



LIFE

Snapshot of Life in MARATHON COUNTY

13th Edition | 2023

Snapshot of LIFE in Marathon County

The 2023 Marathon County Local Indicators for Excellence (LIFE) Report is a data-driven depiction about the quality of life in Marathon County. Powered by Marathon County Pulse, the 2023 LIFE Report exists exclusively online, providing the community an immersive experience in local data, community context, and story.

The 2023 LIFE Report is broken down into seven sections that encompass nearly every aspect of life in Marathon County.

- Basic Needs
- Connected
- Economic Environment
- Education
- Energy & Environment
- Health & Wellness
- Safety

Each section of the report was developed by a subcommittee comprised of local experts. These subcommittees examined and selected local data, developed narratives based on community context, and identified Calls to Action and Successes & Progresses to be included in their respective section of the LIFE Report.

In total, the seven subcommittees identified 18 Calls to Action and 33 Successes & Progress. Through a facilitated prioritization process, the Community Advisory Committee and the LIFE Steering Committee selected the top Calls to Action and Successes & Progress to be highlighted in the 2023 LIFE Report.

The Purpose of the LIFE Report is to:

- Acknowledge community Successes & Progress.
- Identify community Calls to Action.
- Serve as a catalyst for change by advancing community conversations and partnerships.

Marathon County Pulse

To see the full 2023 LIFE Report, or to take a deeper dive into the data for each section, visit: www.marathoncountypulse.org





LIFE Calls to Action

The 2023 LIFE Report establishes five community Calls to Action within four categories. The purpose of these Calls to Action is to advance community dialogue and stimulate action to improve policy, systems, and environmental change in our community. These priorities were identified by community data and context through the work of the LIFE Subcommittees and prioritized by the Community Advisory Committee and LIFE Steering Committee.

THE CALLS TO ACTION

- MENTAL HEALTH
- SUBSTANCE MISUSE
- CHILD CARE
- PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION



LIFE Calls to Action

MENTAL HEALTH

Marathon County has more mental health providers than ever before, but still not enough to meet the increased demand for services. Lack of or inadequate health insurance coverage for mental health services, limited appointment availability and long waiting lists continue to be barriers for individuals seeking mental health care. **Reducing barriers for individuals seeking mental health care and for mental health care providers to expand services is vital.**



Youth depression and anxiety is increasing significantly in Marathon County, especially amongst minority populations and students who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Transgender (LGBT). **Expanding and investing in comprehensive school-based mental health services in Marathon County school districts is essential to ensuring youth have access to the support and resources they need.**

SUBSTANCE MISUSE

Drug violation incidents and drug charges are on the rise again in Marathon County. The increase in the distribution and use of methamphetamine, heroin, and fentanyl is leading to increased overdose deaths. More needs to be done to reduce the impact of illegal substances in our community. **Efforts to expand prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and recovery must continue to occur in Marathon County.**



LIFE Calls to Action

CHILD CARE

The child care business model is broken. Since COVID-19, the influx of federal relief funding has been a vital lifeline to support child care providers, however this funding is temporary and could cause a potential fiscal cliff in the near future. It is extremely difficult for child care providers to provide quality care and education on parent fees/tuition alone. **Child care needs additional long-term public and private investment so children can have high-quality care and education, parents remain in the workforce, and those who work in child care can earn enough to support their own families.**



PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Given the public support for expansion of public transportation services, **municipalities need to consider support for and funding a public bus system with routes throughout the Wausau Metro Area.** This would allow individuals to utilize public transportation for employment as well as increase access to other basic needs such as health care.

