

El Paso County Public Health Director’s Report

To: The El Paso County Board of Health

From: Susan Wheelan, M.B.A. Public Health Director

Date: May 2024 (reflects activity in April 2024)

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In the News

- The proclamation from the Board of Health recognizing KidPower as a Public Health Champion, noting their 30 years of service, was featured in an [in-depth story on KOAA](#). El Paso County Public Health (EPCPH) Deputy Director DeAnn Ryberg shared the impact of the program and its benefits for children and local communities.
- The [April monthly edition of the New Falcon Herald](#) featured an article from EPCPH CO-Medical Director Dr. Paul Mayer on the topic of spring allergies. In addition to offering tips to provide relief from allergies, the article also notes when it may be something more than allergies, such as respiratory illness, and what steps to take.
- [KRDO increased awareness of the rise in congenital syphilis](#), with data and information provided by EPCPH.

Program Spotlight

Each year, the month of May is dedicated to raising awareness about the importance of mental health, including learning about different mental health conditions, how to access resources, and how having open dialogue can reduce social stigma and increase connections. Mental Health Awareness Month, first recognized in the U.S. in 1949, serves as a good reminder to learn more about mental health and do a simple mental health check-in with yourself, family, friends, and community. In honor of Mental Health Awareness Month, here are a few things EPCPH is doing to support mental health throughout El Paso County (EPC).

The Youth Suicide Prevention (YSP) Workgroup has been focusing on ways to reach parents and caregivers in the community about mental health and suicide prevention support for their youth. The YSP Workgroup created a centralized place for parents and caregivers to access resources for youth mental health through a partnership with the [Pikes Peak Library District](#). In addition, the workgroup members have been developing content for incorporating mental health moments into existing events where parents and caregivers attend. This will increase the mental health literacy of parents in our community, a common thread seen among youth suicides in EPC. The content has simplified awareness touch points for parents and caregivers.

EPCPH, in partnership with local behavioral health organizations and key community leaders, is planning a co-launched innovative behavioral health platform to expand access to behavioral and mental health resources, while combatting the stigma often associated with mental health. The Behavioral Health 360 platform will be a one-year, piloted, free online tool that brings together expert-rated and vetted content such as videos, podcasts, apps, online programs, books, and articles all in one easy-to-use space. The behavioral health platform is confidential, anonymous, and available 24/7 for individuals to learn new skills, understand their mental health, take a mental health assessment and browse the library containing thousands of mental well-being resources.

Lastly, EPCPH has been sharing ways for people to support Mental Health Awareness Month:

- Save 988 or the Colorado Crisis Hotline (1-844-493-TALK) on your phone.
- Reach out to a friend you haven't connected with in a while.
- Participate in an activity you've been wanting to try.
- Send a card to a friend.
- Extend an invitation to someone new, whether it's running errands, taking a walk, or going to an event or gathering. Is there someone new you can invite to go with you?

Agency Operations

In 2008, the Colorado Public Health Act required the State Board of Health to establish, by rule, the core public health services that each county and district public health agency must provide or ensure, as well as establish minimum quality standards for those public health services. A revised ruling ([6 CCR 1014-7](#)), effective January 1, 2020, now requires state and local health departments in Colorado to ensure the provision of seven Foundational Capabilities and five Foundational Services.



Image courtesy of the [Colorado Association of Local Public Health Officials](#).

El Paso County Public Health (EPCPH) fulfills its statutory requirement of providing these core public health services through the work of its divisions and programs. Activities supporting these services for the timeframe of this report follow.

Foundational Public Health Capabilities

Assessment and Planning

A public launch plan was finalized to release the 2023 Community Health Assessment (CHA), which will be available in mid-May. The launch will include a multi-pronged approach that makes the comprehensive assessment available to the public, partners, and stakeholders.

The Public Health Data & Analytics (PHDA) team was showcased in the first 2024 quarterly edition of the [El Paso County Courier](#), an external newsletter that features insight into El Paso County and the services the county provides to the community. This edition, published on April 9, highlighted the recent launch of the overdose and suicide data dashboards.

Communications

EPCPH was featured in television news coverage on several emerging topics during the month of May, including congenital syphilis, avian influenza, and a proclamation from the Board of Health recognizing KidPower as a Public Health Champion.

On April 1, EPCPH participated in a countywide spokesperson media relations training aimed at preparing staff with the resources, strategies, and knowledge they need to be successful in sharing information with media partners. From the EPCPH Office of Communication, the public information officer and deputy public information officer assisted with the planning, facilitation,

and implementation of the training. EPCPH's division director of Clinical Services participated in the training as a newer agency spokesperson. The training, which garnered significant interest and positive feedback, has its next scheduled session on May 10.

