



ISSUE BRIEF JAN2021

Using research to build better public policy for families

What Works for Health Wisconsin: A Tool for State Policymakers

Healthy families are the cornerstone for thriving communities and a strong economy. How can legislators and other state government officials apply a health lens to their work and create a healthier Wisconsin? This issue brief summarizes evidence-based policy and program options for state policymakers to consider. Some programs and policies are being implemented in select Wisconsin communities and could be expanded statewide, while others have not yet been implemented.

*This issue brief is one of four for the 39th Wisconsin Family Impact Seminar, **Beyond Healthcare Policy: Building the Foundation of Health for Wisconsin Families**, held January 13, 2021.*

The University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute's *What Works for Health Wisconsin* ([WWFHW](#)) online tool houses information on more than 400 policies and programs that can improve health. This interactive, regularly updated database allows users to select programs based on health factor, decision-maker, evidence rating, impact on disparities, and potential population reach. Some of these programs directly target health. Others do not have an explicit health focus, but target the social, economic, and physical environment factors (e.g., income) that are known to improve health.

This issue brief highlights policies and programs from the database that are likely to be of higher interest to state policymakers. The policies and programs meet following criteria:

- Can be influenced by state government decision-makers,
- Have been rigorously tested and consistently produce positive results, earning the highest rating of "scientifically supported," and
- Are likely to decrease health disparities (we included a few that have insufficient evidence of their impact on health disparities to ensure each domain had three examples).

As of January 2021, 59 policies and programs met these criteria. We selected a sample of 18 that can improve health across six social, economic, and physical environment domains:

- Education
- Family and social support
- Food security
- Housing
- Jobs and the economy
- Physical environment (built and natural)

We note whether these policies and programs are being implemented in Wisconsin to some extent. Also, to illustrate the cross-cutting nature of these policies and programs, we list the 2021-23 legislative committees beyond health committees on which legislators could take action to improve the health of Wisconsin families.

EDUCATION

School-based health centers (SBHC): These centers provide elementary, middle, and high school students a variety of healthcare services on school premises or at offsite centers linked to schools.

Examples in Wisconsin: In 2015, the Menominee Indian School District opened an [SBHC](#) on the Menominee High School campus. Additionally, the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) administers grants through the [School-Based Mental Health Services Grant Program](#) to school districts to provide mental health services to students in collaboration with community health agencies. Strategies may include co-locating community mental health clinics in schools and providing screening and intervention services.

School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) (Tier 1): The first tier of the three-tier PBIS behavioral system provides school-wide support to all students to increase academic performance, improve safety, decrease problem behavior, and establish a positive school culture.

Example in Wisconsin: The [Wisconsin PBIS Network](#), a collaboration between DPI and Wisconsin's 12 Cooperative Educational Service Agencies, provides high-quality PBIS professional development and technical assistance. In 2020, the Wisconsin Response to Intervention Center recognized 668 schools for successful PBIS implementation.

Full-day kindergarten: These programs offer kindergarten to 4- to 6-year-old children, five days per week, for at least five hours per day.

Examples in Wisconsin: [Kindergarten programs](#) vary from district to district with most being full-day programs, some being part-day, and many districts offering both. Currently, all public school districts offer 5-year-old kindergarten to all children in their district and a large majority of districts also offer 4-year-old kindergarten.

Examples of 2021-23 legislative committees that may discuss policies related to education:

Assembly Committees: Children and Families | Colleges and Universities | Education | Mental Health | Workforce Development | Speaker's Task Force on Racial Disparities

Senate Committees: Economic and Workforce Development | Education | Human Services, Children and Families | Universities and Technical Colleges

FAMILY AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

Early childhood home visiting programs: Trained home visitors provide at-risk, expectant parents and families with young children with information, support, and training regarding child health, development, and care.

Examples in Wisconsin: The [Wisconsin Family Foundations Comprehensive Home Visiting Program](#) supports home visiting programs for at-risk pregnant women and parents of children from birth to age 5. As of 2019, [23 rural counties and 12 non-rural counties](#) provided early childhood home visiting programs with funding from the federal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program.

Kinship foster care for children in the child welfare system: These programs prevent child maltreatment through the use of full-time foster care – by relatives or non-related adults who have a family relationship with the child – when a child is removed from home due to a safety concern. Children may be placed in kinship foster care through a child welfare agency (i.e., formal kinship care) or through informal arrangements among family members.

