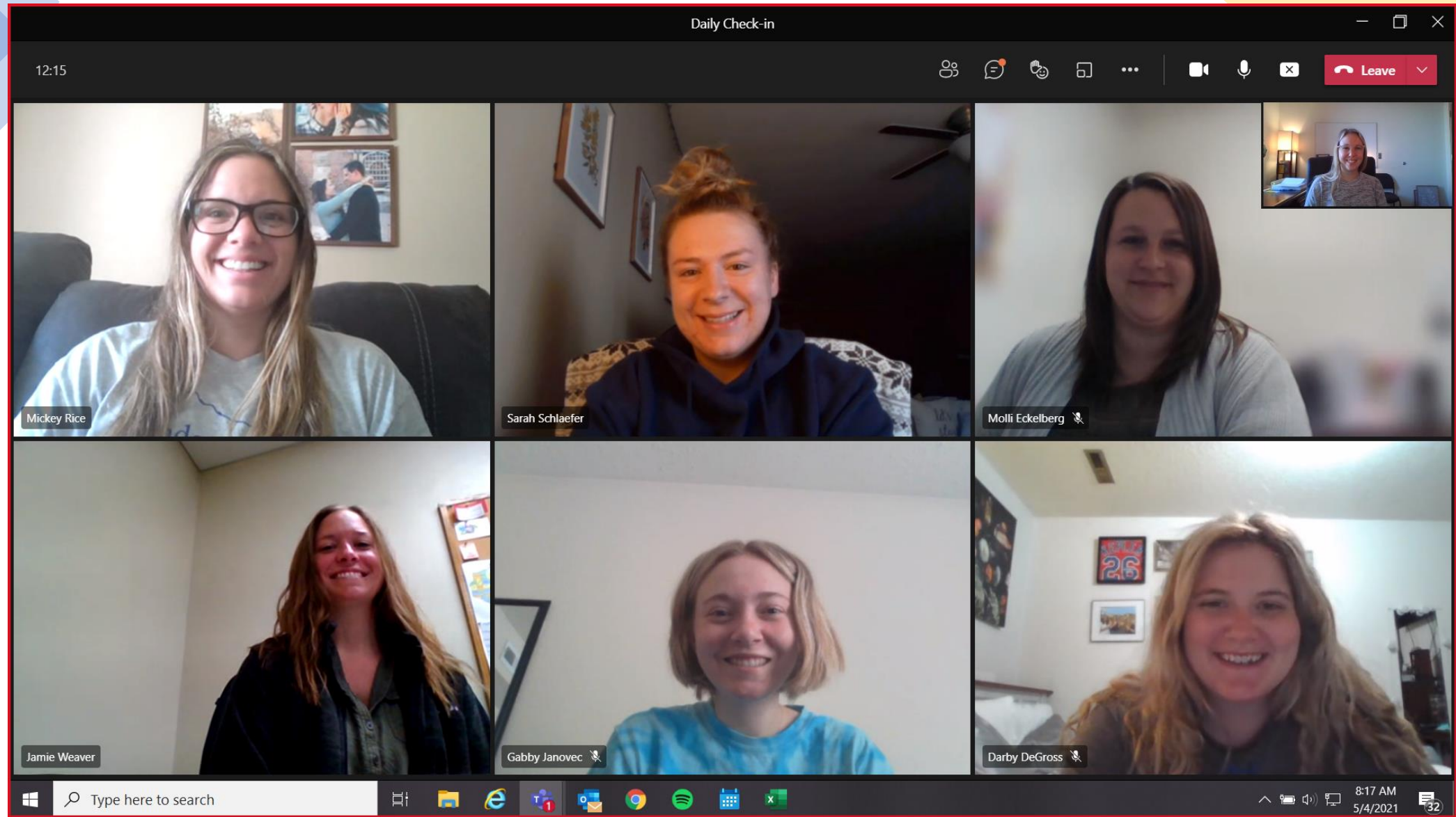
The cover features a central white diamond shape with a thin white border, set against a light gray background. The background is decorated with four overlapping diamond shapes in the corners: yellow in the top-left and bottom-right, and blue in the top-right and bottom-left. The text is centered within the white diamond.

Buffalo County Public Health
2020 Annual Report

Buffalo County Public Health Staff & Mission

The mission of Buffalo County Public Health (BCPH) is to empower communities to live better longer by preventing disease, protecting health and assuring safety.

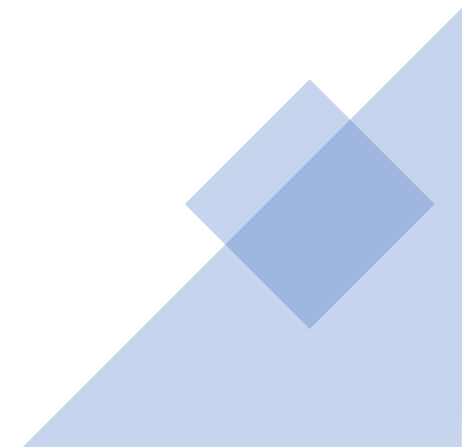
- Health Officer: April Loeffler, BSN, RN (end date 12/17/2020)
- Public Health Nurse (PHN): Josie Knauber, BSN, RN
- Environmental Health Specialist (EHS): Jamie Weaver, REHS
- WIC Director/Public Health Dietician: Sarah Nix, MS, RD, CD, CLS (end date 12/2/2020)
- Public Health Educator: Mickey Rice, CHES (start date 2/17/20)
 - Limited Term Public Health Educators
 - Sarah Schlaefer
 - Bachelor in Public Health-Community Health Education
 - Minor in Anthropology
 - Darby DeGross, CHES
 - Bachelor in Public Health-Community Health Education
 - Gabby Janovec
 - Bachelor in Public Health-Community Health Education
- WIC Support Staff: Mylessa Ingli (end date 7/2020) Molli Eckelberg (start date 7/20/20)