Emergency Preparedness and Response

The EPCPH Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR) Program engaged in the National Defense Military System Tabletop Exercise held in Denver. The exercise revolved around a scenario involving the transportation of 1000 wounded patients from overseas to the US, requiring critical care upon arrival. Denver is currently part of a pilot project designated to accept these wounded service members, and as a closely connected jurisdictional partner, EPC was invited to participate. Given the potential involvement of local health and medical facilities in such scenarios, the county's participation was deemed crucial for effective coordination and preparedness efforts.

EPCPH participated in a Mass Fatality Planning Group convened by the Pikes Peak Regional Office of Emergency Management (PPROEM). The EPC Coroner's Office retains its vital role as the lead agency for the mass fatality plan, with EPCPH serving as a supporting partner.

EPCPH participated in planning and facilitating the inaugural South Central Healthcare Coalition Summit, held at St. Francis Hospital. With over 95 attendees from across the South-Central Region, the summit marked a significant milestone in regional collaboration. EPCPH team members contributed extensively by serving on the planning committee, crafting the agenda, managing registration, coordinating facility logistics, and orchestrating a CHEMPACK Tabletop Exercise. The exercise drew participation from various key partners, including representatives from the FBI, CDPHE, PPROEM, AMR, CSFD, Monument Fire, UCHealth, CommonSpirit, Children's Hospital, TCPHE, Lake County OEM, EPCMRC, Colorado Springs Utilities, EPC Coroner's Office, and Diversus Health. This exercise served as the inaugural test of the newly updated EPC CHEMPACK plan and fulfilled a critical PHEP Deliverable requirement for FY24.

EPCPH renewed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between EPCPH, PPROEM, and the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC). This agreement strengthens preparedness for potential MRC involvement in public health responses and reinforces the collaborative partnership among the involved entities.

Social Determinants of Health

Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) helped to address some of the social determinants of health by providing 27 referrals on behalf of 29 families. These referrals were to housing assistance, mental health treatment, Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), child care, dental services, lactation support, and Women, Infants and Children (WIC).

NFP held its second in-person graduation celebration for clients, honoring 16 clients and their families (65 people total) at the United Way's Family Success Center. Clients participated in

NFP from their pregnancies through their child's second birthday. Food, fun, and celebration were enjoyed by clients, families, babies, and their NFP nurses.

EPCPH's Reproductive Health Clinic (RHC), Immunization and Care Coordination teams provided resources and services at the Springs Rescue Health Fair. With an attendance of 25 individuals, four testing appointments were made, and 15 vaccinations were administered.

Care Coordinators participated in the Springs Rescue Mission Health Day in collaboration with the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical School, the EPCPH RHC, the Care Coordination Team, and the Immunizations Clinic (IZ). Care Coordination connected with 25 individuals providing information on EPCPH services and linkage to community resources and services.

Care Coordination has received 533 referrals from January-April 2024. Care Coordination has delivered 21 care packages and attended seven community events.

Foundational Public Health Services

Communicable Disease Prevention, Investigation and Control

EPCPH presented regarding emerging infectious disease threats at the South-Central Region Healthcare Coalition Summit.

Representatives from the EPR and Communicable Disease (CD) programs participated in a measles tabletop exercise to improve agency readiness and capacity to respond to measles and other infectious disease threats.

EPCPH's Immunizations Program conducted several outreach vaccination clinics in April including, Deerfield Hills Community Center, First Congregational Church, Hillside Community Center, Harrison D2 Kindergarten Round-Up, and Springs Rescue Mission, meeting community members where they are to help prevent disease while helping address health equity.

Environmental Public Health

Environmental Health met with partners from Fort Carson to share best practices from the EPCPH Body Art Program and facilitate field inspection shadow experiences.

Environmental Health facilitated an open information session for realtors selling properties with septic systems. The purpose of this session was to communicate program standards and respond to industry questions.

Maternal, Child, Adolescent and Family Health

Maternal and Child Health (MCH) provided skill-building training to the Community Health Promotions Division, which included 52 participants, to learn skills that apply to working with children, families, and the community. Additionally, MCH provided social and emotional well-being training to the Salvation Army's educational staff, which included five participants.

