



*Health Department*  
**County of La Crosse, Wisconsin**

300 4th Street North • 2nd Floor  
La Crosse, Wisconsin 54601-3228  
(608) 785-9872 • FAX: (608) 785-9846  
[www.lacrossecounty.org/health](http://www.lacrossecounty.org/health)



**Public Health**  
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**NEWS RELEASE**

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Contact: Bryany Weigel  
[bweigel@lacrossecounty.org](mailto:bweigel@lacrossecounty.org)  
608-785-9723

**Coulee Region Immunization Coalition works to protect all people from HPV related cancers.**

The Coulee Region Immunization Coalition has joined in a national effort throughout the month of January, National Cervical Health Awareness Month, to educate and inform the public about the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) and the importance of the HPV vaccine.

The Human Papillomavirus is so common that almost everyone will be infected at some point in their lives. It is estimated that 79 million Americans are currently infected with 14 million new HPV infections each year. Most people infected will never know. However, for some HPV can cause cancer. Cancers of the cervix, vagina, and vulva in women, cancer of the penis in men, and cancers of the anus and the mouth or throat in both women and men. There are about 26,000 of these cancers each year—and most could be prevented with HPV vaccine.

Data from the Wisconsin State Immunization Program shows that the Western Region of WI has had an increase in the percent of adolescent's age 13 to 18 years old who have received one dose and three doses of HPV vaccine. In 2013, 33.73% of adolescent's age 13 to 18 years old had received one dose of HPV vaccine. In 2014, that number increased to 38.51%. In 2013, 18.34% of adolescent's age 13 to 18 years old had completed the three dose HPV vaccine series. In 2014, that number increased to 21.49%. Although the numbers are increasing, our Western Region lags behind the rest of the State of Wisconsin in administration rates of the vaccine ([www.dhs.wisconsin.gov](http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov)).

To encourage increased awareness and conversation of the HPV virus, the HPV vaccination, and the cancers it protects people from, CRIC has sponsored billboards in the cities of La Crosse, Sparta and Mauston, and radio and television PSA's covering the coulee region of western Wisconsin and eastern MN throughout the month of January. The campaign has highlighted the link between HPV and cancer and the importance of HPV vaccination. The funding for this project was generously provided by grants from the Wisconsin Immunization Program, Gundersen Health System, Mayo Health System, and the Women's Fund of Greater La Crosse.

*The Coulee Region Immunization Coalition's (CRIC) mission is to increase immunization rates to protect the public from vaccine-preventable diseases. Our focus is on educating about vaccinations and the diseases they prevent and preventing vaccine-preventable diseases. The Coalition consists of representatives from seven local health departments, Gundersen and Mayo Clinic Health Systems, Scenic Bluffs Community Centers, Scenic Rivers AHEC, WI Department of Health Services, and local school district and university nurses.*

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