

Dodge-Steele Community Health Board



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Community Health Improvement Plan
2025 – 2029

Adopted: April 24, 2025

Table of Contents

Message from the Dodge-Steele Community Health Board.....	3
Executive Summary.....	4
About the Dodge-Steele Community Health Board.....	5
Programs and Services.....	5
Staffing	5
Guiding Public Health Frameworks	6
Demographics.....	7
Health Inequities.....	7
Overview of the CHA-CHIP Process	9
CHA-CHIP Process Timeline.....	9
Health Priorities.....	12
Alignment with State and National Priorities	17
Community Health Improvement Plan.....	18
Priority Issue: Mental Health & Substance Use.....	18
Goal #1: Create a culture that supports mental wellbeing.....	18
Goal #2: Reduce substance use.....	20
Priority Issue: Financial Stability	23
Goal #1: Increase the number of households reporting financial stability	23
Community Assets & Resources.....	25
References	26

Dear Community Members,

The Dodge-Steele County Community Health Board is committed to supporting the health and well-being of all people who live, learn, work, play, grow, and age in Dodge and Steele Counties. We are dedicated to our mission of preventing disease, promoting wellness, and protecting the health of individuals, families, and communities within our jurisdictions.

At its core, public health is an investment in healthy people and healthy communities. It's about creating the conditions that allow everyone to lead healthier lives, whether that's through access to vaccines and healthcare services, chronic disease and injury prevention efforts, promoting mental health and preventing substance use, or providing resources and education around healthy aging, nutrition, parenting, healthy home environments, and emergency preparedness. It's the behind-the-scenes work happening every day in collaboration with community partners to build a safer, healthier, and more equitable community for all.

As stated in Minnesota's Local Public Health Act, Community Health Boards are charged with the responsibility of conducting a Community Health Assessment (CHA) and developing a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) to address the top health priorities in our communities. The CHIP must be developed with input from the community and take into consideration the statewide outcomes, the areas of responsibility, and essential public health services.

Over the past two years, Core Planning Teams from both counties have worked to gather input from community members and analyze data to determine our community's top health priorities. Thank you to those who took the time to contribute to this process to help us create a plan that reflects local priorities. This CHIP will be reviewed on a regular basis and adjusted as needed to ensure the action items continue to be aligned with our goals. We hope that this plan proves to be clear, concise, and used as a resource for others to join in our efforts.

Here's to the health of Dodge and Steele Counties!

Sincerely,

Dodge-Steele Community Health Board

Executive Summary

This document was developed by Core Planning Teams from Dodge County Public Health and Steele County Public Health to guide efforts in improving the health of people who live, learn, work, play, grow, and age in Dodge and Steele Counties. According to [Minn. Stat. § 145A.04](#), all Community Health Boards must complete a Community Health Assessment (CHA) and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) every five years. The CHA is a data-driven process that identifies and prioritizes the health needs of the community, providing the foundation for the development of the CHIP, which is a long-term plan that describes how local public health, and a variety of community partners will address the identified needs.

Over the past two years, the Core Planning Teams in each county conducted a CHA using prioritization surveys, listening sessions with residents, discussions with community leaders, and data from external sources. Several key health issues were identified through this process, from which the two top priorities emerged: Mental Health & Substance Abuse and Financial Stability.

In Dodge County,

- 28% of students reported a mental health problem²
- 15% of adults reported 14 or more days of poor mental health per month¹²
- 16% of 11th graders using marijuana in past 12 months²
- 13% of adults are current smokers¹²
- 8.9% of children under five years old live in poverty⁵
- 28% of households live below the basic cost of living for the county¹¹

In Steele County,

- 29% of students reported a mental health problem²
- 14% of adults reported experiencing 14 or more days of poor mental health per month¹²
- 16% of 11th graders using marijuana in past 12 months²
- 18% of adults are current cigarette smokers¹²
- 14.9% of children under five years old live in poverty⁵
- 33% of households live below the basic cost of living for the county¹¹

The CHA data and resulting priorities were subsequently used to inform the CHIP, which outlines the goals and objectives that will guide local public health efforts from 2025 to 2029:

Dodge-Steele CHB Health Priorities, 2025-2029

Mental Health & Substance Use

Goal 1: Create a culture that supports mental wellbeing.

Goal 2: Reduce substance use.

Financial Stability

Goal 1: Increase the number of households reporting financial stability.

About the Dodge-Steele Community Health Board

Dodge and Steele Counties, located in the southeastern portion of Minnesota, have worked collaboratively as a Community Health Board (CHB) since the passage of the 1976 Community Health Services Act. The Dodge-Steele CHB consists of three members from each county, appointed by their respective County Boards. As a unified board, the Dodge-Steele CHB is guided by a shared mission, vision, and values that shape its approach to public health:

Mission

Promote wellness, prevent disease, and protect the health of individuals, families, and communities.