In partnership with the Colorado Community Health Alliance, MCH facilitated a viewing of the documentary titled, “Unseen, How We’re Failing Parent Caregivers and Why It Matters” with 23 care coordinators who serve those receiving Medicaid benefits. This documentary gives an unfiltered glimpse into the lives of caregivers, bringing awareness to the stress and burnout for those raising a child with special health care needs. The documentary serves to educate and start a dialogue with care coordinators and identify ways to support caregivers. In addition, MCH staff facilitated two large viewings of the documentary in partnership with Personal Assistance Services of Colorado (PASCO) for caregivers they serve.

MCH participated in a resource fair for individuals with disabilities, hosted by the Pikes Peak Interagency Transition Team. Staff interacted with approximately 55 individuals and provided information on ECPH services and MCH programming.

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for WIC participated in a Pikes Peak Library District Family Playgroup in Fountain and provided nutrition education and outreach to caregivers of children 0-3 years old. There were 14 caregivers in attendance. WIC also spoke with seven families participating in an Early HeadStart parent meeting about toddler nutrition. HeadStart and WIC serve similar populations.

Chronic Disease, Injury Prevention and Behavioral Health Promotion

Fountain Valley Communities that Care (FV-CTC) sponsored a Youth Mental Health First Aid training for community partners in Fountain Valley. The event was held at Widefield Parks and Recreation and resulted in 20 community partners and residents getting certified.

April 27 was National Drug Take Back Day, where people could appropriately and safely dispose of prescription medications, reducing the availability of substances in the community. FV-CTC co-hosted two drug take back sites at Fountain Library and Widefield Parks and Recreation with the Drug Enforcement Agency and local law enforcement, collecting a total of 66.2 pounds of unused or expired medications. Ten Narcan kits and ten medication lockboxes were distributed at each site to community residents and families, with an overall reach of about 50 community members.

The Tobacco Education and Prevention Partnership (TEPP) provided training to 15 staff members of Penrose-St. Francis’ Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation Clinic. Information provided included tobacco and vape use trends for adults and youth, impacts of secondhand smoke exposure, and cessation resources for clients. The cessation education provided resources for how to refer clients to the Colorado QuitLine and Baby and Me Tobacco Free Program.

TEPP presented at the Colorado Springs School District 11 School Accountability meeting at Tesla Educational Center. The training was provided to 15 parents, staff, and community members focused on the importance of, and techniques for, becoming a trusted adult in the life of teens regarding vape and tobacco use and prevention.

TEPP launched a prevention campaign, *Unflavor the Lie*, within the Fountain community to educate the general community about facts surrounding flavored vape products. The campaign includes a billboard and the use of digital and social media advertising on various platforms.

Appendix A: Environmental Health Activity

Environment Health Activity	2024 Total <i>As of 04/30/2024</i>	2023 Total	2022 Total
Air Quality Construction Permits	44	136	163
Air Quality Open Burn Permits	11	51	19
Air Quality Complaints	11	23	38
Animal Bites Reported	285	1091	877
Body Art Routine Inspections	44	112	86
Body Art Follow-up Inspections	1	7	8
Body Art Complaints	7	31	22
Child Care Regular Inspections	69	202	138
Child Care Follow-up Inspections	4	6	15
Child Care Complaints	9	20	8
Child Care High Risk Field Consults	9	12	18
Land-Use Planning Review	90	204	232
Onsite Wastewater Treatment System (OWTS) Pumper Truck Inspections	49	77	85
OWTS Final Inspections	136	551	576
OWTS Partial Inspections	43	227	235
OWTS Application Design Reviews	98	490	558
OWTS Design Revision Requests	19	120	221
OWTS Design Revision (add) Requests	5	63	0
OWTS New Permit Applications	54	232	351
OWTS Repair Permit Applications	64	266	276
OWTS Modification Permit Applications	3	19	15
OWTS Acceptance Doc for Title Transfer	206	731	866
OWTS Soil and Site Evaluations	73	376	425
OWTS Complaints	10	30	27
OWTS O&M Systems	40	116	65
Recreational Water Safety Inspections	125	313	295
Recreational Water Follow-up Inspections	11	22	17
Recreational Water Complaints	5	14	9
Retail Food Establishment (RFE) Regular Inspections	868	2481	1908
RFE Re-Inspections	89	315	171
RFE Complaint Investigations	158	517	391
RFE Plan Reviews	87	210	193
School Safety Regular Inspections	13	24	13
School Safety Complaints	6	15	14

