

We all want to live in a healthy community, but how do we decide what to improve and how? Every 3 years Public Health Sauk County works with our 3 area hospitals to conduct a Community Needs Assessment to see what steps are needed to make our community healthier.

- In 2021 this assessment involved a community survey, focus groups and interviews, as well as looking at multiple data sources to understand how healthy our communities are now, and what a healthier Sauk County would look like in the future.

At a gathering of over 100 community members, we shared the assessment results and they selected the priorities of substance use, mental health and housing for our 2021 Community Health Improvement Plan.

These chosen priorities align with our current work in substance use and resulted in the forming of 2 new action teams to address mental health and housing issues. At this time, the mental health team is working on strategies to address long wait times for first appointments. The housing team is addressing our insufficient housing supply. For over 5 years Sauk County's Partnership for Prevention coalition has been working to address youth use of alcohol and vapes, and we have many public health programs to improve referrals to treatment, harm reduction, and recovery support.

As we plan and implement change, we are working hard to involve community leaders as well as those who are most affected by mental health, substance use and housing to ensure that our efforts are effective. Who do you know who might be interested in helping us improve our community? I would very much appreciate your help in connecting with them. Would you be willing to introduce me to them?