Example in Wisconsin: The Department of Children and Families (DCF) has a [listing of kinship care coordinators](#) in every county and with every American Indian tribe.

Activity programs for older adults: Educational, social, creative, musical, and physical activity programs in group settings increase social connectedness and reduce isolation. Isolation among older adults is associated with poorer health outcomes.

Example in Wisconsin: Many [senior centers](#) offer social, educational, and volunteer opportunities for participants through a variety of activities and classes.

Examples of 2021-23 legislative committees that may discuss policies related to family and social support:

Assembly Committees: Aging and Long-Term Care | Children and Families | Criminal Justice and Public Safety | Family Law | Mental Health | Public Benefit Reform | Substance Abuse and Prevention | Speaker’s Task Force on Racial Disparities

Senate Committees: Human Services, Children and Families | Judiciary and Public Safety

FOOD SECURITY

School breakfast programs: These programs offer students a nutritious breakfast, often incorporating a variety of healthy and culturally relevant choices.

Examples in Wisconsin: [DPI](#) and the [UW–Madison Division of Extension](#) offer resources and tools to support school breakfast programs. The [Wisconsin Food Security Project](#) provides customizable local data about the food security infrastructure in Wisconsin, including school breakfast program participation numbers and rates.

Fruit and vegetable incentive programs: Also called bonus dollars, market bucks, produce coupons, or nutrition incentives, these programs offer matching funds to low-income participants to purchase healthy foods, especially fresh fruits and vegetables.

Examples in Wisconsin: Members of [Wholesome Wave’s National Nutrition Incentive Network](#) operate incentive programs in Wisconsin, including Double Dollars at farmers markets in south-central Wisconsin, Market Match in Eau Claire and at Fondy Food Center in Milwaukee, and Partner Shares through the FairShares Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Coalition.

School Nutrition Standards: The federal government and most states regulate the quality of food that can be sold to students on school grounds during the school day. Such standards often focus on foods available during school meals and via the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

Example in Wisconsin: [Wisconsin’s Model Academic Standards for Nutrition](#) provides guidance to students, parents, educators, administrators, policymakers, and community members to support state and local school district nutrition education efforts. Also, all school districts must write wellness policies that ensure their school meal nutrition standards meet the minimum [federal school meal standards](#).

Examples of 2021-23 legislative committees that may discuss policies related to food security:

Assembly Committees: Agriculture | Education | Environment | Public Benefit Reform | Rural Development

Senate Committees: Agriculture and Tourism | Education

HOUSING

Housing First: This approach addresses chronic homelessness by providing rapid access to permanent housing without requirements for treatment, along with ongoing support services such as crisis intervention, needs assessment, and case management.

Example in Wisconsin: The [Milwaukee County Housing First](#) program moves homeless and chronically homeless individuals into housing without requiring sobriety, a clean bill of mental health, or employment. The program costs approximately \$2 million each year and has reduced annual Medicaid costs to Wisconsin by \$2.1 million and reduced mental health costs to Milwaukee County by \$715,000 annually.

Housing rehabilitation loan and grant programs: These programs provide funding to repair, improve, or modernize dwellings, and remove health or safety hazards from those dwellings.

Examples in Wisconsin: The Department of Administration (DOA) Division of Energy, Housing and Community Resources operates the [Homebuyer and Homeowner Rehabilitation Program](#) with funds from the U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) HOME Investment Partnerships Program and the [Wisconsin Community Development Block Grant](#) program for housing rehabilitation. The City of Madison offers [home rehabilitation loans](#) to qualifying families to upgrade housing and address needed rehabilitations.

Integrated pest management (IMP) for indoor use: This includes a broad range of methods to control pests and minimize potential hazards to people, property, and the environment.

Example in Wisconsin: Wisconsin does not currently have any [statewide requirements](#) for IPM in schools. The [IPM Institute of North America](#), located in Madison, works to improve sustainable pest removal practices in communities and agriculture through IPM.

