

# WISCONSIN PUBLIC HEALTH COUNCIL

*Assure safe and healthy people by monitoring progress on the state health plan  
and on the readiness for public health emergencies*



January 13, 2025

## 2024 Annual Report of the Public Health Council

Prepared by Council Chair Paula Morgen with support of Public Health Council Secretary Bob Leischow and Council Coordinator Aisha Dogbey

The Public Health Council was established in Wis. Stat. §15.197(13), as enacted by 2003 Wis. Act 186 to inform and advise the Governor, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, the Wisconsin State Legislature, and the people of Wisconsin. Its primary objective is to address prioritized public health concerns, reflecting the diverse needs of the state in an equitable, inclusive, and responsive manner.

The Council currently consists of 19 members, nominated by the Secretary of the Department of Health Services, and appointed for three-year terms by the Governor. This Council is supported by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services- Office of Policy and Practice Alignment (“OPPA”) staff and the Public Health Council Coordinator, who supports meeting logistics and operations, coordinates key tasks, and improves the Council’s efficiency. These tasks include the development, revision and finalization of agendas and meeting minutes, organizing reference items, and facilitation, attendance, and report out at meetings.

The year 2024 was one of rebuilding and re-envisioning as the Council focused on its membership, internal structures, and becoming more action oriented in alignment with its stated charge. Significant actions taken are outlined below, highlighting efforts to rebuild internally and to address prioritized Public Health issues.

### Internal Achievements

1. A Nominating Committee was developed, leading to the election of a new Chair, Chair Elect, and Secretary, each appointed for 2-year terms
2. New Chair Paula Morgen organized and completed 1:1 meetings with PHC members to build relationships and understand expertise.
3. The Council held four virtual meetings and two in person meetings for the first time since before the pandemic, which provided additional engagement opportunities:
  - a. The April meeting was held at the United Community Center in Milwaukee, which serves the predominant Latino community in that area. During meeting breaks, Council members had the opportunity to explore the center’s gallery and engage with its staff members. The DHS Secretary designee was in attendance for the first time since February 2020, and the Council engaged in meaningful conversation about working with the Secretary’s Office to build relationships.
  - b. The October meeting was held at The Village on Park in Madison, where Council members had the opportunity to tour the Black Business Hub and explore potential partners for future collaborations.
4. The Council successfully completed a robust recruitment process, receiving 59 applications to fill 5 vacant seats, which suggests strong stakeholder interest in the work of the PHC. In prior years, the Council had struggled to fill vacant positions.

1 W. Wilson Street ♦ Room 250 ♦ Madison, WI 53703

P.O. Box 2659 ♦ Madison, WI 53701-2659

DHSPublicHealthCouncil@wisconsin.gov ♦ <http://publichealthcouncil.wisconsin.gov>

5. The Issues Committee process was thoroughly reviewed, resulting in the Issues Committee Charter being revised and an evolving workflow that considers important inputs such as the legislative calendar, state budget, DHS priorities, WPHA/WAHL DAB legislative priorities, and the interests of Council members.
6. The Council established a cadence of quarterly meetings with DHS Office of the Secretary for the purposes stated above.
7. The Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (“JEDI”) Committee planned and facilitated a series of “equity sessions” to begin the work on an equity scan and continually ground the Council in the work of addressing health inequities.
8. The Council continued to elevate the importance of the Public Health Emergency Preparedness Advisory Committee (“PHEPAC”) work as part of our statutory requirement. A new PHEPAC Chair (Brittany Fry) was appointed, a Vice Chair (Svea Erlandson) now co-leads, new members were recruited, and efforts continue to involve a PHC liaison.
9. To further support the statutory mandate to monitor the progress in implementing the State Health Improvement Plan (“SHIP”), a SHIP Committee was established, and a charter is currently being developed.

### **Public Health Council Actions**

1. Facilitated through the Issues Committee, a workgroup was organized and tasked to address issues associated with Public Health Nursing in Wisconsin. This workgroup wrote three resolutions (listed below), which were distributed by the Council to various key stakeholders including the Governor’s Office, Legislators, the Department of Health Services- Office of the Secretary, and other public health-oriented entities in the state. The three resolutions:
  - a. *“Requesting Reinstatement of the Wisconsin Department of Health Services Director of Public Health Nursing Position”* recommends the reinstatement of the Director of Public Health Nursing position, given the need for Wisconsin to have an advanced executive public health nurse leader who provides leadership, guidance and support to state and local units of government who have public health nurses providing critical public health nursing services, to residents of the State of Wisconsin, and other directors of nursing in communities, hospitals and clinics, nursing homes, schools, and other healthcare settings.
  - b. *“Requesting Recruitment and Retention Initiatives to Address the Public Health Nurse Workforce Shortage in Wisconsin”* supports creative solutions to address the public health nurse workforce shortage in Wisconsin, diversifies the public health nurse workforce to better represent the populations served, and with specific emphasis on areas of the state experiencing critical recruitment issues/needs.
  - c. *“Optimizing the Public Health Nurse Role for Improved Population Health Outcomes”* identifies the need to support new approaches, strategies, and data sharing to bridge gaps between population health needs and public health prevention strategies, including technology needs for interoperability and data modernization to achieve population health goals.
2. Appreciating that simple distribution of resolutions can be effective, Council members met with Department of Health Services leadership to discuss how to effectuate the resolutions. Next steps have been determined to include listening sessions in January 2025 with partner organizations that are interested in helping to move the resolution asks forward.
3. The Public Health Emergency Preparedness Advisory Committee (PHEPAC) recommended via a resolution that the Department of Health Services routinely prepare After Action Reports (“AAR”) after

public health emergency incidents, which prompted discussion with DHS leadership. This resulted in improved communication with Office of Preparedness and Emergency Health Care (OPEHC) staff and a letter affirming DHS' commitment to completing AARs and ongoing collaboration.

4. After receiving presentations from Mobilizing Communities 4 Just Response (MC4JR) grantees detailing community based efforts, the council developed and distributed a resolution on Impact of Social Connection and Belonging on the Health and Wellbeing of Individuals, Families and Communities.
5. In response to the report that Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) mishandled funds, the Council prepared a letter of support to the Governor's plan to perform an audit of MPS operations. The letter will be issued in early 2025 and the Council will monitor the progress of the audit with intent to take further action based on the audit findings.