Vision

The health of the entire population will be optimized through joint efforts of the Dodge-Steele Community Health Board.

Values

Accountability, Collaboration, Efficiency, Evidence-Based Practice, Holistic Care, Quality, Respect

Programs and Services

Each county operates its own local public health agency, which is responsible for delivering a broad range of programs and services to improve the health and well-being of residents. While some programs and services vary between the two counties, several core programs are provided in both, including Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP), disease prevention and control, chronic disease prevention guided by the Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP), substance use prevention focused on tobacco, nicotine, cannabis, and opioids, as well as other community health initiatives shaped by local priorities.

In addition to these programs, several public health services are provided in both counties. These include immunizations, health education, lead and tuberculosis screenings, refugee health, case management and care coordination for seniors, and family health programs such as Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Child & Teen Checkups, the Follow Along Program, Maternal & Child Health, family home visiting, and car seat education. Steele County also offers radon and water testing, home health aide and homemaker services, skilled nursing visits, and physical therapy.

Staffing

Dodge County Public Health is staffed by 11 full-time and 5 part-time employees, while Steele County Public Health has 29 full-time and 18 part-time and contracted employees. Across both agencies, the staff consists of a wide range of positions, including nurses, social workers, case aides, health educators, community health workers, home health aides, homemakers, a physical therapist, and essential roles in office support, administration, and finance. This diversity of experience and skill ensures each county is well-equipped to meet evolving public health needs.

Guiding Public Health Frameworks

The Dodge-Steele CHB's work is guided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s [Ten Essential Public Health Services](#), which serve as a national framework for public health:

1. Assess and monitor population health.
2. Investigate, diagnose, and address health hazards and root causes.
3. Communicate effectively to inform and educate.
4. Strengthen, support, and mobilize communities and partnerships.
5. Create, champion, and implement policies, plans, and laws.
6. Utilize legal and regulatory actions.
7. Enable equitable access.
8. Build a diverse and skilled workforce.
9. Evaluate effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services.
10. Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems.

In addition to these national standards, the Dodge-Steele CHB also follows Minnesota's Local Public Health Act, which outlines [six areas of public health responsibility](#) for local public health:

1. Assure an adequate local public health infrastructure.
2. Promote healthy communities and healthy behavior.
3. Prevent the spread of infectious disease.
4. Protect against environmental health hazards.
5. Prepare for and respond to emergencies.
6. Assure health services.

As the field of public health continues to evolve, Minnesota is aligning its system with the national [Foundational Public Health Responsibilities](#) framework, centered on **five Foundational Areas**:

1. Communicable Disease Control
2. Chronic Disease & Injury Prevention
3. Environmental Public Health
4. Maternal, Child, & Family Health
5. Access to & Linkage with Clinical Care

These areas are supported by **eight Foundational Capabilities**:

1. Assessment & Surveillance
2. Community Partnership Development
3. Equity
4. Organizational Competencies
5. Policy Development & Support
6. Accountability & Performance Management
7. Emergency Preparedness & Response
8. Communications

Demographics

Dodge County

Dodge County is primarily a rural county and was home to 20,962 people in 2023. The County population is composed of a predominantly white population (95.0 %) with Latinos making up the larger part of the minority population (5.1%). In recent years the County has seen a rise in population and is forecasted to continue to rise. The primary contributing factor to the rise in population is the proximity and growth of the Rochester area, with more people choosing to live in Dodge County and commute to work. Dodge County's chief industry is agriculture and also supports several large manufacturers. There are three Public School Districts that provide pre-K-12 education. Mayo Family Clinic in the city of Kasson provides clinical health for area residents. The County Seat lies in the city of Mantorville.

Steele County

As of the most recent U.S. Census, Steele County is home to 37,406 residents. About 29.75% of Steele County's population resides in rural areas. The city of Owatonna serves as the county seat and is home to 70.6% of the population, while 5.28% of residents live in Blooming Prairie, 3.52% in Medford, and 1.81% in Ellendale, with the remaining 18.9% living in the county's thirteen townships. Steele County is served by four public school districts and two healthcare systems: Mayo Clinic Health System and Allina Health. The primary industries in Steele County are manufacturing (21.2%) and education, health care, and social services (20.3%).