Environment Health Activity	2024 Total <i>As of 04/30/2024</i>	2023 Total	2022 Total
School Safety Self-Certification Audits	23	45	15
School Safety Self-Certifications Returned	1	327	332
Waste Tire Facilities Regular Inspections	46	140	115
Waste Tire Follow-up Inspections	0	0	1

Appendix B: Water Systems Testing

2023	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Totals	572	531	694	663	836	789	846	773	735	668	728	554

2024	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Public Water Systems	348	340	352	321								
Private Wells	299	267	290	377								
Totals	647	607	642	698								

Appendix C: Immunizations Program Vaccines Administered

2023 Month	Non-COVID Vaccines	COVID Vaccine Administered in Clinic/Distributed (Long- Term Care Facilities and Operation House Call)	COVID Vaccine Administered by EPCPH Mobile Team
January	502	115	14
February	592	89	0*
March	878	150	8
April	956	119	0*
May	930	140	0*
June	1119	163	0*
July	856	65	0*
August	948	73	0*
September	766	24	0*
October	878	205	47
November	731	192	13
December	607	131	18

As we return to routine operations, COVID vaccinations will no longer be separate categories.

2024 Month	Total Vaccines Administered	Vaccines Administered by the Mobile Team*
January	720	33
February	852	123
March	670	28
April	674	35
May		
June		
July		
August		
September		
October		
November		
December		

*Number of vaccines administered by the mobile team included in total vaccines administered column

Appendix D: Nurse-Family Partnership Client Visits

Month	2023 # of Client Visits	2024 # of Client Visits
January	237	241
February	213	252
March	254	241
April	220	272
May	222	
June	245	
July	186	
August	215	
September	213	
October	231	
November	230	
December	188	

Appendix E: Disease Prevention and Control

Category	Disease	2024 As of 05/01/2024	2023	2022
Food/Waterborne Diseases				
	Campylobacter	43	189	118
	Cryptosporidium	5	42	25
	Cyclosporiasis	0	8	10
	Giardia	20	68	47
	Hepatitis A	1	2	3
	Legionellosis	0	19	11
	Salmonella	27	89	54
	Shigella	20	46	57
	Shiga Toxin-producing E. coli (STEC)	16	59	42
	Vibriosis	3	9	7
Food/Waterborne Diseases Totals		135	531	373
Viral Hepatitis				
	Hepatitis B (acute)	1	2	3
	Hepatitis B (chronic)	23	95	92
	Hepatitis C (acute)	0	1	3
	Hepatitis C (chronic)	77	255	296
Viral Hepatitis Totals		101	353	394
Healthcare Associated Infections				
	Carbapenem-Resistant Acinetobacter baumannii (CRAB)	0	0	1
	Carbapenem Non-susceptible Enterobacteriaceae (CRE)	23	58	47
	Carbapenem-Resistant Pseudomonas Aeruginosa (CRPA)	11	45	43
Healthcare Associated Infections Totals		34	103	91

Vaccine Preventable Diseases				
	Haemophilus influenzae (H. flu)	7	18	14
	Measles	0	0	0
	Meningococcal Disease	0	1	0
	Mumps	0	2	3
	Pertussis	10	24	29
	Rubella	0	0	0
	Varicella	12	33	21
Vaccine Preventable Diseases Totals		29	78	67
Respiratory Diseases				
	Hospitalized COVID-19	286	1,091	2,847
	Hospitalized Influenza*	313	266	529
	Hospitalized RSV	297	161	24
Respiratory Disease Total		896	1,518	3,400

*Flu Seasons:

- October 3, 2021- May 21, 2022; 188
- October 2, 2022- May 20, 2023; 399
- October 1, 2023-May 18, 2024; 500

Table 2 – Foodborne illness complaints received at El Paso County Public Health in April

2023 Month	Complaint Received by EH that Mentions Foodborne Illness	Foodborne Illness Investigation
January	5	1
February	9	2
March	8	1
April	5	4
May	14	3
June	10	2
July	3	1
August	9	1
September	16	0
October	12	2
November	7	0
December	4	2

2024 Month	Complaint Received that Mention Foodborne Illness	Foodborne Illness Investigation
January	1	0
February	3	1
March	22	2
April	23	2
May		
June		
July		
August		
September		
October		
November		
December		

Table 3 – Annual rabies control activities

Year	Rabid animals total	Animal type
2024	0	--
2023	2	Bats
2022	4	Bats

2024 Month	Rabies Related Calls	Animals Tested	Positive Results	PEP Recommendations
January	12	1	0	0
February	20	4	0	1
March	20	2	0	2
April	32	6	0	3
May				
June				
July				
August				
September				
October				
November				
December				