Staff current at the end of 2020 during one of our virtual public health meetings.
Top row left to right: Mickey Rice, Sarah Schlaefer, Molly Eckelberg, Josie Knauber
Bottom row left to right: Jamie Weaver, Gabby Janovec, Darby Degross



Public Health Services

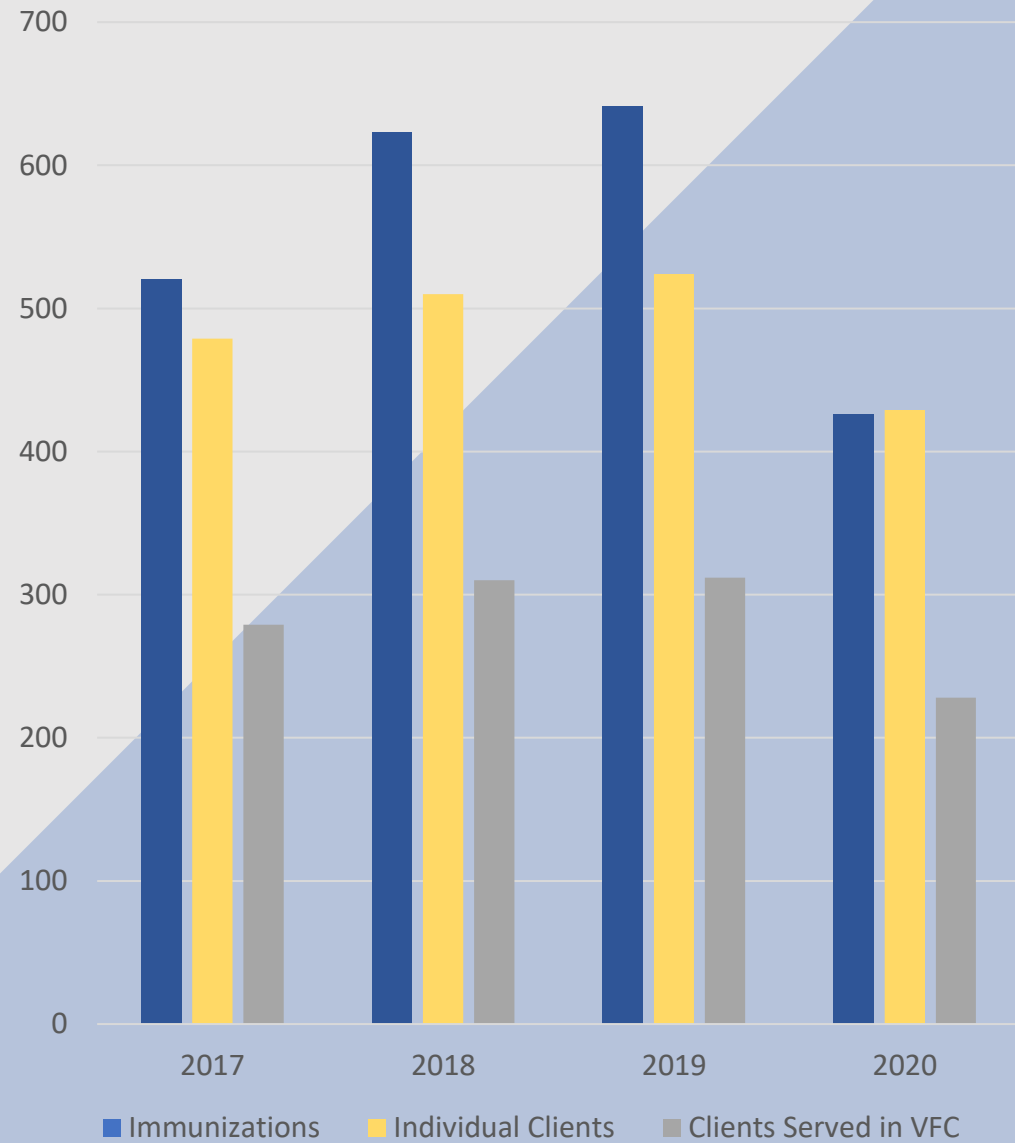
- Immunizations – Vaccines for Children (VFC)
 - Communicable Disease Surveillance & Control
 - Lead Poisoning & Prevention
 - Environmental Health Program
 - Human Health Hazards
 - Rabies & Animal Bite Program
 - Water Testing Lab
 - WIC
 - BOTVIN
 - Signs of Suicide (SOS)
 - Tobacco Prevention
 - COVID-19 Response
- 

Immunizations – VFC

- BCPH provides immunizations to children through the VFC program. VFC is a program that provides vaccines at no cost to children.
 - Eligible children include those on BadgerCare or Medicaid, no insurance, insurance that does not cover vaccines, or children who are American Indian or Alaska Native.
- BCPH offers seasonal influenza vaccines to children and adults. Children are served through mass vaccination exercises at their schools each year. BCPH travels to farms, businesses, and schools to vaccinate adults for seasonal influenza.
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, immunization rates have dropped significantly. Most vaccines given were seasonal influenza vaccines.