The population of Steele County is predominantly White (86.0%), with additional representation from individuals identifying as two or more races (5.31%), some other race (3.78%), Black or African American (3.67%), and various other races making up a combined 1.29%. Additionally, 8.39% of residents identify as Hispanic or Latino. Over time, Steele County has become more racially diverse, with a growing number of residents identifying as races other than White between 2013 and 2023. The majority of residents (93.0%) speak only English at home. However, 7.0% report speaking a language other than English: 4.4% speak Spanish, with the rest speaking other languages, likely including Somali and Karen. Additionally, Steele County's age distribution is fairly balanced. Seniors aged 65 and older make up 18.7% of the population, while another 13.5% are between 55 and 64. Youth (ages 24 and under) comprise 32.0% of the population.

Health Inequities

According to the World Health Organization, "health equity is achieved when everyone can attain their full potential for health and well-being." Health is influenced by the conditions in which people live, learn, work, play, grow, and age. These conditions, commonly referred to as social determinants of health, include factors such as income, employment, education, healthcare access, transportation, housing quality, and social support. When these conditions are unequal or unfavorable, they can lead to health disparities that increase the risk of chronic disease, mental health and substance use disorders, reduced life expectancy, and overall lower quality of life.

Dodge County

Economically, Dodge County fairs a bit better than the statewide average, with a median household income of \$92,890, with \$43,903 median per capita income, compared to \$85,086 median household for Minnesota. Despite this, approximately 8.9% of children under age five live in poverty with 5.4% of all people living in poverty. Dodge County receives \$660 per capita in Medicaid and Minnesota Care funds, the lowest in the state. 28% of households are considered Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE), meaning that these households earn more than the federal poverty level but less than the basic cost of living in Dodge County. 5.4% of Dodge County residents do not have health insurance. 3.7% of Dodge County residents are foreign born, and 68.8% of these residents are not US citizens, presenting challenges in navigating the healthcare system, including legal, financial, and linguistic obstacles. The unemployment rate in Dodge County is 4.1% and 10.3% of residents are disabled, requiring additional resources to maintain their health. Dodge County does not have a large established health care infrastructure, forcing residents to seek care in neighboring counties and cities, further complicating their health care needs.

Steele County

Steele County faces several health disparities influenced by socioeconomic status, healthcare access, and language barriers. The median household income in Steele County is \$83,448, with a per capita income of \$41,392, which are both lower than state averages. Over 3,500 households (24%) are considered Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE), meaning that these households earn more than the federal poverty level but less than the basic cost of living in Steele County. The unemployment rate is 3%, and 7.4% of residents live in poverty, with rates varying by age: 8.4% of children under 18, 7.0% of adults aged 18–64, and 7.5% of seniors over 65 live below the poverty line. When it comes to education, 93.1% of adults have at least a high school diploma, with 39.6% having obtained an associate's degree or higher.

Although Steele County receives \$2,317 per capita in Medicaid and Minnesota Care funds and has established health care infrastructure, including Mayo Clinic Health System and Allina Health in Owatonna, some residents may still face access issues due to insurance, disability, or language barriers. Approximately 3.6% of residents lack health insurance coverage, which can significantly affect access to preventive and emergency care. Furthermore, the county's foreign-born population makes up 4.8% of all residents, and over half (53.7%) are not U.S. citizens, presenting challenges in navigating the healthcare system, including legal, financial, and linguistic obstacles. Disability is another significant factor in health equity, with 11.1% of the county's population reporting a disability. The most common difficulties are cognitive (5.4%), independent living (5.2%), and ambulatory (4.3%), which often require specialized services and create additional barriers to accessing care and community resources. Language barriers also pose a challenge, as 7.0% of Steele County's residents speak a language other than English at home, including Spanish, Somali, and Karen. This underscores the need for culturally and linguistically appropriate services to better support these populations.

Overview of the CHA-CHIP Process

To begin the Community Health Assessment (CHA) and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) process, Core Planning Teams were formed for each county, which worked independently over the past two years to collect and analyze county-specific data. In March 2025, the teams convened to shared discuss CHA priorities and collaboratively develop the CHIP.

This process has been significantly different from past iterations due to the lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Previous CHAs and CHIPs followed structured frameworks and included more extensive data collection, meeting with community partners, and broader community input and engagement. However, these approaches were neither feasible nor required during this planning cycle. Given the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic, our scope was narrowed to focus on validating existing priorities from the previous CHIP and creating the 2025-2029 CHIP with those priorities in mind, while remaining open to considering new priorities that emerged through available data and community input.

