

La Crosse County Wisconsin Obesity Prevention

QUOTE

“Over the past 20 years our county has successfully implemented wellness interventions and policy changes in the areas of nutrition and physical activity in a variety of settings from schools to restaurants to public health clinics. Our work has helped make La Crosse County a healthier place to work, live and play.”

--Steven Doyle, Board Chairman, La Crosse County

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

- La Crosse County, located in western Wisconsin, has a population of 112, 627, with almost half of the residents living in the City of La Crosse and about 26% living in one of three suburbs with the remainder in small towns or rural areas.
- About 94% of county residents are White, with the Hispanic population being the largest minority population in the County (3%) followed by small Native American (2%) and African American (1%) populations.
- La Crosse County has a higher rate of poverty (13.2%) than the State of Wisconsin (10.8%).

COMMUNITY HEALTH PROBLEMS

- Data from 2004-2006 showed that 60.1-64.2% of adults in La Crosse County were overweight and 26.6-29.3% of adults were obese.
- Rates varied across segments with men, older adults and those with a lower economic status being more likely to be overweight or obese.
- In 2009, about 31.9% of children aged 2-4 years in the Wisconsin WIC Program in La Crosse County are overweight or obese and 34.6% of 4 year old children are either overweight or obese.

COMMUNITY ASSETS:

La Crosse County will build on existing success in the areas of policy, systems, and environmental change.

- The La Crosse 500 Club helps restaurant patrons identify menu choices that are controlled in calories and fat.
- Wellness Warriors offers healthy vending options through price reductions on healthier items and price increases on calorie dense, nutrient poor choices.
- The Safe Routes to School Program increases the number of children who walk and bike to school.
- As it is implemented, the recently adopted Coulee Region 2035 Bicycle Pedestrian Plan will improve bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.
- A vibrant, growing local food system is expanding farm to institution efforts.
- The Footsteps to Health grocery store initiative encourages patrons at participating stores to increase their fruit and vegetable purchases through in store education and sampling.

LEADERSHIP TEAM:

The Leadership Team includes high-level community leaders from various sectors in the community who have the resources and capacity within their organizations, that when combined, can make the proposed activities a reality. This team is integral to community success as they will oversee the strategic direction of the project, enact policies related to the strategies selected, and will work with the community coalition(s).

Members of the La Crosse County Leadership Team include leaders from the following offices and organizations:

- Health and Human Services Board Chair, La Crosse County
- Executive Director, Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater La Crosse
- Director of Health Programs, Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA)
- Director of Planning and Development, City of La Crosse
- Assistant Chief, La Crosse Police Department
- Epidemiologist, Gunderson Lutheran Health System
- Transportation Planner, Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Community Outreach Coordinator, School District of La Crosse
- Director, La Crosse Medical Health Science Consortium
- Director of Pupil Services, Onalaska School District
- Pioneering Healthier Communities Coordinator, La Crosse Area Family YMCA
- Wellness Director, Western Technical College
- Director of Quality Assurance, Reinhart Food Service
- Professor of Exercise Science, University of Wisconsin- La Crosse

COMMUNITY STORY

The St Louis Action Institute inspired La Crosse’s Leadership Team to action. As one team member notes, “Place really does matter...We need to examine where we live, work and play...do these places promote health or chronic disease. “ Another noted: “One-third of the La Crosse community doesn’t drive and they need to get around safely. In addition, most people want to drive less and we need to find ways to make it easier for them to do that. Complete Streets is a natural fit. To make a complete streets policy a reality in La Crosse county we need to gather the many stakeholder groups in our community around the table and develop an “action team” of partners who will help move this forward”

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COMMUNITY STRATEGIES

	La Crosse, Wisconsin Strategies
Media	Nutrition <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Promoting health food/drink choices & active transportation choices▪ Counter advertising for unhealthy food and beverage choices
Access	Nutrition <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Farm to School Physical Activity <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Enhancement of bicycling/pedestrian infrastructure▪ Daily physical activity in afterschool
Point of Purchase / Promotion	Nutrition <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Labeling of lower fat/calorie choices(grocery stores, restaurants)
Price	Nutrition <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ In vending: Lowering prices of healthier items and increasing prices of less healthy items
Social Support & Services	Physical Activity <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Workplace policy changes to encourage active commuting▪ Activity groups at Senior Centers▪ Safe Routes to School programs