Immunizations – VFC

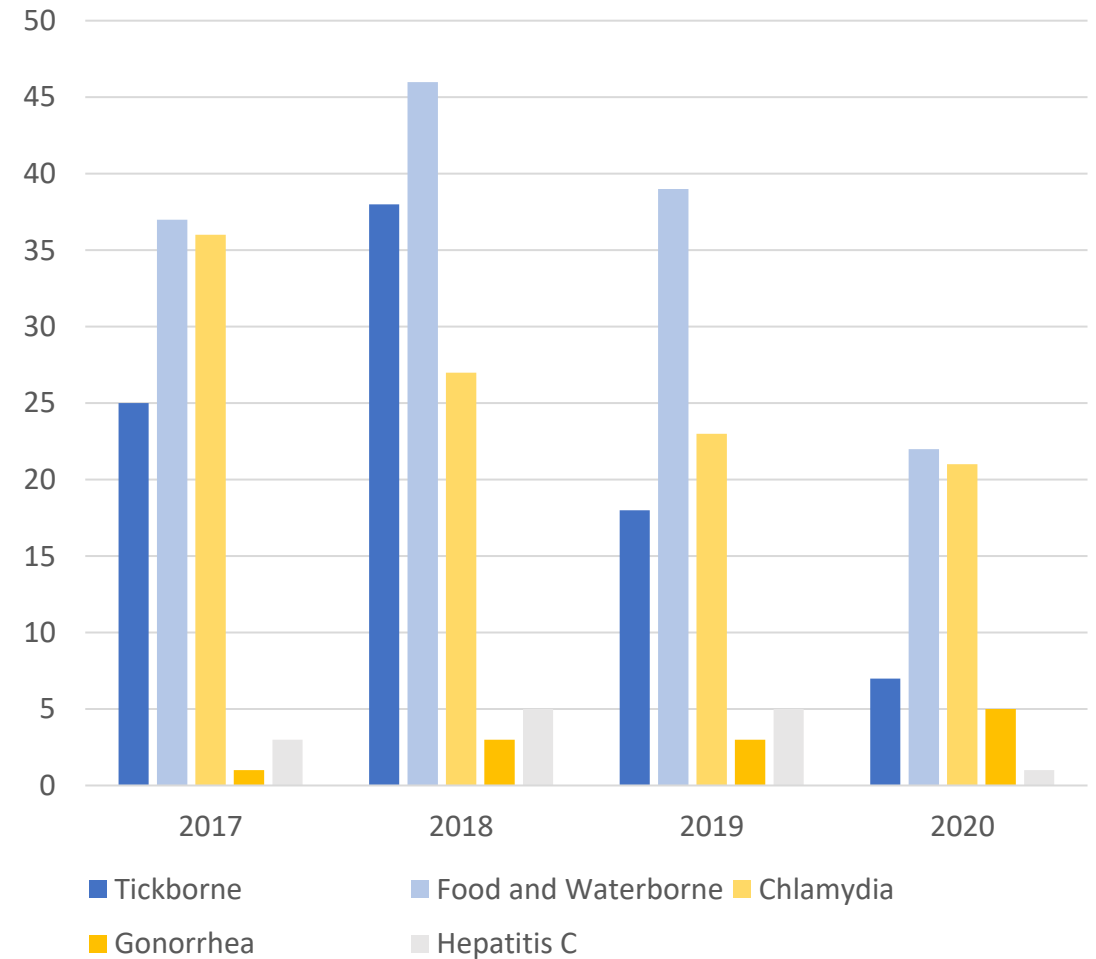
Immunizations Growth and Decline



Communicable Disease Prevention & Control

- BCPH PHN, EHS, and health officer investigate all reportable diseases in Buffalo County community members.
- The amount of testing was reduced due to COVID-19. We expect more cases than normal once people resume in person health care visits and routine surveillance of communicable diseases is increased.