Accomplishing the CHA and CHIP would not have been possible without the key contributions and support of valued community partners, including Allina Health, Mayo Clinic Health System, United Way of Steele County, United Way of Southeast Minnesota, HealthFinders Collaborative, Semcac, the Center Clinic, and the Epidemiology, Surveillance, and Preparedness Unit at Olmsted County Public Health Services. These partners played essential roles in providing data, organizing listening sessions, and supporting community engagement. The Dodge-Steele CHB and Core Planning Teams are immensely grateful for their collaboration in advancing this important work.

CHA-CHIP Process Timeline

May 2023	Dodge County Public Health CHA-CHIP Planning Team	Planned framework, created partner map of community resources, decided on polling locations
June-August 2023	Dodge County Public Health CHA-CHIP Planning Team	Gathered population survey data
September 2023	Dodge County Public Health CHA-CHIP Planning Team	Analyzed survey data for community Top 10 issues, projected top 5 health issues
October 2023	Dodge County Public Health CHA-CHIP Planning Team SHIP Coordinator	Developed plan for public health advisory board in Dodge County to advise on CHA priorities and CHIP objectives
October 2023	Dodge County Public Health CHA-CHIP Planning Team United Way of Southeast MN	Partnered with United Way to assist with community listening sessions

November 2023	Dodge County Public Health CHA-CHIP Planning Team	Developed listening session curriculum and questions, decided on population groups to focus on, planned listening sessions for older adults
December 2023 – February 2024	Dodge County Public Health CHA-CHIP Planning Team United Way of Southeast MN	Hosted listening sessions for older adults to guide CHA priorities in 4 communities in Dodge County
March 2024	Dodge County Public Health CHA-CHIP Planning Team	Analyzed qualitative data from listening sessions
April 2024	Steele County Public Health CHA-CHIP Planning Team	Planned CHA process; began creation of prioritization survey and listening session questions
June 2024	Dodge County Public Health CHA-CHIP Planning Team SHIP Coordinator	Developed plan and resource list for public health advisory board in Dodge County partners in community
July 2024	Dodge County Public Health CHA-CHIP Planning Team SHIP Coordinator	Created list of community resources of public health advisory board in Dodge County partners
August 2024	Dodge County Public Health CHA-CHIP Planning Team	Created bylaws for public health advisory board in Dodge County
August 2024	Dodge County Public Health CHA-CHIP Planning Team The Center Clinic	Planned listening session for Hispanic community members
August 2024 – February 2025	Steele County Public Health CHA-CHIP Planning Team	Distributed the community health prioritization survey at events
September 2024	Dodge County Public Health CHA-CHIP Planning Team The Center Clinic, United Way	Hosted listening session for Hispanic community members
October 2024 – February 2025	Steele Public Health CHA-CHIP Planning Team	Hosted listening session for Havana & Clinton Falls Townships and the cities of Medford, Blooming Prairie, & Ellendale

November 2024	Dodge County Public Health CHA-CHIP Planning Team	Determined Top 10 issues and verified community data with population health indicators, projected top 4 health priorities
January 2025	Dodge County Public Health CHA-CHIP Planning Team SHIP Coordinator	Created public health advisory board for SHIP and CHA-CHIP advisory
January 2025	Dodge County Public Health CHA-CHIP Planning Team Dodge County Mental Health Coalition	Discussed objectives and goals for CHIP priorities with community stakeholders
February 2025	Dodge County Public Health CHA-CHIP Planning Team Dodge County Mental Health Coalition	Developed action steps for CHIP priorities with community stakeholders
February 2025	Dodge County Public Health CHA-CHIP Planning Team Steele Public Health CHA-CHIP Planning Team	Met with both planning teams to discuss CHA-CHIP progress, timeline, and next steps as a combined Community Health Board
March 2025	Dodge County Public Health CHA-CHIP Planning Team Dodge County Mental Health Coalition	Developed action steps for CHIP priorities with community stakeholders
March 2025	Dodge County Public Health CHA-CHIP Planning Team CHAMPS	Held inaugural meeting for public health advisory board, finalized CHA Top 10 health issues, developed action steps for CHIP priorities with advisory group
March 2025	Steele Public Health CHA-CHIP Planning Team	Discussed CHA priority health issues with community partners and SHIP CLT
March – April 2025	Dodge & Steele County Public Health CHA-CHIP Planning Teams	Met several times to discuss shared health priorities, develop goals, and complete the CHIP

Health Priorities

Over the past two years, the Core Planning Teams in each county reviewed local data, conducted listening sessions, and facilitated discussions with community partners to identify the top health priorities for residents of Dodge and Steele Counties. Prioritization surveys were also distributed to gather input on which health issues community members felt were most important. These priorities were further discussed through listening sessions held throughout the CHA-CHIP process with the following communities:

