

Wisconsin DHS Awarded \$45 million to Strengthen the Public Health Workforce

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has awarded \$45 million to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) to strengthen the public health workforce. In addition, the City of Milwaukee Health Department received \$8 million. Nationwide, \$3.2 billion has been awarded to 107 state, local and territorial health departments to improve the public health infrastructure.

"This is a win not only for our public health workforce, but for every community that will benefit from enhanced capacity to work collaboratively to build stronger, safer, and healthier communities," said DHS Secretary-designee Karen Timberlake in statement on Dec. 5.

According to DHS, their five-year funding investment will help support an assessment of the public health system, and support strategies to recruit, prepare and retain public health workers. Approximately 40% of the funding amount will be allocated to local and tribal health departments.

The funding is welcome news for Wisconsin hospitals and health systems as well, who are optimistic the dollars will be used to fill gaps that were revealed during the COVID public health emergency. In a [panel discussion last week](#), WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding noted that "COVID stressed the public health system because hospitals and health systems had to step in like never before to play more typical public health functions. So, there are a lot of aspects of public health that have been weakened as a result of COVID."

Most of the funding for the CDC grant program comes from the American Rescue Plan Act, which authorized \$3 billion for jurisdictions to recruit, retain and train their workforce. Funding was distributed from the CDC based on population size and "community resilience," which is a measure of how at-risk every neighborhood in the United States is to the impacts of disasters, including COVID-19.

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