

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: April 2024 (reflects activity in March 2024)

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In the News

- El Paso County Public Health (EPCPH) Director Susan Wheelan was featured in a [front-page Gazette article on a local mental health initiative](#). Spearheaded by Colorado Springs’ First Lady Abbey Mobolade, working closely with Director Wheelan and EPCPH, the article highlighted the intentional and collaborative communitywide efforts to increase awareness of and access to vital mental health resources. The insightful and in-depth article also garnered coverage from the [Gazette Editorial Board in a separate piece](#) calling attention to the importance of this initiative, and the importance of taking local action to improve mental health for citizens throughout El Paso County.
- The [New Falcon Herald featured an article from EPCPH Co-Medical Director Dr. Paul Mayer with tips to support heart health](#), noting the importance of key factors such as a healthy diet and physical activity in supporting long-term cardiovascular health.

Program Spotlight

Each year, the first week of April marks National Public Health Week, a time to recognize and celebrate the incredible contributions of public health agencies across the nation. The 2024 theme of “Protecting, Connecting and Thriving: We are all Public Health,” is reflective of EPCPH’s mission to promote and protect public health and environmental quality through *people, prevention, and partnerships*. This month’s program spotlight features a brief snapshot of the accomplishments of programs throughout the agency, a testament to the work of EPCPH’s highly skilled and dedicated workforce.

People

Recently, our Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) program added a Spanish language community health liaison to the team. This addition has allowed NFP to better serve the monolingual Spanish-speaking population, while also offering culturally competent care to NFP families. In the six months since hiring the liaison, it has increased NFP’s ability to serve this population more than four-fold.

Prevention

Our Reproductive Health Clinic (RHC) continues to provide high-quality care to women of reproductive age at the Criminal Justice Center as part of a congenital syphilis grant. This innovative grant aims to reduce new cases of congenital syphilis by screening, identifying, and treating syphilis in this population. A unique partnership between public safety and public health, this ground-breaking work has been presented to local public health agencies across the nation, in addition to the National Association of County and City Health Officials.

Partnerships

Fountain Valley Communities That Care (FV-CTC) recently hosted a one-day youth summit, “Amplifying Youth Voices,” at Widefield Parks and Recreation. With 18 youth participants, the goal of the summit was to empower youth in Fountain Valley to use their voices to create change in the communities in which they live. United around the shared goal of reducing and preventing youth substance use, youth were taught how to use evidence-based skills and resources to create safe, youth-oriented spaces, while advocating for themselves and their peers.

Our work is grounded in a vision for all El Paso County (EPC) residents to live in thriving communities where everyone has the opportunity to achieve optimal health. EPCPH’s staff, who are tasked with carrying out EPCPH’s mission, vision, and values, do so with the utmost professionalism and care for the communities they serve. We remain laser focused on bringing together individuals, families, partners, and communities to support the highest levels of health and well-being across EPC.

National Public Health Week provides the opportunity to shine a spotlight on our local public health heroes, who work tirelessly to improve community health.

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 assure 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 provision of seven Foundational Capabilities and five Foundational Services.

