

Local Health Departments are Preparing for the Health Impacts of Climate Change

October 2017

City of Milwaukee Health Department

Project Summary



The National Association of County and City Health Officials, with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), selected the City of Milwaukee Health Department as one of 11 local health departments (LHDs) to better understand how city and county health departments are preparing

for the health impacts of climate change. The goal of this project was to highlight local efforts to prepare for and build resiliency to the health impacts of climate change and to share these success stories to support new and ongoing initiatives in other LHDs. The project sought to identify best practices and provide real-world case studies. LHDs play an important role in connecting health impacts with the effects of climate change. This project highlights only a few of the many departments actively engaged in climate change efforts.

Background

Milwaukee, the largest city in Wisconsin and the seat of Milwaukee County, is located on the western shore of Lake Michigan. The City of Milwaukee has an estimated population of 595,047; Milwaukee County has an estimated population of 951,448.¹ The City of Milwaukee Health Department proudly serves as Wisconsin's largest local public health agency, ensuring that services are available to enhance the health of individuals and families, promote healthy neighborhoods, and safeguard the health of the Milwaukee community. Within the health department, the Division of Disease Control and Environmental Health is actively involved in the promotion and improvement of childhood immunizations within childcare and school settings.

Climate Challenge

Milwaukee faces climate change challenges such as extreme heat, flooding, and extreme cold weather. These environmental concerns require leveraging public health, emergency management, healthcare coalitions, and business infrastructures to coordinate adaptation and mitigation interventions.

Goal

The City of Milwaukee Health Department's goals focus on obtaining additional grant funding to support climate change projects, collaborating with business recovery planners, increasing climate change coordination, and building capacity through community engagement to enhance environmental public health in Milwaukee. The health department developed several objectives to address this overarching goal and has achieved a number of successes so far.

OBJECTIVES

- Increase the knowledge base of local health departments and all community partners regarding the public health and long-term consequences of climate change;
- Develop, maintain, and continuously improve emergency operations plans to guide departmental response activities for all hazards emergencies;
- Convene a group of stakeholders who represent multiple community sectors to develop a list of emergency preparedness needs and identify capacity and funding needs; and
- Build community, resiliency, government preparedness, response, and recovery.

Achievements and Successes

- Partnered with Reflo Sustainable Water Solutions to implement rainwater harvesting systems at Alice's Garden, an urban community garden, and provide community educational sessions on climate change and public health;
- Partnered with University of Wisconsin to develop a buoy that provides real-time data about Milwaukee's beaches;
- Developed Water Commons Partnership and display at the Bradford Beach in Milwaukee;
- Convened a focus group between the Business Recovery Planners Association of Southeastern Wisconsin and the Southeast Wisconsin Homeland Security Partnership to discuss issues of climate effects, public health adaptation, and community resilience;
- Participated in the 2016 Business Resiliency Showcase exhibit booth and presented at the Kohl's Innovation Center;
- Collaborated and partnered with the City of Milwaukee's Environmental Collaboration Office and presented at the Sustainability Summit in 2016; and
- Participated in educational event at the summer musical event Chill on the Hill and Rock the Green Sustainability Festival.



References

1. United States Census Bureau. Quick Facts webpage. Retrieved September 13, 2017, from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045216>

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National Association of County & City Health Officials

The National Connection for Local Public Health

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The mission of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) is to be a leader, partner, catalyst, and voice with local health departments.

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