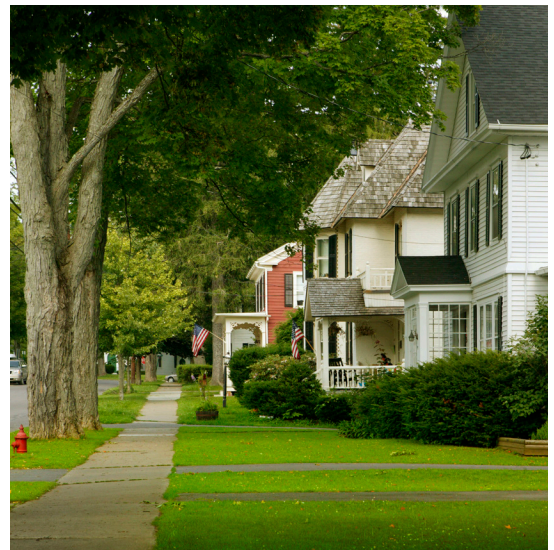


Success | Progress

SUCCESS & PROGRESS

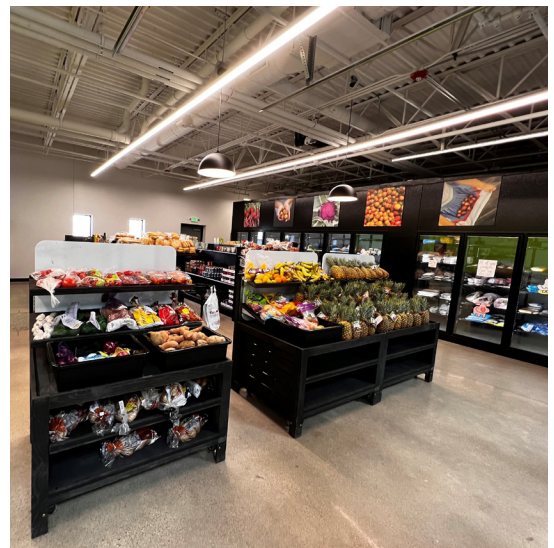
Reflecting on the success and celebrating the progress that Marathon County has made since the 2019-2021 LIFE Report is vital. The following successes and progress were identified through the work of the LIFE Subcommittees and prioritized by the Community Advisory Committee and LIFE Steering Committee.

- Through the Marathon County School-Based Counseling Consortium (MCS-BCC), local mental health clinics and school districts built a mental health service delivery system that previously did not exist and has provided mental health therapy to over 2,000 students over the past five years.
- The establishment of the Community Partners Campus in Wausau brings together organizations that offer programs or assistance with basic needs, such as food, shelter, medical care, mental health and social well-being, under one roof.
- In 2022, initiatives to bring high speed internet access to rural Marathon County will provide fiber connectivity to more than 825 businesses and more than 10,000 homes.
- Marathon County has experienced a significant reduction in emergency detentions for individuals with a mental health crisis with the continued implementation of two Crisis Assessment Response Teams (CART) that pair a law enforcement officer with a crisis professional. CART's focus on crisis intervention and support has improved patient outcomes across the number of crisis situations that law enforcement responds to.
- Marathon County school districts continue to make investments to support staff to improve their skills to help with student achievement. Successful academic experiences lead to greater post-secondary opportunities for students.



Success | Progress

- The Putting Families First initiative has continued to be a focal point for child welfare services in Marathon County and Wisconsin. This work is intended to transform the child welfare system to become more in-home, family focused, and collaborative, with the aim to dramatically reduce the proportion of the Child Protective Service and Youth Justice children and youth who are served outside of their family home.
- The approval of the 2022-2024 Marathon County Ground Water Plan allows Marathon County to assess the condition of groundwater by testing at least 1,000 private wells.
- The Hmong and Hispanic Communication Network (H2N) serves as a vital connection to individuals and communities throughout Marathon County. Outreach by H2N Community Health Workers have provided a variety of supports and services including COVID-19 testing and vaccination, food and rental assistance, mental health services, domestic abuse resources, legal rights and more. Programs like H2N are a potent tool to improve health outcomes and reduce health disparities in Marathon County.
- There are more organizations providing various types of housing assistance in Marathon County including North Central Community Action Program (NCCAP), Catholic Charities, Family Services Association (FSA), St. Vincent De Paul, and the Community Development Authority.
- Marathon County food pantries in the Wausau metro area transitioned from primarily box and processed food items to fresh produce from local farmers in Marathon County. In addition, food pantries have made efforts to offer culturally relevant foods. The Market at The Neighbor's Place receives food donations from local farmers with the help of coordination by the Marathon County Hunger Coalition. Individuals may visit The Market at The Neighbor's Place twice per month.





The LIFE Report powered by Pulse, sponsored by:

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- United Way of Marathon County
- Wisconsin Public Service Corporation

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Local photos courtesy of Visit Wausau

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SNAPSHOT 2023

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