Common Confirmed, Probable, and Suspect Communicable Diseases

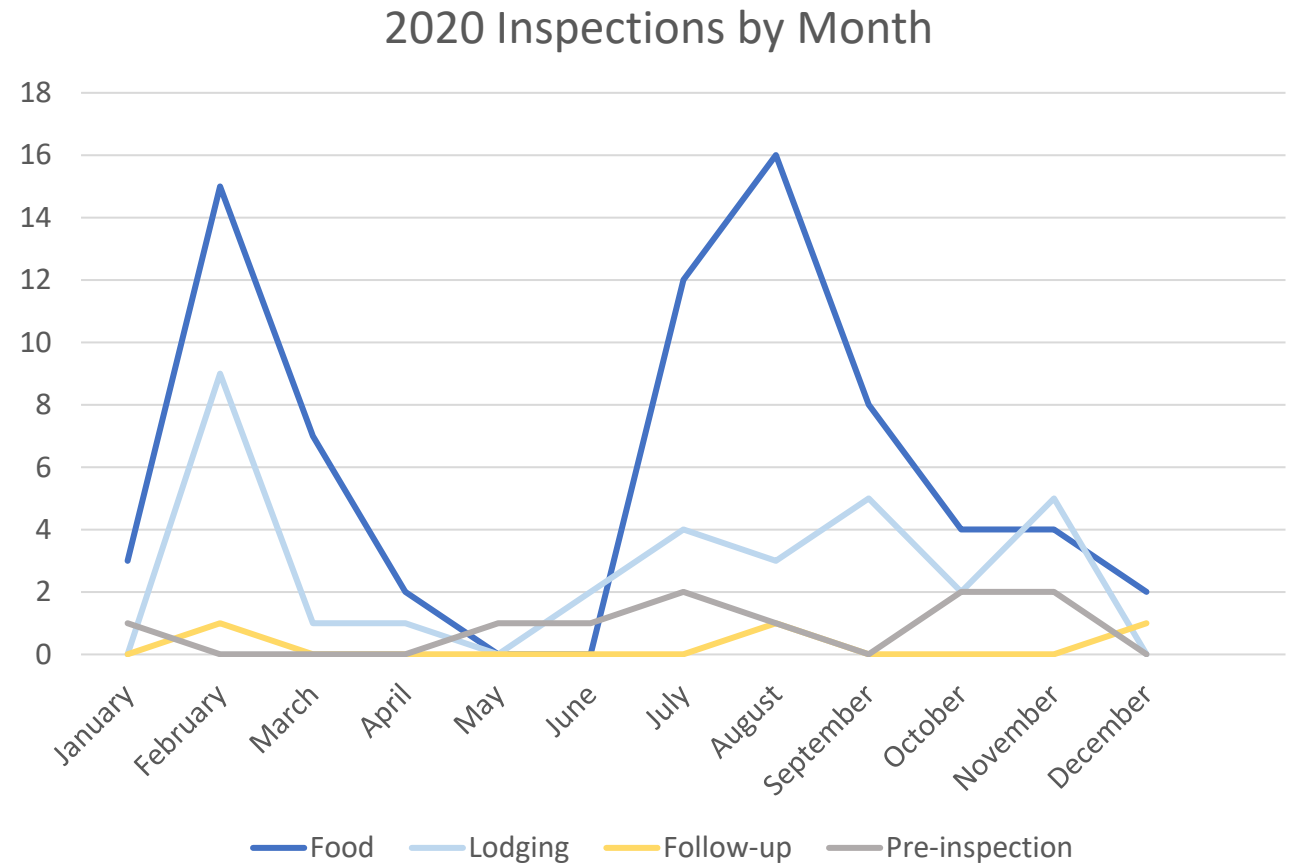


Lead Poisoning & Prevention

- Number of children tested for lead: 90
 - Number of children with confirmed ≥ 5 mcg/dL blood lead level: 1
 - Number of lead investigations: 1
-
- The PHN, WIC Director and support staff, and EHS are all involved in running our lead program.
 - Children are screened for lead poisoning at 1 and 2 years of age during their WIC appointment.
 - Children with blood lead levels ≥ 5 mcg/dL are referred to the PHN and EHS.
 - The PHN provides case management and lead education.
 - The EHS coordinates lead hazard assessments, lead risk assessments, and assists with coordinating lead abatement. BCPH contracts with neighboring counties' certified lead risk assessors to conduct lead risk assessment.

Environmental Health - Inspections

- Due to COVID-19 in 2020, facility (restaurants, bars, lodging, swimming pools, schools) inspections were largely put on hold due to the stay-at-home order and virus transmission concerns. Pre-inspections and complaint inspections were conducted if they were received with safeguards in place.