- Dodge County Hispanic community
- Dodge County over 65 population
- Cities of Medford, Ellendale, and Blooming Prairie
- Townships of Havana and Clinton Falls

The top 10 identified health priorities for each county, listed in no specific order, are as follows:

Dodge County

- Access to Healthcare
- Dental Health
- Mental Health
- Substance Abuse
- Housing
- Financial Stability
- Obesity
- Emerging Issues
- Chronic Disease
- Healthy Lifestyle

Steele County

- Healthcare Access
- Access to Dental Care
- Mental Health & Well-Being
- Substance Abuse
- Safe & Stable Housing
- Nutrition & Food Security
- Physical Activity
- Crime & Violence
- Older Adult Health
- Youth & Teen Health

From these identified health priorities, the Core Planning Teams gathered additional data from a variety of sources to better understand how these issues impact their respective communities. The tables below highlight key findings that helped inform the selection of the top two health priorities and guided the development of the CHIP's goals and objectives.

Top 10 Health Priorities: Dodge County Community Health Assessment Indicators

Health Priority	Dodge County Indicators	Source
Access to Healthcare	5.4 % of Dodge County residents do not have Health insurance	2023 American Community Survey
Dental Health	Medicaid dental service use 27.5% (31.8% in 2018)	2023 MDH

Mental Health	28% of Dodge County Students reported mental health problems 15% of Dodge County residents reported frequent mental distress	2022 Minnesota Student Survey 2024 County Health Rankings
Substance Abuse	21% of Dodge County adults reported binge drinking	2024 County Health Rankings
Housing	28% of Households live below the basic cost of living for the county 76% of single mothers live below the cost of living for the county	2024 ALICE Report
Financial Stability	8.9% of children under 5 are below the poverty threshold	2019 MDH
Obesity	36% adult obesity rate in Dodge County	2024 County Health Rankings
Emerging Issues	10% of Dodge County students report vaping at least monthly	2022 Minnesota Student Survey
Chronic Disease	22% of Dodge County residents have been diagnosed with hypertension 26% of Dodge County seniors have been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes	2023 Healthy Trends Across Communities
Healthy Lifestyle	72% of people live close to a park or recreation facility 82% of Dodge County students do not reach the recommended amount of physical activity	2024 County Health Rankings 2022 Minnesota Student Survey

In Dodge County, ranked health priorities and potential solutions were brought to key community partners through Dodge County Public Health’s advisory board, known as Community Health Advisory Members Planning for Success (CHAMPS). Established in March 2025, CHAMPS was created to advise the CHA-CHIP process and other public health initiatives in Dodge County. The advisory board ranked which health priorities they felt were the most important and discussed potential solutions, including the feasibility of implementing them in Dodge County.

Top 10 Health Priorities: Steele County Community Health Assessment Indicators

Health Priorities	Steele County Indicators	Source
Healthcare Access	5% of people under the age of 65 did not have health insurance 1 primary care physician per 1,700 people 1 mental health provider per 340 people	2020 County Health Rankings 2022 County Health Rankings
Access to Dental Care	31.7% dental service use among Medicaid population 1 dentist per 1,170 people	2020 Minnesota DHS 2021 County Health Rankings
Mental Health & Well-Being	138 suicide ideation hospital visits in 2024 48 suicide attempt hospital visits in 2024 22 suicides from 2020 – 2025 Prevalence of mental health conditions in Steele County: - Any mental health condition: 24% - Anxiety: 18% - Depression: 16% - Suicidal ideation or attempt: 2% 14% of adults reported experiencing 14 or more days of poor mental health per month	2024 Olmsted County Public Health Services 2024 Health Trends Across Communities in Minnesota 2020 County Health Rankings
Substance Abuse	18% of adults are current cigarette smokers 20% of adults reported binge or heavy drinking Since 2018, there have been 15 unintentional overdose fatalities, including at least 10 opioid overdose fatalities Since 2018, there have been 341 unintentional non-fatal overdose hospital visits, including at least 65 non-fatal opioid overdoses	2020 County Health Rankings 2024 Olmsted County Public Health Services

