



▶ RESIDENT TO DENTIST RATIO FOR PIERCE COUNTY IS 2,577:1, THE NATIONAL BENCHMARK IS 1,516:1, COUNTY HEALTH RANKINGS 2013



▶ PIERCE COUNTY RESIDENTS REPORT POOR HEALTH FOR 2.9 DAYS WITHIN THE LAST MONTH, BRFSS SURVEY



▶ 73.8% OF PIERCE COUNTY WOMEN ON THE WIC PROGRAM ARE ALSO ON BADGER CARE PLUS/ MEDICAID, WIC STATISTICS

Health Care *access*

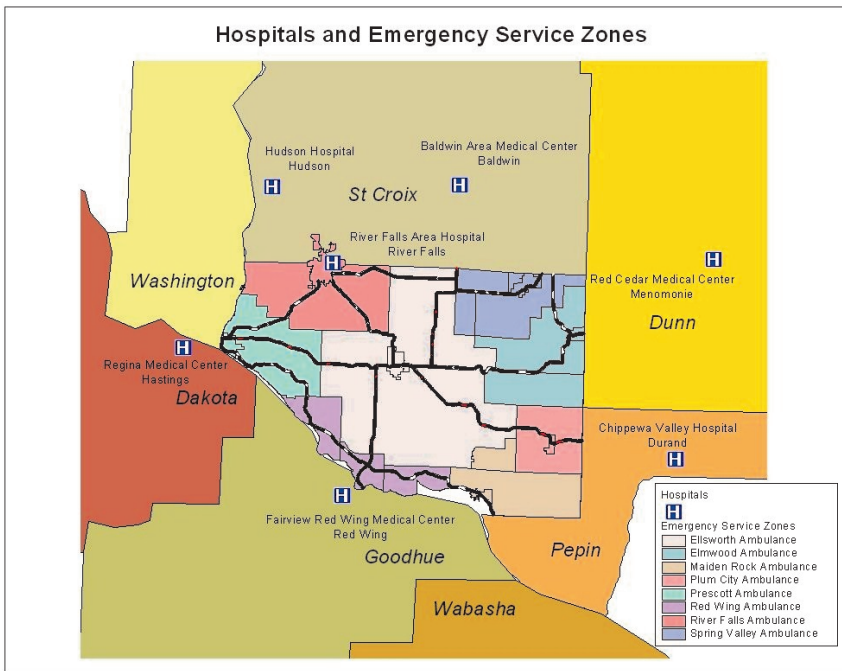
IT IS THE MISSION OF PIERCE COUNTY HEALTH WATCH TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE THROUGH COORDINATION AND MOBILIZATION OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES.

Background:

Pierce County is home to over 41,000 residents located on the Minnesota/Wisconsin border. Being considered both rural, suburban and within the metropolitan service area, residents struggle daily with available services and area providers. Access to needed health care has been an outstanding issue identified in each of five Community Health Assessments (CHA) conducted by the Pierce County Health Department (PCHD) from 1992 to present.

Late 2012, the PCHD and River Falls Area Hospital (RFAH) teamed up to complete the CHA for 2013. Health assessment data was gathered from pre-existing sources in order to help identify priority needs. Health care access remains to be an area for improvement; however, PCHD and RFAH through a prioritization process, identified physical activity and healthy foods as focus areas for the 2013-2017 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP).

Pierce County is a unique community in that, no hospitals are physically located within the Pierce County borders. Residents are required to travel to the surrounding five Wisconsin and two Minnesota hospitals in order to seek medical care. That being said, Emergency medical services (EMS) and long-term care facilities are well established as seen within the image to the left.



In 2011, Pierce County Health Department obtained a grant from ABC for Health to establish a HealthWatch Coalition. The initial goal of the grant was to provide training for express enrollment providers, as well as additional training on general advocacy issues related to health care and health care access. Since the initial grant period, Pierce County HealthWatch has maintained its mission and continues to provide several meetings/trainings annually with participation from various organizations throughout the field of health care. This document is an attempt to create a picture of the most recent health care trends and issues with health care access of Pierce County, Wisconsin.