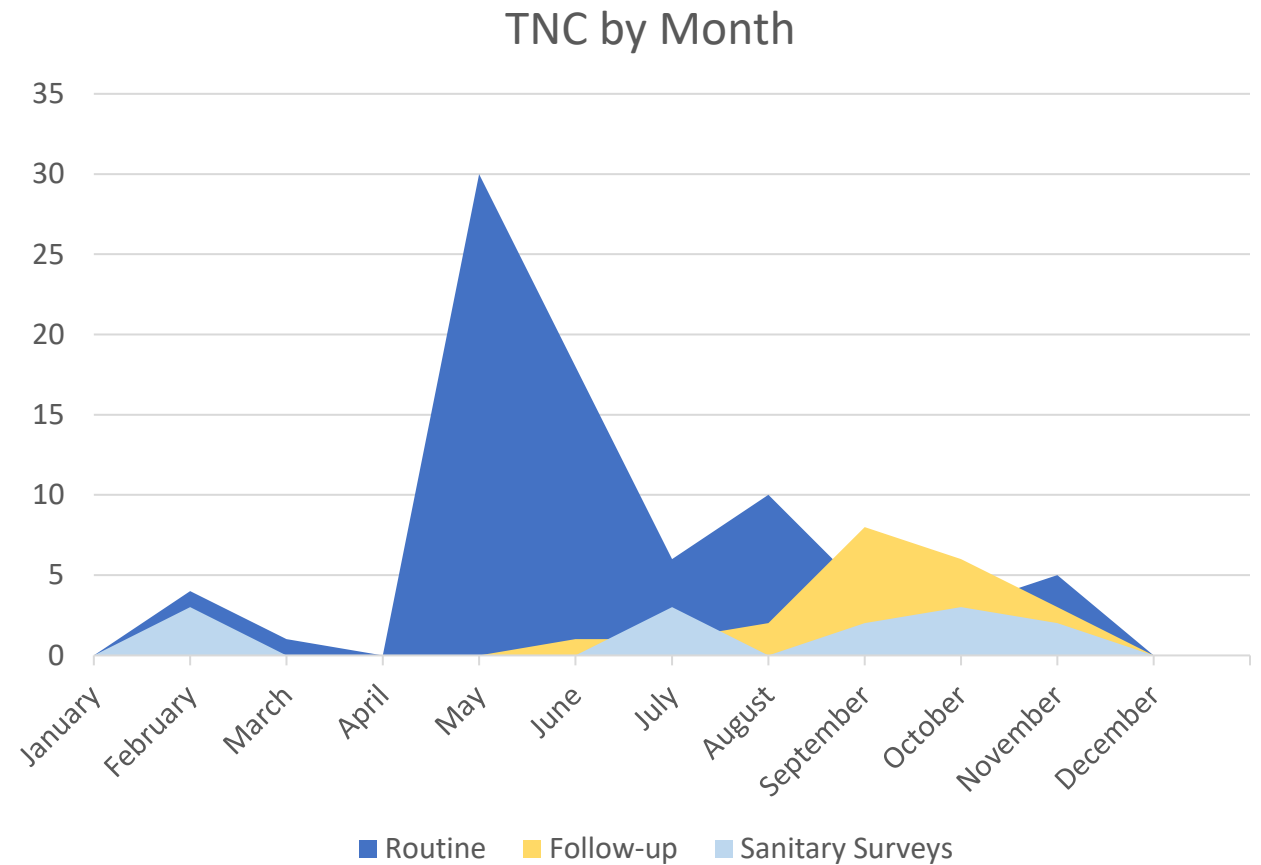


Environmental Health – Transient Non-Community Public Water System (TNC)

- The federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) requires public water systems to monitor the quality of the drinking water they serve to the public to ensure protection of public health and safety. A Transient Non-Community Public Water System is defined as a public water system that serves at least 25 persons daily; at least 60 days per year. Examples of transient non-community water systems include taverns, motels, restaurants, churches, campgrounds, and parks.
- BCPH has been contracted by the Wisconsin DNR for the purpose of assuring compliance with Wisconsin Code requirements. As part of the contract, BCPH staff conduct annual site visits, collect drinking water samples, conduct assessments and required follow up in response to sample results, and at least once every five years, perform a complete sanitary inspection of the well and entire water system.

Environmental Health – TNC

- The TNC well program, contracted through the DNR, was able to proceed as usual in 2020. Water sampling and well inspections could be done while being socially distanced or without any persons needing to be present, so the virus transmission risk to staff and community was low. The importance of safe drinking water during the pandemic was important and safeguards were utilized while in the field.



Human Health Hazards

- WI State Statute 254.59 (1): If a local health officer finds a human health hazard, he or she shall order the abatement or removal of the human health hazard on private premises, within a reasonable time period, and if the owner or occupant fails to comply, the local health officer may enter upon the premises and abate or remove the human health hazard.
- It is the responsibility of the health department to ensure the health and safety of its community members. During 2020, the BCPH EHS and Health Officer investigated six human health hazards.

Rabies & Animal Bites

- During 2020, the EHS, PHN, and Health Officer investigated 22 animal bites to ensure the biting animal was not infected with rabies.
- During the investigation, animals are monitored for signs and symptoms of rabies by a veterinarian. If after 10 days since the bite the animal is not exhibiting signs or symptoms, it is found to be negative for rabies.
- If the animal develops signs or symptoms or is deceased, the animal is sent to the WI State Lab of Hygiene for testing.
- If the animal is unable to be found, the person undergoes post-exposure prophylaxis – a series of medications to prevent rabies.
- Through these investigations, no cases of rabies were found.



