail. This recording of the women talking about addiction and what makes it difficult to ask for help has proven to be a powerful tool in reducing stigma.

The PST program has been instrumental in connecting women to services upon their release and increases their chances for success moving forward.

Health Education and Promotion

3,000 pamphlets distributed about marijuana use and pregnancy

6 food retailers engaged in "Stock Healthy Shop Healthy"

563 "Blunt Facts" cannabis radio spots aired across the district

1,500 minutes of radio time in Baraga County about asthma triggers

Health Education and Promotion programs promote healthy lifestyles through individual education, and support healthy communities through systems change. The Western U.P. Health Department operates a variety of education and promotion programs that engage school-aged children, senior citizens, and the community as a whole. We work to tackle chronic disease indicators such as nutrition and physical activity, and also delve into specific concerns like asthma, and access to cannabis products and tobacco.

85 tobacco Retailers educated

62 seniors reached with "Eat Smart, Live Strong" curriculum

89% of students in WUPHD program report learning something new about being healthy

16,625 residents reached via "Stock Healthy, Shop Healthy"

2,565 residents reached via "Healthy Concessions"

65% of 4th graders in WUPHD program report eating more fruits and vegetables

218 students reached via "Healthy Schools, Healthy Communities"

Public Health Preparedness

The Public Health Emergency Preparedness program is responsible for planning, training, responding to, and evaluating emergency actions to ensure that people and communities are protected when extraordinary events threaten public and environmental health and safety.

- Create agency emergency plans and protocols
- Participate in community meetings and exercises
- Work with State and Local partners on emerging issues and threats

Plan

- Exercise plans internally and with community partners
- Train employees (100 % have completed incident command training)
- Engage with public through social media outreach (6,000 users engaged routinely)

Train

- 2022 responses activities included:
 - Rural fuel spill
 - Gas station fire
 - Industrial environment mercury response
 - Community flooding
 - Community water contamination
 - Flooding and dam failure exercises

Respond

- Develop after action reports to evaluate incidents and create/revise standard operating procedures
- Use internal surveys to better prepare employees for future events/incidents

Evaluate

Western U.P. Regional Public Health Laboratory

Background

The Western Upper Peninsula Regional Public Health Laboratory began operations in September 2021 to increase public health/infectious disease laboratory capacity in the State of Michigan. Our lab is a Biosafety Level 2 facility providing high-complexity clinical testing in the specialties of Molecular, Clinical Chemistry, and Immunoassay. The laboratory operates as a Division of the Western U.P. Health Department.

Western U.P. Regional Public Health Laboratory is one of six laboratories within the Michigan Regional Laboratory Network, receiving leadership and guidance from the Michigan Bureau of Laboratories. We are committed to providing timely and accurate high-complexity testing services to diagnose communicable diseases and increase the speed at which health professionals can respond to, investigate, and treat disease outbreaks. Additionally, the laboratory provides low-cost services to support public health programs across Michigan.

Test Menu

Molecular Offerings: Molecular testing uses a sample of tissue, blood, or other body fluid to check for certain genes, proteins, or other molecules that may be a sign of a disease or condition. Testing is performed on a Hologic Panther Fusion instrument, which can perform more than 300 tests in an 8-hour shift.

Clinical Chemistry Offerings: Clinical chemistry measures levels of chemical components in body fluids and tissues. The most common specimens used in clinical chemistry are blood and urine. Current clinical chemistry offerings include Drugs of Abuse screening. The Drugs of Abuse Screening Program is a partnership between the laboratory and the 97th District Drug Treatment Court Program. Testing is performed on an Abbott Architect.

Next Generation Genomic Sequencing for Respiratory Illness Prevalence: Genomic surveillance can track infectious disease transmission and identify novel strains of viruses and other emerging pathogens. Sequencing data helps public health officials track the path of an epidemic, determine the rate of pathogen evolution, and understand if a pathogen is changing in ways that could impact diagnostic or therapeutic effectiveness. Western U.P. Regional Public Health Laboratory has partnered with the Michigan Bureau of Laboratories for a pilot project to determine feasibility of performing sequencing in a small-scale, local public health laboratory.