BARRIERS TO OBTAINING CARE

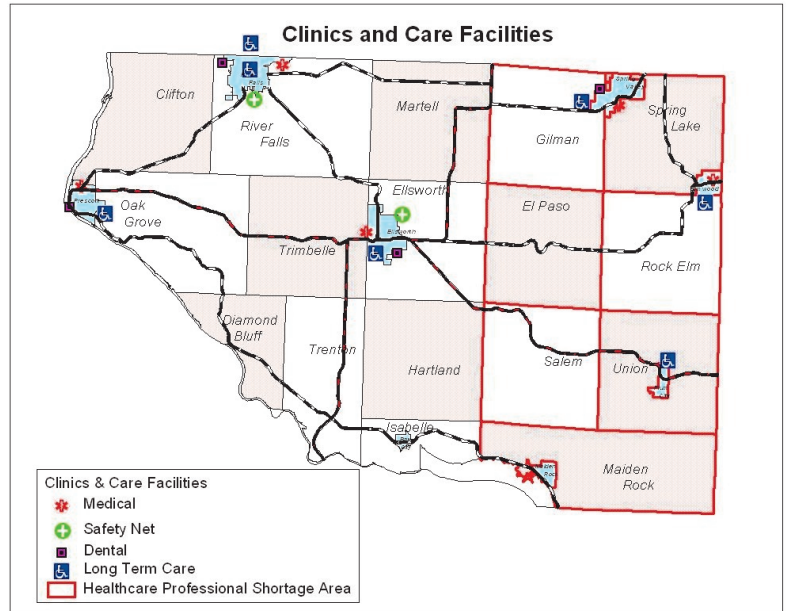
Medical Health Care

There are several noted barriers to accessing care, as previously mentioned, Pierce County is home to no hospitals. Several area clinics provide primary care services, but refer clients in need of emergent services past county borders.

The 2013 County Health Rankings, state that the Pierce County population/resident to physician ratio is 2,280:1, when the ideal ratio is 1,067:1, this is a 366 resident to physician increase from 2012. Thus, further demonstrating a lack of even primary care physicians available to consumers. Outlined in the map is a pictorial view of the health care shortage area. This is one of the many deterrents from residents seeking adequate health care.

Additionally, 10% of residents are in poverty and 10 % of adults and 4% of children are uninsured. Ten percent also indicate they opted to not seek medical care at some point within the last 12 months due to cost (County Health Rankings, 2013) this is up 2% from 2012.

An available option for uninsured individuals in both Pierce and St.Croix County is the Pierce-St.Croix Free Clinic located in River Falls. In 2013, the Free Clinic had 2,586 visits, 485 of these visits were new clients. Over 50% of individuals served are between 45 and 64 years of age. The most prevalent diagnoses of those visiting is high blood pressure, second falling into acute care complaints (GERD, abdominal pain, rashes, etc.). This clinic is a huge asset to our community and our under/uninsured residents.



Dental Health Care

Twenty-eight percent of Pierce County residents did not seek dental care within the last 12 months. This is not difficult to understand considering the population to dentist is a ratio of 2,577:1, with a National Benchmark of 1,516:1, it is evident we are lacking.

Of individuals receiving Medicaid/Badger Care (BC) benefits 28 % had a dental visit within the last 12 months. Of the private dental offices that lie within the county, all do not accept new BC clients. BC clients seeking dental care are obligated to transport to surrounding areas (e.g., Menomonie, Chippewa Falls, Cottage Grove, MN, etc.) to receive dental care.

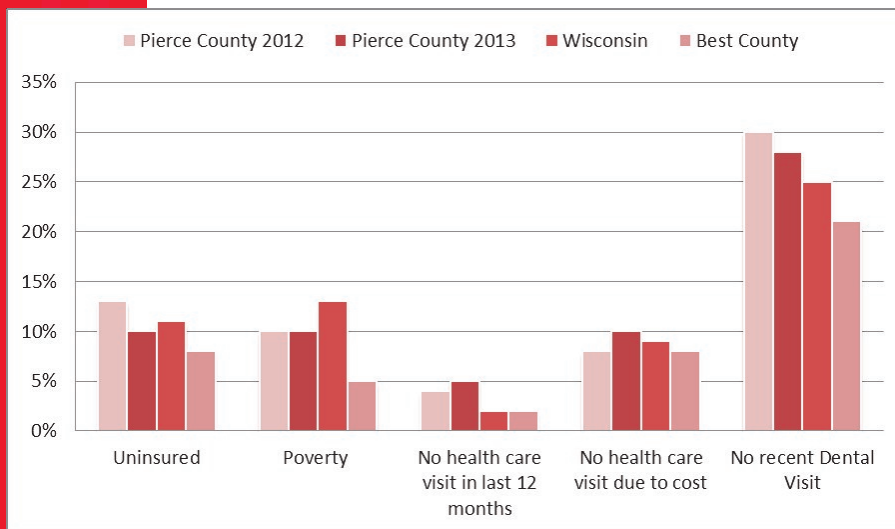
In 2013, PCHD had connected with Southside Dental, a Minnesota based Federally Qualified Health Center that has a mobile dental unit. Despite multiple attempts to contract with Southside services, there have been several administrative snags, subsequently delaying the process.