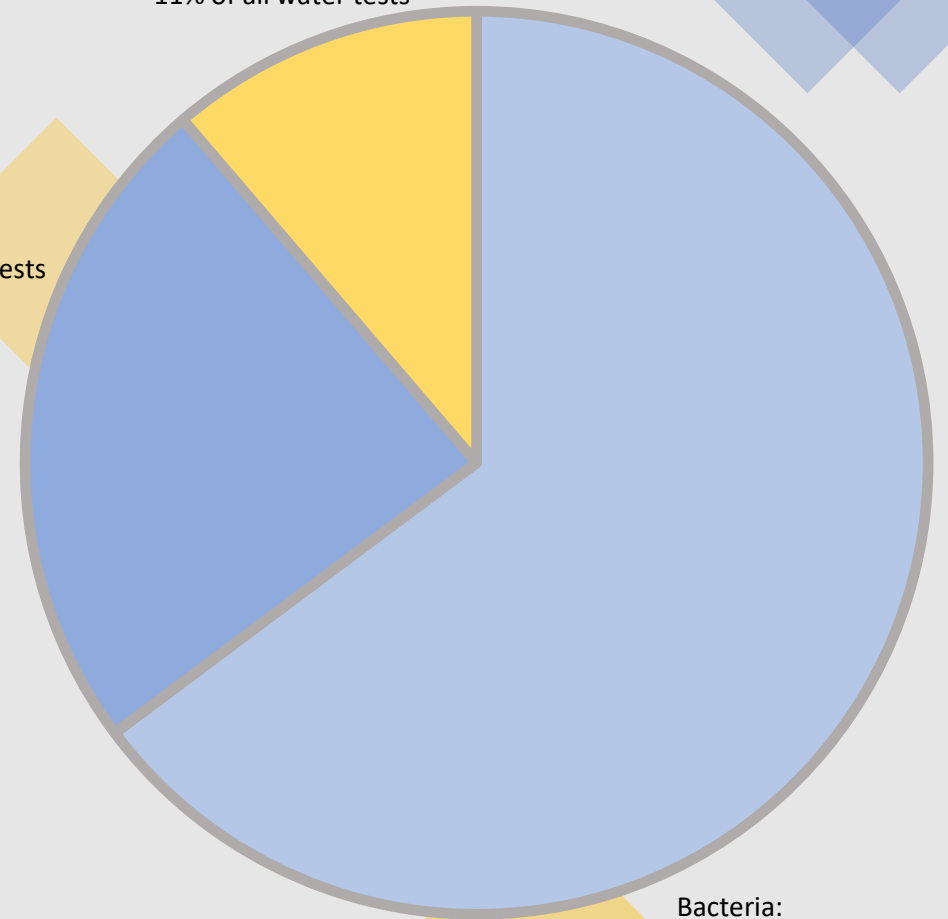
Water Testing Lab

- BCPH has a WI DATCP Certified water lab. We offer testing for bacteria, nitrate, and arsenic. Private wells should be tested for routinely.
- Bacteria: Coliform bacteria are the most common contaminants found in private water systems. They don't generally cause illness but indicate a breach in the water system. E. Coli are a type of coliform bacteria. Most strains are harmless and live in the intestines of healthy humans and animals. However, one strain, O157:H7, produces a powerful toxin that can cause severe illness.
- Nitrate: Nitrate is a compound that is formed naturally when nitrogen combines with oxygen. Nitrogen is essential for all living things, but high levels of nitrate in drinking water can be dangerous to health, especially for infants and pregnant women. Nitrates come from fertilizers, manure, naturally occurs in plants and vegetables, septic systems, and municipal sewage sludge.
- Arsenic: Arsenic is a natural element found in soil and bedrock throughout Wisconsin. High levels of arsenic can negatively affect your health.

Water Test Proportions 2020

Nitrate:
34 Total Tests
24% of all water tests

Arsenic:
16 Total Tests
11% of all water tests



Bacteria:
92 Total Tests
65% of all water tests

■ Bacteria ■ Nitrate ■ Arsenic

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)



- WIC is a federally funded program that provides preventative health and nutrition services to eligible families.
 - Eligible individuals include pregnant or breastfeeding women, new mothers, infants, children under the age of 5, individuals living in Wisconsin and meet income eligibility requirements.
- WIC provides monthly food benefits such as milks, eggs, peanut butter, whole grains, fruits and vegetables, cheese, yogurt, baby formula, and more.
- During 2020, WIC served a monthly average of 151 clients.
- WIC clinics are offered in Central Lutheran Church in Mondovi and the Buffalo County Courthouse in Alma.
- In late 2020, the BCPH WIC Director left employment. The state WIC program strongly recommended merging WIC programs with a neighboring county. This was explored through the rest of 2020 and into 2021.

Botvin *LifeSkills Training*

- The Botvin LifeSkills Training Elementary School program is a comprehensive, dynamic, and developmentally appropriate substance abuse and violence prevention program designed for upper elementary school students.
- This highly effective curriculum has been proven to help increase self-esteem, develop healthy attitudes, and improve their knowledge of essential life skills – all of which promote healthy and positive personal development and mental health.

Program Learning Objectives

- **Personal Self-Management Skills**
Students develop skills that enhance self-esteem, develop problem-solving skills, help them reduce stress and anxiety, and manage anger.
- **General Social Skills**
Students gain skills to meet personal challenges such as overcoming shyness, communicating clearly, building relationships, and avoiding violence.
- **Drug Resistance Skills**
Students build effective defenses against pressures to use

Botvin *LifeSkills Training*

- The Botvin *LifeSkills Training* program, training, and materials were funded by the Northwoods Coalition and implemented in all four Buffalo County schools in the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year, serving 164 students in the 3rd and 4th grades.
- Mondovi School: 3rd grade (4 classes)
- Gilmanton School: 3rd and 4th grade (combined classroom)
- Cochrane-Fountain City School: 3rd and 4th grade (separate classrooms)
- Alma School: 3rd and 4th grade (separate classrooms)
- The program was implemented at different times for each school, with each school finishing their last of the 8 lessons before the end of 2020. A pre and post survey were administered, but data is still being analyzed.