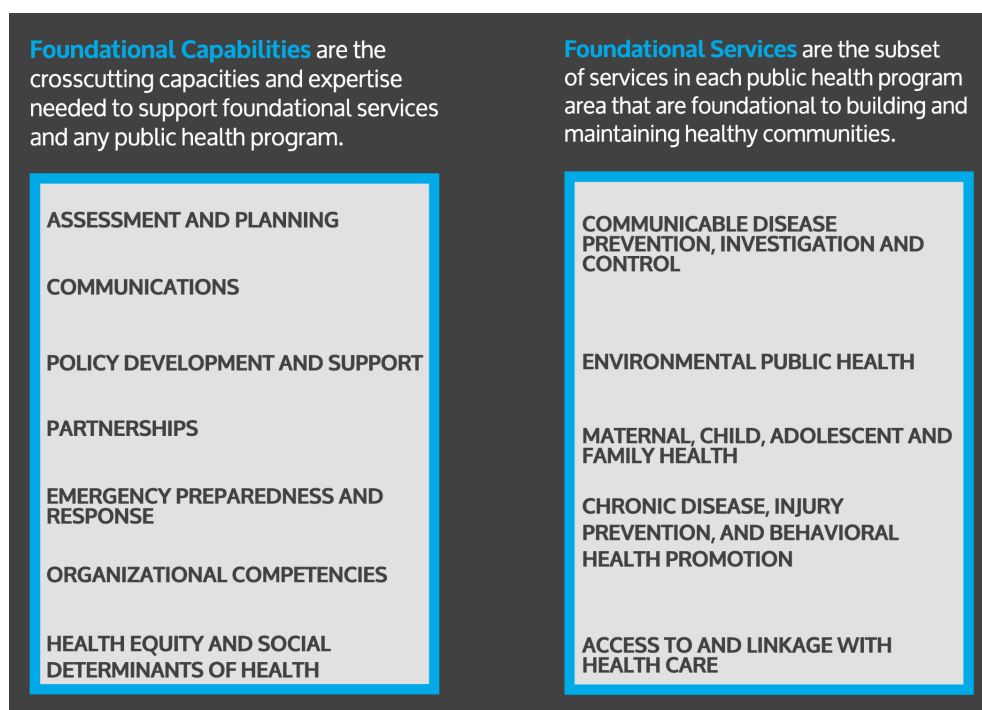


Image courtesy of the [Colorado Association of Local Public Health Officials](#).

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

Annual Performance Measures

Four organizational pillars were identified in the 2023-2027 strategic plan: 1) health data and communication, 2) community trust and engagement, 3) partnerships, and 4) workforce. Each division and office contributes to the development of an annual work plan, also known as performance measures, which aligns with the four organizational pillars. The annual work plan is used for internal monitoring and performance management at the division and office level. The work plan is tracked monthly to determine progress and notes are reflected for each objective. Updates are provided quarterly to stakeholders. At the close of each year, the updated work plan is reviewed and a percentage of completed objectives is calculated to determine how EPCPH is meeting its objectives.

Quarter One Work Plan Highlights (January 2024 – March 2024):

Health Data & Communication

- A redesigned EPCPH website was launched in February to improve access to public health information. The new website is intended to be modern, easy-to-navigate, and ADA compliant. Additionally, a new internal SharePoint site was launched to assure all EPCPH staff have access to reference materials and forms, improving efficiency and accessibility.
- The processes for internal all-staff and management team meetings were updated to improve communication and coordination across the agency.
- The communicable disease program continued to disseminate a bi-monthly “What’s Going Around” report to community partners.
- Clinical Services staff provided travel health education to 85 students at Fountain Valley School.
- Epidemiologist supported several key internal data requests in March:
 - In conjunction with EPCPH co-medical director, provided updated youth suicide data summary and data visuals, including 2023 provisional data, to support a presentation to the Youth Suicide Prevention Workgroup.
 - Provided demographic and community descriptor data to FV-CTC to support a better understanding of the communities they serve, and to support data-driven decision-making for the coalition when planning and prioritizing community projects.
 - Provided a comprehensive data review to the injury and violence prevention planner in support of a presentation on the topic of impaired driving.
 - Provided relevant state data to Maternal and Child Health (MCH) program manager for a grant to support children and youth with special health care needs.

Community Trust & Engagement

- The care coordination program at EPCPH aims to improve access to, and awareness of, health care resources through information, resource activities, and outreach events. This team works to build rapport with residents and community partners through one-on-one interactions and community engagement events. 384 referrals were received in the first quarter.
- The Women, Infants and Children (WIC) mobile services team conducted 51 clinics across 13 partner locations in the first quarter of 2024.