Appendix F: Reproductive Health Clinic

Table 1 – Reproductive Health Clinic Client Visits

Month	2023 # of Client Visits	2024 # of Client Visits
January	122	195
February	109	181
March	187	141
April	193	184
May	161	
June	198	
July	147	
August	225	
September	164	
October	170	
November	152	
December	153	

Appendix G: Tuberculosis Program

2024 Month	TB Cases Active/Latent	TB Rule Outs in Partnership with Community Providers	TB Direct Consultation to Community Providers
January	5/10	3	4
February	4/7	4	8
March	2/6	1	2
April	1/4	0	7
May			
June			
July			
August			
September			
October			
November			
December			

Definitions of Foundational Terms

Foundational Public Health Capabilities

Assessment and Planning- Colorado’s governmental public health system will apply the principles and skilled practice of epidemiology, laboratory investigation, surveillance and program evaluation to support planning, policy and decision making in Colorado.

Communications - Colorado’s governmental public health system will be a trusted source of clear, consistent, accurate and timely health and environmental information.

Policy Development and Support - Colorado’s governmental public health system will inform and implement policies to meet the community’s changing health needs. Public health policies will aim to eliminate health disparities, reduce death and disability, and improve environmental quality and health outcomes for all people in Colorado.

Partnerships - Colorado’s governmental public health system will create, convene, and support strategic partnerships, engage community members and cross-sectoral partners, agencies, and organizations to achieve public health goals.

Organizational Competencies – No official definition from CDPHE but this section will be used to report on QI, accreditation, finance/budget, governance, awards, etc.

Emergency Preparedness and Response - Colorado’s governmental public health system, in coordination with federal, state and local agencies and public and private sector partners, will have the capability and capacity to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies with health, environmental and medical impacts.

Social Determinants of Health - Colorado's governmental public health system will intentionally focus on improving systems and institutions that exacerbate health disparities so that all people and communities in Colorado can achieve the highest level of health possible. Governmental public health will have the requisite skills, competencies, and capacities to play an essential role in creating comprehensive strategies needed to address health inequities, and social and environmental determinants of health.

Foundational Public Health Services

Communicable Disease Prevention, Investigation and Control - Colorado's governmental public health system will carry out state and locally coordinated surveillance, disease investigation, laboratory testing, and prevention and control strategies to monitor and reduce the incidence and transmission of communicable diseases. Programs will target illnesses that are vaccine-preventable, zoonotic, vector-borne, respiratory, food- or water-borne, bloodborne, healthcare associated, and sexually transmitted as well as emerging threats. Communicable Disease Control will collaborate with national, state, and local partners to ensure mandates and guidelines are met and timely, actionable information is provided to the public and health professionals.

Environmental Public Health - Colorado's governmental public health system will use evidence-informed practices to understand the cause and effect relationships between environmental changes and ecological and human health impacts, to protect, promote, and enhance the health of the community and environment. Agencies will participate in the protection and improvement of air quality, water, land, and food safety by identifying, investigating, and responding to community environmental health concerns, reducing current and emerging environmental health risks, preventing communicable diseases, and sustaining the environment in a coordinated manner with agencies at the federal, state, and local levels as well as industry stakeholders and the public.

Maternal, Child, Adolescent and Family Health - Colorado's governmental public health system will develop, implement and evaluate state-wide, regional and local strategies related to maternal, child, adolescent and family health to increase health and wellbeing, reduce adverse health outcomes and advance health equity across the life course. Strategies may include but are not limited to identifying and providing information, promoting evidence-informed and multi-generational approaches, identifying community assets, advocating for needed initiatives, and convening partners.

Chronic Disease, Injury Prevention and Behavioral Health Promotion - Colorado's governmental public health system focuses on common risk and protective factors that affect social, emotional and physical health and safety. To prevent chronic disease and injuries and promote behavioral health, Colorado's governmental public health system will use policy, systems and environmental change strategies to comprehensively address the root causes of poor health outcomes and advance health equity. Priority areas include, but are not limited to, nutrition, physical activity, oral health, access to care and disease management, injury prevention, violence prevention, suicide prevention, mental health and substance use (including tobacco, alcohol and other substances).

Access to and Linkage with Healthcare - All Coloradans should be connected with and have access to needed personal health care services that include primary care, maternal and child health care, oral health care, specialty care, and mental health care. All Coloradans should be connected with and have access to needed personal health care services that include primary care, maternal and child health care, oral health care, specialty care, and mental health care.