Botvin *LifeSkills Training* School Testimonial

Gilmanton School, “The curriculum has been proven to help increase self-esteem, develop healthy attitudes, and improve knowledge on essential life-skills, promoting health and positive personal development and mental health.”



Signs of Suicide (SOS)

- SOS Signs of Suicide (SOS) is a universal, school-based prevention program designed for middle or high school students. The Hope 4 U coalition purchased this program to be used in the Buffalo County High Schools. The goals of this program include:
 - Decrease suicide and suicide attempts by increasing student knowledge and adaptive attitudes about depression
 - Encourage personal help-seeking and/or help-seeking on behalf of a friend
 - Reduce the stigma of mental illness and acknowledge the importance of seeking help or treatment
 - Engage parents and school staff as partners in prevention through “gatekeeper” education
 - Encourage schools to develop community-based partnerships to support student mental health
- Through a video and guided discussion, students learn to identify warning signs of suicide and depression in a single class period. At the end of the session, students complete a seven-question screening for depression to further encourage help-seeking and connect students at risk with trusted adults. The curriculum raises awareness about behavioral health and encourages students to ACT (Acknowledge, Care, Tell) when worried about themselves or their peers.

SOS Program Data

- Buffalo County implemented SOS with Alma High School on December 14th. This included all 64 high school students.
 - Data is not representative of all high school students as 39 out of 64 students completed and submitted surveys.
- 61.5% of students had responses that categorized them as “unlikely to have depression”.
 - One student is currently being treated for depression.
 - One student responded they would not go to any adults within the school.
 - One student did not list any trusted adults.
- 28.2% of students had responses that categorized them as “possibly having depression”.
 - Two students are currently being treated for depression.
 - All students were able to list in and out of school trusted adults.
- 10.3% of students had responses that categorized them as “likely to have depression”.
 - One student is currently getting treated for depression.
 - Two students were unable to list a trusted adult within the school.
- Five teachers or school staff were listed by students as trusted adults within the school.

Tobacco Prevention

- Public Health put out a press release about the Wisconsin Synar survey in collaboration with the 7C's Health Initiative, a tobacco prevention coalition consisting of 7 counties.
- Data from the yearly Wisconsin Synar survey shows that little cigarillos are increasingly being sold to kids, even as the number of retailers selling any tobacco product to youth has gone down slightly.
- The Synar survey, which monitors the percentage of retailers across the state that sell tobacco to minors, shows that the overall sales rate of tobacco products has remained stable at 5.5% in 2019 (down from 5.8% in 2018). However, the product most often sold to youth was cigarillos for the second year in a row (7.4% in 2018 and 7% in 2019). This is concerning since these products are not required to be displayed behind the counter and they often come in kid-friendly flavors.

2020 COVID-19 Response

- In the early days of the pandemic, specifically March through June, Buffalo County experienced two to three COVID-19 cases per month (Figure 1). Yet, this number continued to increase as time passed.
- In July, Buffalo County was experiencing approximately one to two COVID-19 cases per day (Figure 1). Eventually, this increased to three to five COVID-19 cases per day in September of 2020 (Figure 1).
- Ultimately, case rates spiked tremendously as we reached the end of the year holidays: Thanksgiving and Christmas.
- In November of 2020, Buffalo County had anywhere from 10-36 COVID-19 cases each day. In fact, on November 9th, 2020, we had our highest ever single-day case count at 36 (35 confirmed and 1 probable).
- Although numbers started to slowly decrease, Buffalo County ended the year with anywhere from 2-20 cases per day in December.
- Despite the rising case numbers throughout 2020, as well as the disease burden in Buffalo County, our team of nine Public Health Staff stayed dedicated to protecting the health of our residents and worked tirelessly to mitigate the pandemic in our community.

Figure 1. COVID-19 Disease Trends in Buffalo County, WI as of 04/30/2021.

Number of reported confirmed and probable COVID-19 cases by date of symptom onset or diagnosis: Buffalo County