Safe & Stable Housing	57.4% of renters spend 30% or more of their income on rent 20.7% of households with a mortgage spend 30% or more of their income on housing costs 33% of households live below the basic cost of living for the county	2024 Minnesota Department of Employment & Economic Development 2024 ALICE Report
Nutrition & Food Security	Prevalence of obesity: 36% Prevalence of type 2 diabetes: 8% 9% of people did not have a reliable source of food	2024 Health Trends Across Communities in Minnesota 2022 County Health Rankings
Physical Activity	23% of adults reported participating in no physical activity outside of work 70% of people live close to a park or recreation facility	2020 County Health Rankings 2020 & 2022 County Health Rankings
Crime & Violence	In the past 5 years in Steele County: • 2 homicides • 10 robberies • 191 burglaries	2025 FBI Crime Data Explorer
Older Adult Health	90 fatal falls for residents ages 55+ from 2020 – 2025, of which 38.9% occurred in the home and 37.8% at skilled nursing or long term care facilities Prevalence of chronic disease conditions among older adults by age group: • 65-74: 17% cancer, 20% type 2 diabetes, 12% heart disease, 66% hypertension • 75-84: 24% cancer, 25% type 2 diabetes, 21% heart disease, 75% hypertension • 85+: 27% cancer, 19% type 2 diabetes, 22% heart disease, 75% hypertension	2024 Olmsted County Public Health Services 2024 Health Trends Across Communities in Minnesota

Youth & Teen Health	29% of students reported a mental health problem Use of any tobacco products has decreased among students from 21% in 2019 to 14% in 2022 22% of students reported drinking alcohol and 16% of 11th graders using marijuana in past 12 months 19% of students reported at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day in last 7 days 34% of students reported recommended hours of sleep on school nights 23% of students reported eating enough fruits and 7% eating enough vegetables in the last 7 days	2024 Olmsted County Public Health Services
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In March and April 2025, the Core Planning Teams from both counties came together to review the identified health priorities. Together, they assessed each issue based on its importance to the community, the severity of its impact, and the feasibility of implementing effective strategies to address it. Based on these discussions, the following two priorities were selected as the focus areas for the 2025-2029 Dodge-Steele CHB Community Health Improvement Plan:

Mental Health & Substance Use

Financial Stability

Alignment with State and National Priorities

To improve health outcomes, it is important for local public health agencies to align their work with the broader state and national priorities. This alignment ensures that local priorities, goals, and strategies contribute to and are reinforced by larger public health initiatives, creating synergy between local, state, and national efforts, while also strengthening opportunities for collaboration, funding, and shared resources.

The State Community Health Services Advisory Committee (SCHSAC) is working towards improving the health and wellbeing across the state by guiding local public health efforts through the Healthy Minnesota Partnership framework. The desired outcome of SCHSAC is that your zip code does not determine your health outcomes.

On February 11, 2025, the Healthy Minnesota Partnership, a collaboration between the Minnesota Department of Health and community partners, adopted the most recent [statewide health improvement framework](#). This framework includes the following three health priorities, which the Partnership will focus on addressing between 2025 and 2029:

- Wellbeing, belonging, and substance use prevention
- Health and housing
- Equitable access and care

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services released [Healthy People 2030](#), a set of measurable objectives designed to improve health and well-being in the United States over the next decade. These objectives are centered around five overarching goals:

- Attain healthy, thriving lives and well-being free of preventable disease, disability, injury, and premature death.
- Eliminate health disparities, achieve improved health for all people, and attain health literacy to improve the health and well-being of all.
- Create social, physical, and economic environments that promote attaining the full potential for health and well-being for all.
- Promote healthy development, healthy behaviors, and well-being across all life stages.
- Engage leadership, key constituents, and the public across multiple sectors to take action and design policies that improve the health and well-being of all.

The Dodge-Steele CHIP directly reflects these state and national priorities. The selected priorities, Mental Health & Substance Use and Financial Stability, align with the state's efforts around wellbeing, substance use prevention, and housing. The priorities also reflect Healthy People 2030 objectives related to mental health, substance use, and economic stability.

By aligning with these state and national priorities, the Dodge-Steele CHB ensures that the goals and strategies in its CHIP are supported by meaningful progress across multiple levels of the public health system. The following Community Health Improvement Plan outlines specific goals and strategies that will guide efforts in Dodge and Steele Counties in addressing these priorities.

Community Health Improvement Plan

Priority Issue: Mental Health & Substance Use

Goal #1: Create a culture that supports mental wellbeing.

Objective 1: Reduce stigma.

Action Items	Measurements	By When	Resources Needed	Lead Agency
Conduct monthly community education series of classes focused on reducing stigma and building resiliency.	12 classes per year 10 students per class on average	2028	Curriculum, advertising, time from partners	Dodge County Public Health, The Center Clinic
Develop and establish student teaching groups focused on mental health education.	2 school districts participating 3 classes taught per school district annually	2029	Curriculum, teaching supplies, time from partners	School Districts in Dodge County, Dodge County Public Health

Objective 2: Increase awareness of mental health resources available to the community.