Immunoassays/Enzyme-Linked Immunosorbent Assays (ELISA): ELISA is test that detects and measures antibodies in blood. Antibodies are proteins that the body produces in response to foreign substances called antigens. ELISA tests are frequently used to identify antibodies related to certain infectious diseases. Immunoassay testing is performed on multiple instruments.

Patient Samples Processed

	SARS-CoV-2	Chlamydia/Gonorrhea/ Trichomoniasis	HIV, Hepatitis B & C, Syphilis	Drugs of Abuse Screening
2021	373	32	26	0
2022	4,730	212	784	716
Totals	5,103	244	810	716

Community Health Needs Assessment

The Upper Peninsula Community Health Needs Assessment 2021 (UPCHNA) was published in the summer of 2022, with the help of 42 community partners. It is a 458-page volume that brings together county-level health and demographic data from federal and state sources as well as the results of the 2021 Upper Peninsula Community Health Issues and Priorities Survey (UPCHIPS). One thousand five hundred UPCHIPS surveys were mailed to random addresses in each of the Upper Peninsula counties, with the exception of Keweenaw County, which was combined with Houghton County. The same survey had been performed in 2017, so the results of the two were compared.

Key Takeaways

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the health of our community beyond the effects of the virus. At the onset of the pandemic, face-to-face appointments with clinicians were suspended. As a result, vaccinations could not be given to children. In the aftermath, vaccination rates have not returned to pre-pandemic levels, and there has not been a rebound to make up for those delayed during the pandemic. There was also a significant drop in preventative care procedures such as mammograms and tests screening for prostate, cervical, and colon cancer.

The community is increasingly aware of barriers to receiving care for mental health and substance use. In the 2017 survey, 37.5% of respondents identified the shortage of mental health programs and services or lack of affordable mental health care as a "very important" health priority. In the 2021 survey, 47.5% of respondents identified this priority as "very important." **Of the 16 health priorities evaluated, it was the only one with a sizable increase.** Comparing the 2017 to 2021 surveys there was a 34% increase in those who reported 14 or more days in the past 30 days of having "fair" or "poor" mental health. Similarly, there was a 22% increase in those who had been told they had a depressive disorder and a 33% increase in those who had been told they had an anxiety disorder. There was a 64% increase in those who called a suicide crisis line in the past 12 months, a 46% increase in those taking medication for mental illness, and a 46% increase in those reporting having received counseling for mental illness in the past 12 months.

Substance use also increased from 2017 to 2021. Those reporting binge drinking increased by 43%, those getting high from prescription medications increased 71%, and use of injected or snorted drugs to get high increased 56%. Reporting use of marijuana in the past 30 days nearly tripled.

While the percentages of those 18 to 64 years of age reporting not having health insurance coverage decreased from 18.4% in 2012 to 4.4% in 2021, there has been little change in the percentage of those reporting having no personal health care provider and those not having had a routine checkup in the past year. **Cost is less of a barrier to health care, but there are not enough providers to meet the needs of the community.**

Access to dental care, which was consistent across the Upper Peninsula in 2017, varied wildly from county to county in 2021 with some counties experiencing extreme shortages.

The counties that do not have universities continue to have populations that are considerably older than the rest of the state. As a population ages, there is more chronic illness. **Given our low population densities, high percentage of people over 65 years of age living alone, and low rates of access to broadband internet, isolation and lack of access to services are increasingly important issues.**

The rate of **smoking in individuals who are pregnant** in the Upper Peninsula is **nearly double** than the state average. Similarly, the rate of hospitalization for **neonatal abstinence syndrome**, in which newborns are withdrawing from certain substances (including opioids) they were exposed to prior to birth, **is three to four times higher in the Upper Peninsula** than for the State of Michigan.

People in the Upper Peninsula are **struggling financially** with 42.6% (counties range from 33.6% to 54.4%) earning less than the Household Survival Budget. **The factors that continue to have the largest impact on individual health are education level and income.**

Thank you to those who completed and returned their Upper Peninsula Community Health Issues and Priorities Survey. Your contribution to the health of the community is appreciated!

OFFICE LOCATIONS

540 Depot Street
Hancock, MI 49930

210 North Moore Street
Bessemer, MI 49911

303 Baraga Avenue
L'Anse, MI 49946

408 Copper Street
Ontonagon, MI 49953



906-482-7382



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