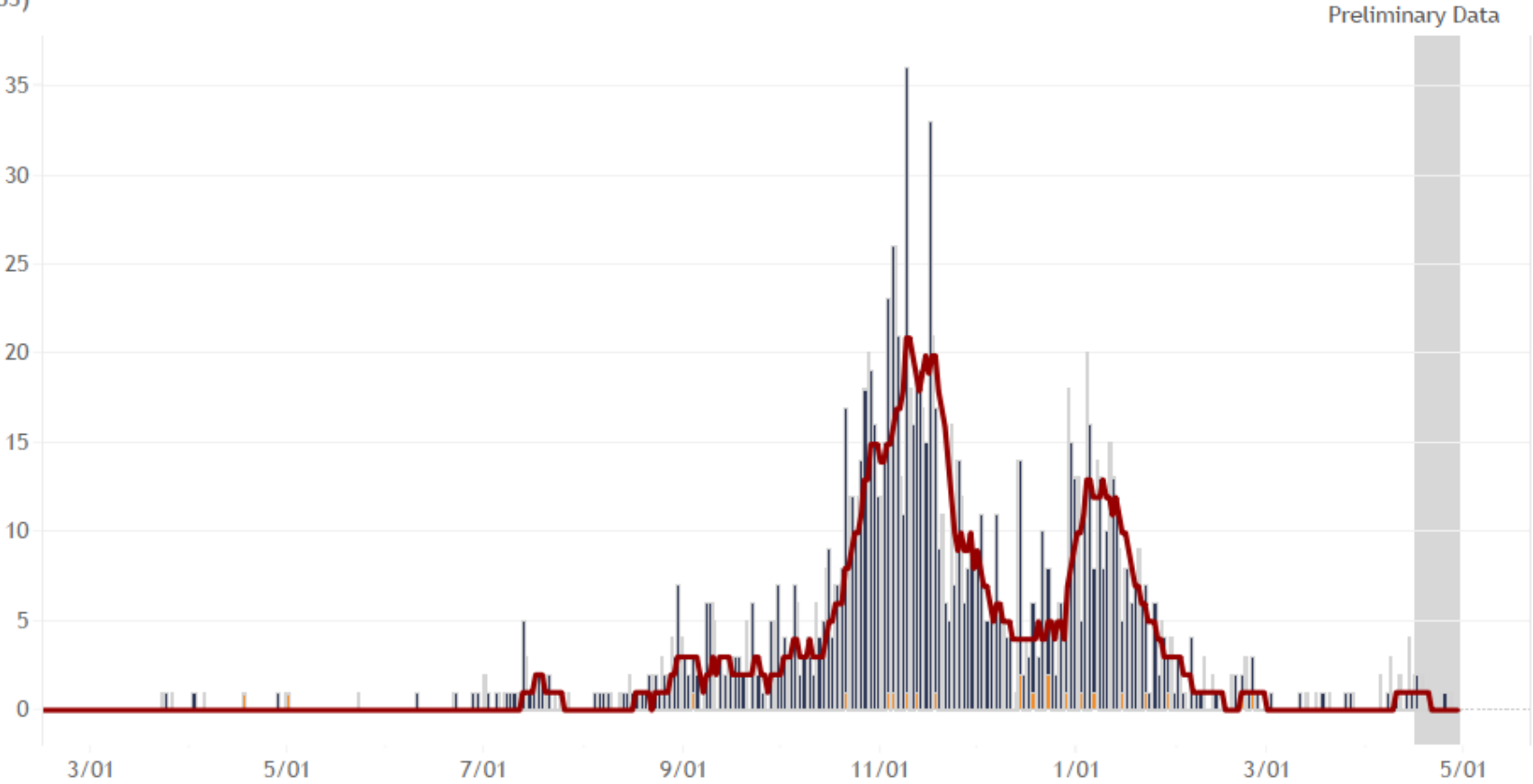
Updated: 4/30/2021 (Total: 1,383)

Select County:

Buffalo County

Select Case Status:

- Confirmed
 - Probable
 - Confirmed and Probable
-
- Confirmed cases
 - Probable cases
 - 7-day average



COVID-19 Staffing

- At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, March 2020, the Buffalo County Health Department had two staff (PHN and health officer) fully trained on how to conduct infectious disease investigations. However, as the number of cases began to increase, several other Public Health staff members were pulled in. For example, our Public Health Educator, Environmental Health Specialist, WIC Director/Public Health Dietician, and our Family & Community Specialist were swiftly trained on disease investigations and integrated into our COVID-19 response. Each of these individuals, as well as our PHN and health officer, were assigned one day of the week to dedicate solely to COVID-19 work. In addition to spending one day each week on COVID-19, all six staff members rotated being “on-call.” On-call responsibilities consisted of the following:
 - Work on-call hours one week each month (Monday-Sunday) in order to meet Buffalo County Health Department’s COVID-19 response goals
 - Be available for emergency COVID-19 calls 4:30-8pm each weekday
 - Be available for emergency COVID-19 calls, as well as COVID-19 disease investigations and contact tracing duties, 8am-8pm on Saturday and Sunday
- Unfortunately, as time passed and we reached the end of June and beginning of July, cases continued to increase, and more staff were required to complete the necessary COVID-19 work in a timely manner. As a result, the Buffalo County Health Department hired three Limited Term Employees (LTEs) to assist with COVID-19 disease investigations and contact tracing. These three LTEs took over COVID-19 disease investigation and contact tracing tasks for the Buffalo County Health Department. This allowed the other Public Health Staff to spend more time on their other activities and programs.
- Though, once again, cases began to surge in November and December and more help was needed. As a result, the Public Health Team made the executive decision to start referring ALL COVID-19 disease investigations and contact tracing tasks to the state of Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS). By doing this, the LTEs were able to focus their efforts on investigating and responding to outbreaks, distributing quarantine and isolation letters, as well as studying upcoming COVID-19 vaccination plans.



Thank you