Action Items	Measurements	By When	Resources Needed	Lead Agency
Promote 211 services.	15% increase of 211 calls from Dodge County ZIP codes 15% increase of 211 calls from Steele County ZIP codes	2027		Dodge County Mental Health Coalition, United Ways of Steele County & Southeast Minnesota
Promote mental health services in underserved populations.	15% increase in underserved populations using mental health resources in Dodge County	2029	Printing, mail, time from partners	The Center Clinic, Spero

Promote CredibleMind as a resource for the community.	3 billboards posted in Dodge County - Incorporate CredibleMind promotion into Steele County Public Health program areas	2028	Funding	MNPrairie, Dodge County Public Health, Steele County Public Health
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Objective 3: Increase access to mental health resources.

Actions	Measurements	By When	Resources Needed	Lead Agency
Create and annually update a resource guide for mental health services.	Resource guide will be updated quarterly and distributed to members of the Mental Health Coalition and CHAMPS group	2027	Printing, time from partners	MNPrairie, Spero, Dodge County Public Health
Engage school leaders to maintain or increase school-located mental health services.	Mental health fact sheets will be developed yearly and distributed to school district superintendents	2028	Staff time	Dodge County Public Health
Develop a digital referral hub to streamline referral pathways between first responders and behavioral health providers.	The digital referral hub will be developed, with at least 5 agencies activated	2026	Staff time, MNTrac technical support	Steele County Public Health, MDH, Steele County Mental Health and Substance Use Collaborative members
Continue updating a resource list for mental health and substance use resources	The resource list will be updated every 6 months and shared with partners	2025	Staff time, printing	Steele County Mental Health and Substance Use Collaborative members, SCPH

Goal #2: Reduce substance use

Objective 1: Reduce opioid usage and harm caused by opioid usage.

Actions	Measurements	By When	Resources Needed	Lead Agency
Promote Narcotics Anonymous groups.	- Amount of outreach for NA meetings - Increased engagement of NA members in the community	2027	Printing, time from partners	Dodge County Public Health, Dodge County Opioid Taskforce, Anchor of Hope Church
Build peer-to-peer counselor capacity.	Increase the number of certified Peer Specialists in Dodge County	2029	Time from partners	St. John's Church in Kasson, NAMI
Establish and promote events celebrating sobriety.	1 event per year focused on celebrating sobriety in Dodge County 300 attendees per year	2028	Location, marketing, time from partners	Spero, Dodge County Public Health, Dodge County Opioid Taskforce, Anchor of Hope Church
Assess the need and capacity for a coordinated law enforcement and social worker response to 911 calls.	Completion of report and findings from assessment	2028	Staff time, time from partners, data collection from 911 calls	MNPrairie, Dodge County Public Health, Law Enforcement agencies
Support initiatives focused on primary prevention in the community, recovery supports, and treatment programs.	Fund at least three initiatives annually to respond to the opioid epidemic.	2025	Staff time, Opioid Settlement Funding	Steele County Public Health, Opioid Response Initiative Funding Award recipients

Objective 2: Reduce commercial tobacco, e-cigarette, and oral nicotine usage and harm caused by usage.

Actions	Measurements	By When	Resources Needed	Lead Agency
Support schools in developing, updating, and implementing tobacco prevention policies.	- All school districts in Dodge & Steele Counties will have updated tobacco prevention policies 20% reduction in tobacco products confiscated from students in Dodge County - Reduction in the percentage of students reporting any tobacco product usage in the past 30 days from 9% (2022) to 4% by 2028.	2027	Time from partners, SHIP staff time	School Districts in Dodge County, Dodge County Public Health School Districts in Steele County, Steele County Public Health
Support schools with continuation of Students Teaching About Refusal Skills (STARS) curriculum.	3 classes taught (3-part series) per school district that adopts STARS curriculum	2029	Time from partners, SHIP staff time	School Districts in Dodge County, Dodge County Public Health
Support SHIP in developing and implementing tobacco-free policies for workplaces.	5 workplaces develop and implement tobacco-free policies in each county.	2029	Time from partners, SHIP staff time	Dodge & Steele SHIP Coordinators, local Chambers of Commerce
Assess feasibility of restricting flavors of tobacco products in local ordinance.	Completion of report assessing feasibility and similar statutes from other similar local health departments	2026	Staff time	Dodge County Public Health, Steele County Public Health

Stay informed of commercial tobacco products in our community.	• An environmental scan will be conducted at 100% of tobacco retailers annually. • Conduct at least one focus group annually with youth to identify trends in tobacco usage.	2026	Staff time, participation from students	Steele County Public Health
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Objective 3: Reduce cannabis and low-potency hemp usage and harm caused by usage.

