



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Dakota County

Strategic Plan

DAKOTA COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH
2024-2028



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About this plan

This strategic plan was developed to guide Dakota County Public Health's work from 2024 through 2028. This plan outlines what the department can do internally to improve work and partnerships and maximize efforts. In addition to this strategic plan, Public Health collaborates with community partners to develop and implement a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) every five years. The CHIP will continue to guide the department's work externally with the community and partners in Dakota County.

This strategic plan was purposely designed to align with the plans and work of the Dakota County Board of Commissioners and the Community Services Division. Over the next five years, Public Health will continuously participate in the work of the County and Division to ensure the most efficient outcomes.

County Board strategic priorities

The county's Strategic Plan goals reflect the Dakota County Board of Commissioners' vision for the county and are meant to guide the work of the county and to provide direction and context for the work of staff:

A great place to live: Dakota County strives to be a welcoming place where all people are safe, have opportunities to thrive, and enjoy a high lifelong quality of life.

A healthy environment with quality natural areas: Dakota County protects and maintains natural resources for the health and enjoyment of current and future residents.

A successful place for business and jobs: Dakota County fosters business and employment success through modern infrastructure, low taxes, and a prepared, connected workforce.

Excellence in public service: Dakota County demonstrates sound stewardship of human and financial resources, communicates, and engages with the public, and innovates and collaborates to provide excellent service.

In addition, Dakota County maintains a set of key [community indicators](#) and performance measures associated with the revised Strategic Plan Goals. This information helps Dakota County monitor the trend, over time, of things Dakota County cares about, as well as information regarding the performance of the services that we provide.

Community Services Division strategic priorities

Dakota County's Community Services Division, which Public Health is part of, created a strategic plan in 2023 that includes the following priorities, objectives, and strategies.

Improved outcomes for people: People, families, and communities are better off because of the work done by CSD and its partners.

- Focus on prevention and early intervention.
- Strengthen (authentic) community engagement.
- Serve people, families, and communities more holistically.

Inclusion, diversity, equity, and access: Contribute to dismantling institutional racism and other forms of oppression and build an anti-racist system that effectively serves all.

- Strengthen staff learning and skill building.
- Build and sustain a more diverse workforce.
- Improve equity in service access and client outcomes.

Employee health and well-being: Our Division is a premier place to work where staff feel their safety and well-being are a priority.

- Build capacity to support staff well-being.
- Develop capacity to address secondary trauma.
- Build-out a more robust staff safety program that encompasses both physical and psychological safety.

Operational excellence: Our operational infrastructure supports the strategic direction and priorities of the division.

- Strengthen the capacity and bench to lead the work.
- Leverage technology to be more effective and efficient.
- Strengthen data management and create a data culture.
- Adapt physical infrastructure in ways that enhance operations.

Public Health's vision

A healthy, thriving, and equitable community for all in Dakota County.

Public Health's mission

Collaborate to prevent disease, promote wellbeing, and protect health and the environment.

Public Health's values

Dakota County Public Health aligns its values with the County.

People: We value and respect every individual.

Innovation: We challenge ourselves to do things better.

Service: We make helping others a top priority.

Integrity: We are honest, fair, and accountable.

County demographics and health equity

Demographics

Dakota County is part of the seven-county Twin Cities Metro region. It is the third largest county in Minnesota by population. The land use is unique, with a one-third split of urban, suburban, and rural communities.

The [Healthy Dakota Initiative](#) conducted the [Community Health Assessment](#) to provide an overview of population health in Dakota County. It recognizes trends in population health status and considers high-risk populations and those with disparities in health outcomes. It also establishes data-driven public health priorities that can be used in the development of a [Community Health Improvement Plan](#).

In 2022, there were an estimated 443,341 residents in Dakota County. The racial composition of Dakota County is 75 percent White, non-Hispanic; eight percent Black/African American; six percent Asian; less than one percent American Indian/Alaskan Native; and eight percent Hispanic/Latino/a. People aged 65 and older comprise 16 percent of the county population, females outnumber males and are living longer, and the population of color is increasing more rapidly than the white population. Lakeville is the ninth largest city in the state and the fastest growing city in the county. The percent of Dakota County residents living below the poverty level (six percent) is below the state and the nation and decreased slightly from 2018 to 2022. However, poverty among Dakota County residents varies by race and ethnicity. Ten percent of non-institutionalized Dakota County residents live with a disability, below the state and the nation.

Health equity

Dakota County Public Health uses the following for the definition of health equity: *Everyone has what they need to achieve their highest level of health and wellness.*

Health equity is a public health issue. Addressing health equity is a priority for Dakota County at every level, including the Public Health Department. For the 2024-2028 strategic plan, Public Health is taking steps to incorporate a focus on health equity as we looked to the future of the department's work.

Strategic planning process

A strategic planning core team was established to guide the facilitation of meetings and planning activities. The core team consisted of the Department Director, Deputy Director, Department Epidemiologist, and Communications Coordinator. The team received facilitation and planning guidance from Amanda Lemke, Emergency Preparedness team member from Bloomington Public Health.