Partnerships

- The Emergency Preparedness and Response staff continued to partner with the Pikes Peak Regional Office of Emergency Management (PPROEM), participating in an Extreme Cold Weather Workgroup and after-action meeting, in addition to participation in the Emergency Support Function-8 (ESF-8) Collaborative which is a partnership with the South-Central Healthcare Coalition and PPROEM. The goal of ESF-8 is to build and maintain strong relationships with health and medical response partners to develop a collaborative approach to response activities during public health emergencies and mass casualty events.

- Two representatives from the Environmental Health (EH) Division met with new Environmental Health staff from Fort Carson on March 22. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss current and future collaboration efforts between EPCPH and Fort Carson’s Environmental Health Program.

Workforce

- Following the implementation of EH fee revisions, four EH specialists and one program assistant have been hired and onboarded.
- Public health information officer organized a “Legislative 101” session for EPCPH’s Management and Executive Teams on March 6. The session, presented by the Colorado Association of Local Public Health Officials’ (CALPHO) policy director, featured in-depth look at the legislative process in Colorado.

Communications

- The bilingual communications specialist participated in a panel on “Inclusive Language in Emergency Situations” at a local Crisis Communications Network meeting. The panel of esteemed experts share their valuable insights on the topic, highlighting the different languages spoken in Colorado, with a focus on strategies to expand inclusive communication to EPC communities during emergencies.
- EH hosted a webinar open to all retail food establishments in EPC on March 21, 2024. The webinar allowed licensed establishments to ask questions about Colorado’s adoption of the new food code. Eighty establishments attended the event. Industry partners provided positive feedback following the event expressing their appreciation for the opportunity to learn more about the code and for providing a forum to ask questions.

Emergency Preparedness and Response

EPCPH continues to enhance cross-departmental collaboration and readiness through weekly internal meeting for emerging disease response and coordination, situational readiness, and agency capacity to respond to potential outbreaks related to measles, meningococcal disease, and mpox.

Social Determinants of Health

NFP helped to navigate some of the determinants of health for their clients enrolled in their program by providing 40 referrals on behalf of 27 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 WIC.

Foundational Public Health Services

Communicable Disease Prevention, Investigation and Control

Members of the Tuberculosis (TB) program staff attended the World TB Day educational event at National Jewish Hospital in Denver, where they learned about topics related to TB, including best practice in the treatment of pregnant mothers who are positive for TB. The TB staff brought this knowledge back to share with the rest of the TB program staff, continuing to foster the

establishment of EPCPH's TB program as a hub for community partners to turn to for subject matter expertise in the realm of TB.

RHC's Syphilis Prevention Public Health Nurse presented at the Denver Metro STI Coalition's quarterly meeting on the grant work she has been conducting in the EPC Criminal Justice Center (CJC). The presentation showcased the collaborative nature of the program between EPCPH and the El Paso County Sheriff's Office (EPSO) to combat the rising rates of congenital syphilis in EPC.

RHC's Public Health Nurse created an internal behavioral health referral system with CJC's Jail Based Behavioral Services for patients seen by the public health nurse who have behavioral health concerns and need/want to be seen by CJC's behavioral health team. In addition to the internal referral system, the public health nurse worked with the Jail Based Behavioral Services to have EPCPH's RHC and Care Coordination Team included on release paperwork for inmates as a resource once they are released from CJC, connecting them to additional community resources in their transition back into the community.

EPCPH's Immunization (IZ) Program conducted several outreach vaccination clinics in March including, Marian House, Deerfield Hills Community Center, and Hillside Community Center, to help prevent disease while helping address health equity.

Environmental Public Health

On January 17, 2024, the State of Colorado Board of Health adopted the 2022 Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Food Code by reference that included changes to the Colorado Retail Food Establishment Regulations. On March 16, 2024, those changes became effective with one exception; the requirement to have a Certified Food Protection Manager (CFPM) as the person in charge on-site, is delayed until March 1, 2025. The State Board of Health delayed the implementation of the CFPM requirement to give owners and managers more time to receive necessary training. Establishments that are currently exempt from this requirement such as Limited Retail Food Establishments will continue to be exempt under the new food code. Examples of exempt establishments include grocery stores without deli's, most coffee shops and convenience stores that do not prepare food.