Examples of 2021-23 legislative committees that may discuss policies related to housing:

Assembly Committees: Aging and Long-Term Care | Children and Families | Criminal Justice and Public Safety | Energy and Utilities | Environment | Housing and Real Estate | Mental Health | Public Benefit Reform | Rural Development | Substance Abuse and Prevention | Speaker's Task Force on Racial Disparities

Senate Committees: Housing, Commerce and Trade | Human Services, Children and Families | Natural Resources and Energy | Utilities, Technology and Telecommunications

JOBS AND THE ECONOMY

Paid family leave: These policies provide employees with paid time off from work for circumstances such as a recent birth or adoption, a parent or spouse with a serious medical condition, or a sick child. Five states and the District of Columbia currently have [paid family leave insurance programs](#) for eligible employees: California, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Washington. Three states recently passed legislation but have not yet begun to pay benefits: Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Oregon. Some states fund paid family leave through state-level temporary disability insurance programs.

Example in Wisconsin: There is no statewide paid family leave requirement in Wisconsin. Employers with more than 50 workers are subject to the federal [Family and Medical Leave Act](#) and must provide up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave to eligible employees.

Adult vocational training: These programs help adults acquire job-specific skills through education and certification programs, also called career and technical education, or on-the-job training. Government-sponsored vocational training programs exist throughout the country. The U.S. Department of Labor provides [Job Corps](#) training centers in all 50 states, Washington DC, and Puerto Rico. The [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#) funds a variety of health profession-specific programs in 21 states.

Example in Wisconsin: [Job Corps](#) training centers are located in Laona and Milwaukee.

Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC): The federal government and [22 states](#) offer a refundable income tax credit to low- to moderate-income working individuals and families. Six states offer a nonrefundable tax credit.

Example in Wisconsin: Wisconsin has a refundable EITC available to residents who have at least one qualifying child and qualify for the federal EITC. [Wisconsin's EITC](#) is set at 4% of the federal credit for 1 child, 11% for 2 children, and 34% for three or more children. Nearly 246,000 households claimed [Wisconsin's EITC in tax year 2016](#), with an average credit of \$398. [Wisconsin is the only state](#) where childless workers are unable to claim the tax credit.

Examples of 2021-23 legislative committees that may discuss policies related to jobs and the economy:

Assembly Committees: Corrections | Jobs and the Economy | Labor and Integrated Employment | Public Benefit Reform | Rural Development | Science, Technology and Broadband | Small Business Development | Workforce Development | Speaker's Task Force on Racial Disparities

Senate Committees: Agriculture and Tourism | Economic and Workforce Development | Financial Institutions and Revenue | Housing, Commerce and Trade | Human Services, Children and Families | Sporting Heritage, Small Business and Rural Issues

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT (BUILT AND NATURAL)

Permeable pavement projects: Permeable pavement, also called porous or pervious pavement, is a type of green infrastructure that is often part of low-impact development efforts to make city landscapes more permeable.

Examples in Wisconsin: The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has a [permeable pavement conservation practice standard](#) that provides guidance on design, installation, and maintenance of permeable pavement systems. The [City of La Crosse](#) offers a permeable pavement credit to property owners that install permeable pavement projects.

Clean diesel technology fleet transition programs: Government or privately operated diesel vehicles (e.g., buses) are replaced or retrofitted until the entire fleet operates with clean diesel technology.

Examples in Wisconsin: DNR administers the [Clean Diesel Grant Programs](#) to help reduce diesel emissions from both public and private vehicle fleets across the state. Additionally, in August 2020 the U.S. [Environmental Protection Agency](#) (EPA) announced \$597,740 in grants specifically for clean diesel projects in Wisconsin. Part of the EPA's award will directly fund DNR's diesel retrofit program, which includes school and municipal buses and off-road equipment.

Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS): This is a federally supported program that promotes walking and biking to school through education, incentives, and environmental changes.

Example in Wisconsin: The Department of Transportation (DOT) oversees project funding for SRTS through the [Transportation Alternatives Program](#) (TAP) authorized in 2012. For fiscal years 2020-24, \$2.9 million was awarded to 8 projects for SRTS, bicycle or pedestrian travel, and similar projects.

Examples of 2021-23 legislative committees that may discuss policies related to the built and natural environment:

Assembly Committees: Energy and Utilities | Environment | Forestry, Parks and Outdoor Recreation | Science, Technology, and Broadband | Transportation

Senate Committees: Economic and Workforce Development | Insurance, Licensing and Forestry | Natural Resources and Energy | Transportation and Local Government



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