In the meantime, PCHD staff have met with a representative from Smiles 4 Life program to potentially bring preventative dental services back within the school districts. Two school districts have jumped on board with this program that will provide services to students on Medicaid, and those with private insurance for a small fee.

Mental Health Care

Mental health continues to be an area of concern not only to Pierce County but all of Wisconsin as seen by our County Health Rankings, 2013. The ratio of 1 mental health provider to 6,840 individuals. Pierce County Human Services Department plays a large role in providing many services including but not limited to: OWI assessments, AODA Group and Individual Therapy, Mental Health Group and Individual Therapy, Mental Health/Medication Management.

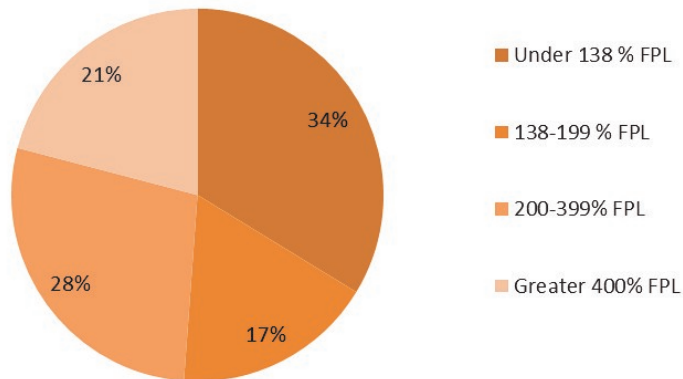
The majority of clients seen have a \$25/ month liability set up fee, with a sliding scale fee developed by the state department. Additionally, 600-650 clients privately pay, 76 with private insurance, 105 on Medical Assistance.



PIERCE COUNTY HEALTH INSURANCE STATUS

Uninsured Population by FPL

(estimate based on American Community Survey, 2005-2012)



Data provided by: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2008-2012

2014 National Changes in Attempt to Increase Access to Affordable Health Care:

In 2010, President Barack Obama signed into law, the Affordable Care Act, a comprehensive health insurance reform plan to span over the following 4 years.

October 1st, 2013 marked the first day of enrollment in the federally managed health insurance marketplace. Throughout the first few months individuals struggled to get through the application process online due to system overload. Because of the many glitches and low enrollment, Governor Scott Walker proposed an extension of Medicaid/BadgerCare for those currently receiving coverage and postponement of enrollment for childless adults under 100 % FPL.

On April 1st, 2014 parents/caretakers and those on HIRSP, Benchmark, and Standard Plans will lose coverage and enter the marketplace; while childless adults under 100% FPL have the opportunity to enroll in Wisconsin Medicaid/Badger Care coverage.

Depicted in the graph above is the percentage of uninsured individuals according to the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). Of those individuals under 138% FPL and uninsured, 9% are under the age of 18. The largest number of individuals lacking insurance coverage are those ages 18-64 at or below 138% FPL, this accounts for 26 % of the uninsured population in Pierce County based on 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-year estimates. As previously mentioned a large deterrent for seeking medical care is due to financial burden of health care (10 % of residents did not see a doctor due to costs in 2013 County Health Rankings).

Thirteen percent of Wisconsinites were uninsured in 2013 according to County Health Rankings (2013). When looking at Pierce County 11% of adults and 4% of children are uninsured. According to the Wisconsin Family Health Survey 2009-2011, in Pierce County of those insured, 76% are employer-sponsored, 8% privately owned insurance, and 8% receive Medicaid or Medicare insurance.

HealthWatch Member Survey

A survey was sent out to members of the Pierce County HealthWatch Coalition in order to gain further perspective of daily issues with access to care throughout a variety of service providers. HealthWatch members were asked a series of questions related to client demographics and challenges posed to both providers and clients in accessing care.

The majority of respondents were from a diverse group of agencies and organizations (e.g. Church Ministry, Youth-serving organizations, mental and medical health, etc.) that serve primarily Caucasian individuals under 100% FPL. Sixty-eight percent felt that the largest barrier for clients seeking care was cost and transportation issues. When looking at the flip side, challenges that providers see on their end that lead to decreased access to care the majority (57%) felt was due to lack of adequate funding. Several additional comments related to barriers of accessing care were, "Lack of providers that offer care and will accept MA".

Thank you HealthWatch members that filled out the survey and provided insight into the issues our area providers are experiencing first hand.