Maternal, Child, Adolescent and Family Health

WIC saw a rapid increase in referrals through the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) referral system, from 568 referrals in December to 823 in January. WIC is working diligently to contact these referrals to increase enrollment and ensure all eligible individuals can receive services if desired. Additionally, WIC enrollment has continued to increase with February reaching 14,100. For comparison, February 2023 enrollment was 12,860. This is the highest monthly enrollment since 2019.

Chronic Disease, Injury Prevention and Behavioral Health Promotion

The injury and violence prevention planner attended the Safety, Wellness, and Support Resource Fair at Colorado College to promote traffic safety and impaired driving prevention. Approximately 500 students attended the event.

Tobacco Education and Prevention Partnership (TEPP) received a grant from the Colorado School of Public Health (CSPH) to educate pregnant women about the harms of tobacco use and to promote the utilization of the Baby and Me Tobacco Free Program (BMTFP). The BMTFP is an evidence-based, smoking cessation program proven to reduce the burden of tobacco on the pregnant and postpartum population. This grant provides \$20,000 per fiscal year, for three years, and will support select WIC staff who work at mobile clinic sites to promote the BMTFP among their clients throughout EPC. Additionally, TEPP will promote the BMTFP among other internal direct service programs as well as external community partners. Referrals will be made to CSPH and BMTFP staff will enroll the woman, and/or partner in the program and provide free cessation counseling services, along with electronic cash vouchers for those who quit and stay tobacco free.

As of April 8th, 1,078 Narcan nasal kits (2,156 doses) have been distributed to community members and partners. The Narcan distribution program was initiated in September of 2023 and since that time, 50 public health staff have been trained in Narcan administration and distribution. Staff receive Narcan user guides and national resources to be distributed with every kit, and community organizations requesting Narcan kits receive additional handouts which include opioid prevention resources, training resources and state resources. Key partnerships for this project include Family Promise, the Youth Suicide Prevention Coalition, the City of Colorado Springs, Diversus Health, TESSA of Colorado Springs, the Clerk and Records office, the District Attorney's office, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), Springs Rescue Mission, faith-based community partners, private clinics, and small businesses.

Appendix A: Upcoming Events

Event	Date
Lifesavers Conference	April 6-9
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs Conference	April 13-16
2024 Suicide Research Symposium (Virtual – no cost) https://www.suicideresearchsymposium.com	April 17-19
Injury & Violence Prevention Professionals Symposium	April 27-30
Epidemiology Conference	May 2
Surviving the Storm Gala – Pikes Peak Suicide Prevention	May 4

Appendix B: Environmental Health Activity

Environment Health Activity	2024 Total <i>As of 03/31/2024</i>	2023 Total	2022 Total
Air Quality Construction Permits	28	136	163
Air Quality Open Burn Permits	10	51	19
Air Quality Complaints	9	23	38
Animal Bites Reported	295	1091	877
Body Art Routine Inspections	34	112	86
Body Art Follow-up Inspections	1	7	8
Body Art Complaints	6	31	22
Child Care Regular Inspections	48	202	138
Child Care Follow-up Inspections	1	6	15
Child Care Complaints	8	20	8
Child Care High Risk Field Consults	9	12	18
Land-Use Planning Review	62	204	232
Onsite Wastewater Treatment System (OWTS) Pumper Truck Inspections	46	77	85
OWTS Final Inspections	99	551	576