Timeline

In the summer 2023, the Department Epidemiologist, Communications Coordinator, and Bloomington Public Health consultant reviewed the previous strategic plans. The group determined that a four-phase process would be utilized:

Phase 1: Facilitated discussions with staff members (August 2023). These facilitated discussions with department team members reviewed the current, vision, mission, and department priorities. These conversations also included a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis to assist in determining the department's current priorities. Five facilitated discussions were held.

Phase 2: Developing strategic plan priority areas (August and September 2023). This facilitated discussion featured a couple dozen staff members from all department units and position levels. The group utilized feedback from the facilitated discussions to create priority areas for the strategic plan.

Phase 3: Support and buy-in from staff (September – December 2023). Over the next several months, The Department Epidemiologist and Communications Coordinator shared the draft vision, mission, and priority areas with each unit of the department for feedback.

Phase 4: Strategic plan launch (January 2024). After receiving feedback and buy-in from all department units, the 2024-2028 strategic plan was drafted and finalized. The plan featured a new vision and mission along with 4 priority areas. The plan also included two new components: common thread principles and an advisory committee.

In previous strategic plans, the planning process included creating goals and objectives for each of the priority areas and all priority areas kicked off when the plan was launched. In this 2024-2028 plan, the priority areas are scheduled to launch over three years. The goals and objectives for each priority area will be created when the priority area launches. This technique was used to ensure that components of the plan complement the ongoing work of the county, division, and department.

Common threads

These principles will be woven throughout our strategic plan:

Balanced: Plan priorities will launch over three years to complement workloads and ensure success.

Inclusive: The plan's priority areas, goals, and objectives will follow health equity, IDEA (inclusion, diversity, equity, and access), and trauma responsive best practices.

Momentum-driven: The plan's priority areas will include and feature recently developed plans and workgroups.

Representative: The plan's committee and priority areas were created by Dakota County Public Health staff and will be open all who are interested.

Sustainable: The plan's committee and priority work groups will ensure goals and objectives are achievable and maintainable.

Advisory committee

The 2024-2028 strategic plan will feature the new strategic plan advisory committee. This committee's goal will be to oversee the plan and assist work groups with building out priority areas.

Committee members will ensure that the plan's common threads are included in the priority area goals and objectives. This committee will remain open to all staff who are interested.

Priority areas

Dakota County Public Health staff chose four priority areas to focus on in 2024-2028. Workgroups will be created for each priority area. Any staff who are interested will be encouraged to participate.

Staff needs and development: Addressing staff hiring, development, and retention

Authentic community engagement: Elevating community voices and being community-driven

Emerging community needs: Integrating community needs into our work and exploring new public health areas (substance use, climate change, cannabis, etc.)

Innovation and operations excellence: Creating an innovative and responsive culture and infrastructure

Priority areas launch timeline

To create a balanced plan, the priority areas will be introduced over three years.

2024: Strategic plan advisory committee and staff needs and development priority area launch.

2025: Authentic community engagement and emerging community needs priority areas launch.

2026: Innovation and operations excellence priority area launch.

Once an area is launched, the work continues through the end of 2028.

Goals and objectives

Staff needs and development

Goal 1: Expand staff hiring and recruitment to be more inclusive, diverse, equitable, and accessible.

- Objective 1.1: Expand job recruitment tactics.
- Objective 1.2: Evaluate and improve the interview experience.

Goal 2: Improve staff orientation and development opportunities to be more consistent and supportive across the department.

- Objective 2.1: Improve processes for staff orientation and training.
- Objective 2.2: Clarify and support career advancement opportunities.

Goal 3: Retain staff and create a safe and responsive environment for feedback to increase job satisfaction.

- Objective 3.1: Promote staff wellbeing. *(Work to be taken on by resiliency committee)*
- Objective 3.2: Expand exit interview tactics.

Performance measures

The performance measures were developed to track progress at the Goal level. These will be analyzed annually by the Department Epidemiologist. As priority areas launch and create goals, additional measures will be added.

Staff needs and development

Goal 1: Expand staff hiring and recruitment to be more inclusive, diverse, equitable, and accessible.

- **Measure: TBD**

Goal 2: Improve staff orientation and development opportunities to be more consistent and supportive across the department.

- **Measure: TBD**

Goal 3: Retain staff and create a safe and responsive environment for feedback to increase job satisfaction.

- **Measure: TBD**

Monitoring

The implementation of each objective will be carried out by Public Health staff working in small teams. A lead or co-lead is assigned to each work group. The teams create work plans with action steps to accomplish their objective. The leads for each team meet regularly to share updated on progress or barriers encountered.

Updates to the plan

This plan is reviewed quarterly by the advisory committee. Leads from each objective team will also share accomplishments, barriers, or setbacks with the advisory team at regular meetings. This document will be updated accordingly.

Progress and updates on the plan will also be shared with department staff via Public Health's SharePoint page and all staff meetings. The Public Health Director will keep the division and county board updated through division and county board meetings.