School Health: Student Access

PIERCE COUNTY
HealthWatch

University of Wisconsin River Falls

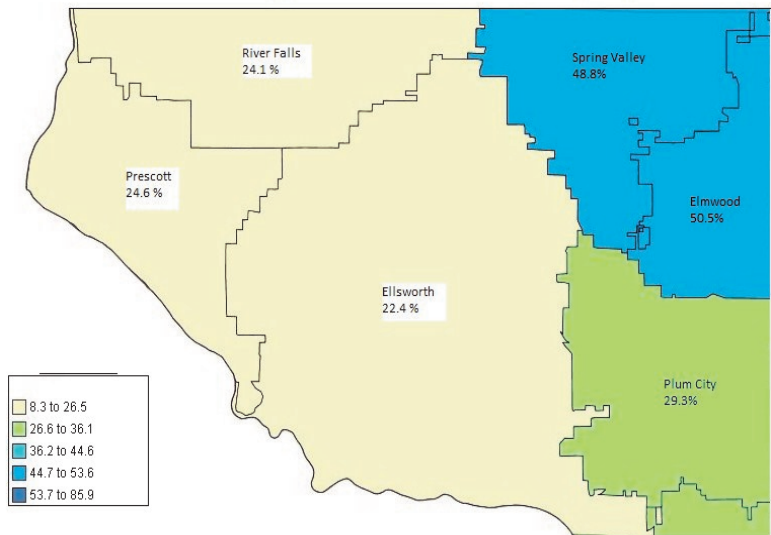
A recent area of concern for individuals having insurance was taking a look at our local university, University of Wisconsin-River Falls (UWRF). Many students are covered under their parents insurance until age 26. However, what are the students that do not have access to parent/guardian insurance to do or those that are underinsured? In the National College Health Assessment, 79% of UWRF students report insurance coverage through their parents, the remaining 20% either are on other plans, have university sponsored coverage or are uninsured. The American Community Survey 2008-2012 estimates that of the roughly 6,444 Pierce County residents ages 19-25, 4,466 are enrolled in school. Seven percent (314) of these students do not have health insurance, although they are in school.

As a part of tuition fees, UWRF students are able to seek medical services through River Falls Medical Clinic, as well as Pierce County Reproductive Health. Students are able to receive basic visits including but not limited to psychiatric visits, immunizations, HIV/STI/Pregnancy testing and more for no additional cost. In 2011-2012 approximately 40%, 2702 students utilized RFMC or Pierce County Reproductive Health Services. In 2013, 406 students specifically sought reproductive services (e.g., HIV/STI/Pregnancy testing, pap smears, emergency contraception, birth control, etc.) through Pierce County Health Department.

Students who do not currently have access to additional insurance, whether through their parents or Medical Assistance (MA) have the ability to sign up on the federal marketplace or the University of Wisconsin System Student Health Insurance Plan.

Pierce County has six public school districts with over 6,700 students enrolled in 2012, as well as the University of Wisconsin-River Falls.

2012 Percent of Students Eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch Program by School District



The federal funded free and reduced lunch program is one of the best indicators for family income level throughout our county. This program is for students with a family income level of 150% of the federal poverty level (FPL) to qualify for free and 185% FPL to qualify for reduced meals. The map depicts the percentage of students that are eligible for free and reduced lunch per school district. According to the American Community Survey by the U.S. Census Bureau 2008-2012, 16% of families or individuals living at or under 199% FPL are uninsured. Of the 9,021 children under the age of 18 in Pierce County, 1,860, roughly 20% are receiving Medicaid/Badger Care coverage.

In 2012, the Vaccine For Children (VFC) program changed requirements for providing immunizations to children. Individuals with insurance that covers vaccinations were no longer eligible for VFC immunizations provided by local health departments. Despite the 2012 rule change, during the 2013-2014 school year PCHD was able to go into each of the 6 public schools and provide a total of 847 influenza vaccinations for students free of charge through the VFC program. Throughout the school year immunizations are also available at the Health Department offices, a total of 1,105 vaccinations were given to children birth-18 years of age in 2013. County health rankings state that 62% of 19-35 months of age received the recommended vaccinations in Pierce County.

We are also proud to mention that according to the Wisconsin Medical Journal (2013), Wisconsin teen birth rates have declined 20.3% from 2001-2010 and of Wisconsin counties, Pierce County has the second lowest teen birth rate (9.9 teens births/1,000 teens age 15-19 years old) from 2001-2010. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention had announced in 2013, that the National teen birth rates have decreased overall by 25% from 2007-2011. According to 2013 County Health Rankings, Pierce County teen births were 10/ 1,000 births of individuals ages 15-19 years. This is a 1 % drop from, 2012 sitting at 11/ 1,000 births. In both 2012 and 2013, Pierce County teen birth rate were less than half of the national benchmark.

On behalf of Pierce County Health Department and Pierce County Health Watch Coalition we would like to thank all of our community organizations and agencies helping to increase access to affordable and quality care to our residents.