Environment Health Activity	2024 Total	2023 Total	2022 Total
OWTS Partial Inspections	24	227	235
OWTS Application Design Reviews	71	490	558
OWTS Design Revision Requests	9	120	221
OWTS Design Revision (add) Requests	5	63	0
OWTS New Permit Applications	43	232	351
OWTS Repair Permit Applications	45	266	276
OWTS Modification Permit Applications	1	19	15
OWTS Acceptance Doc for Title Transfer	133	731	866
OWTS Soil and Site Evaluations	56	376	425
OWTS Complaints	7	30	27
OWTS O&M Systems	25	116	65
Recreational Water Safety Inspections	121	313	295
Recreational Water Follow-up Inspections	8	22	17
Recreational Water Complaints	4	14	9
Retail Food Establishment (RFE) Regular Inspections	602	2481	1908
RFE Re-Inspections	66	315	171
RFE Complaint Investigations	111	517	391
RFE Plan Reviews	62	210	193
School Safety Regular Inspections	13	24	13
School Safety Complaints	6	15	4
School Safety Self-Certification Audits	23	45	15
School Safety Self-Certifications Returned	1	327	332
Waste Tire Facilities Regular Inspections	35	140	115
Waste Tire Follow-up Inspections	0	0	1

Appendix C: 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									
Private Wells	299	267	290									
Totals	647	607	642									

Appendix D: 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		
May		
June		
July		
August		
September		
October		
November		
December		

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

Appendix E: 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	
May	222	
June	245	
July	186	
August	215	
September	213	
October	231	
November	230	
December	188	

Appendix F: Disease Prevention and Control

Category	Disease	2024 As of 03/31/2024	2023	2022
Food/Waterborne Diseases				
	Campylobacter	32	189	118
	Cryptosporidium	4	42	25
	Cyclosporiasis	0	8	10
	Giardia	19	68	47
	Hepatitis A	0	2	3
	Legionellosis	0	19	11
	Salmonella	17	89	54
	Shigella	14	46	57
	Shiga Toxin-producing E. coli (STEC)	13	59	42
	Vibriosis	3	9	7
Food/Waterborne Diseases Totals		102	531	373
Viral Hepatitis				
	Hepatitis B (acute)	0	2	3
	Hepatitis B (chronic)	21	95	92

Category	Disease	As of 03/31/2024	2023	2022
	Hepatitis C (acute)	0	1	3
	Hepatitis C (chronic)	56	255	296
Viral Hepatitis Totals		77	353	394
Healthcare Associated Infections				
	Carbapenem-Resistant Acinetobacter baumannii (CRAB)	0	0	1
	Carbapenem Non- susceptible Enterobacteriaceae (CRE)	13	58	47
	Carbapenem-Resistant Pseudomonas Aeruginosa (CRPA)	9	45	43
Healthcare Associated Infections Totals		22	103	91
Vaccine Preventable Diseases				
	Haemophilus influenzae (H. flu)	6	18	14
	Measles	0	0	0
	Meningococcal Disease	0	1	0
	Mumps	0	2	3
	Pertussis	6	24	29
	Rubella	0	0	0
	Varicella	15	33	21
Vaccine Preventable Diseases Totals		27	78	67
Respiratory Diseases				
	Hospitalized COVID- 19	247	1,091	2,847
	Hospitalized Influenza*	300	266	529
	Hospitalized RSV	267	161	24
Respiratory Disease Total		814	1,518	3,400

*Flu Seasons:

- October 3, 2021- May 21, 2022; 188
- October 2, 2022- May 20, 2023; 395
- October 1, 2023-May 18, 2024; 341

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

2023 Month	Complaint Received by EH that Mentions Foodborne Illness	Complaint Received from EPCPH CD Team Requesting EH to Complete a 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 by EH that Mentions Foodborne Illness	Complaint Received from EPCPH CD Team Requesting EH to Complete a Foodborne Illness Investigation
January	1	0
February	3	1
March	22	2
April		
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				
May				
June				
July				
August				
September				
October				
November				
December				

Appendix G: 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	
May	161	
June	198	
July	147	
August	225	
September	164	
October	170	
November	152	
December	153	

Appendix H: 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			
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 to 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.