Actions	Measurements	By When	Resources Needed	Lead Agency
Provide education on state regulations.	• Attending 2 events annually as a vendor to educate on cannabis regulations • Participate in regional communications campaign about cannabis education	2029	Staff time	Dodge County Public Health, Steele County Public Health
Update local ordinances to reflect gaps in state regulations.	• Creation of local ordinances regulating the sale of cannabis products	2028	Staff time	Dodge County Public Health, Steele County Public Health
Conduct environmental scans of cannabis retailers.	• An environmental scan will be conducted at 100% of retailers within 1 year of store opening.	2026	Staff time	Steele County Public Health

Priority Issue: Financial Stability

Goal #1: Increase the number of households reporting financial stability.

Objective 1: Reduce long-term use of financial relief services.

Actions	Measurements	By When	Resources Needed	Lead Agency
Increase coordination between financial relief providers.	4 meetings per year of the Community Health Advisory Members Planning for Success (CHAMPS) group	2027	Time from partners	Dodge County CHAMPS
Determine housing gaps for Dodge County.	Completion of report on housing needs in Dodge County	2026	Staff time	MNPrairie
Establish public health as a resource for housing support.	- At least 3 staff will be trained in Housing Problem Solving - Staff will attend regular Housing Triage Program meetings	2027	Staff time, HPS training	United Way of Steele County, Spero
Promote sustainable food security resources to community members.	- Food access website launched. - Quarterly trainings on food benefits in the community. - At least one farmers market nutrition program launched. - At least 90% of households have enough food/no need for help - Less than 1% of households have not enough food/no help - Establish at least three two community gardens	2029	Staff time, SHIP funding, time from partners	Steele County Public Health, Steele County Food Team

Improve coordination and promotion of resources that support financial stability.	• Reduce ALICE households to 20% • Reduce people living in poverty to under 5%	2029	Staff time, time from partners	United Way of Steele County, Steele County Public Health
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Objective 2: Educate the community on healthy financial habits.

Actions	Measurements	By When	Resources Needed	Lead Agency
Conduct monthly community education series of classes focused on building financial habits.	• 12 classes per year • 10 students per class on average	2028	Curriculum, advertising, time from partners	Dodge County Public Health, Dodge County Salvation Army

Community Assets & Resources

During the development of the CHIP, several key community assets and resources were identified in Dodge and Steele Counties that will play an important role in addressing these health priorities and implementing the Community Health Improvement Plan outlined above. The resources listed below represent many of the key assets supporting each health priority, though additional valuable resources may not be included here.

Mental Health & Substance Use	Financial Stability
Community-Based Services & Navigation Crisis Resource Center of Steele County Faith in Action Dodge County MNPrairie County Alliance Semcac South Country Health Alliance United Ways of Steele County & SE Minnesota Coalitions & Partnerships Blooming Positive Action Coalition Mental Health and Substance Use Collaborative Mental Health Coalition of Dodge County Opioid Task Force of Dodge County Emergency Response & Justice System Crisis Response for Southeast Minnesota Dodge & Rice-Steele 911 Dispatch Centers Dodge-Olmsted Community Corrections Dodge & Steele-Waseca Drug Courts Local ambulance, fire, & law enforcement Restorative Practices Advisory Committee Steele County Community Corrections Steele County Detention Center Healthcare & Treatment Providers Allina Health Beauterre Recovery Institute Beyond Brink Fernbrook Family Center HealthFinders Collaborative Mayo Clinic Health System Mayo Family Clinic - Kasson Spero Stage by Staige The Center Clinic Peer & Community Support Alliance for Greater Equity Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Elder Network Companion Support Group - Kasson Local churches & faith communities Local schools & school districts Peer support and recovery groups (AA, NA, etc.) Rainbowatonna	Community-Based Services & Navigation The Center Clinic HealthFinders Collaborative MNPrairie County Alliance Salvation Army Semcac United Ways of Steele County & SE Minnesota Early Childhood & Family Support Amazing Newborn Clinic & Baby Café Children’s Remedial Fund Exchange Club Center for Family Unity Head Start programs Employment & Workforce Development Cedar Valley Services Local businesses & chambers of commerce Riverland Community College Somali American Cultural Society of Owatonna Workforce Development, Inc. Financial Education & Legal Support Community Health Workers/Patient Navigators HomeTown Credit Union Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services Food Access & Nutrition Community Pathways of Steele County Hayfield Community Food Pantry Local churches & faith communities Local school pantries & backpack programs Semcac Food Shelf University of Minnesota Extension Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Housing & Homelessness Furnishing Hope Lighthouse of Southern Minnesota River Valleys CoC Spero (PATH) Transitional Housing of Steele County Two Rivers Habitat for Humanity

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