

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: February 2024 (reflects activity in January 2024)

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In the News

KOAA news station featured three articles from El Paso County Public Health (EPCPH) in January focusing on the [Protecting kids from fentanyl act](#), [respiratory virus hospitalizations](#), and [testing for radon](#).

In its January monthly edition, the New Falcon Herald featured an [article from EPCPH Co-Medical Director Dr. Paul Mayer which featured five health tips](#) to support residents in their New Year’s resolutions.

KRDO also supported EPCPH’s radon awareness and action campaign in early January with a [story supporting radon testing and educating on its importance](#).

Program Spotlight

Since its establishment in 2019, the Public Health Data & Analytics (PHDA) program has been leading the way in creating innovative strategies to enhance transparency and increase easy access to data. When the pandemic officially arrived in El Paso County in March 2020, the PHDA team became an integral component of EPCPH's response and Incident Command Structure (ICS). A publicly accessible COVID-19 dashboard was quickly developed, and regular communication with community partners and stakeholders assured that the information needed was clearly defined, and that the PDHA team was able to efficiently generate the data needed to inform the community's response.

With a continued focus on building our data infrastructure and in collaboration with data modernization efforts among state and federal agencies, EPCPH is refining methods to expand reporting capacity.

For the first time, EPCPH will be able to visualize and have interactive components to support the Community Health Assessment. Much of the recent work in this realm has focused on finalizing two public-facing data dashboards which will feature in-depth information on the topics of suicide and drug overdose deaths. The primary purpose of these dashboards, scheduled to launch in early February, is to enhance transparency and increase access to timely and actionable local data. This data provides context around local trends, creating a more in-depth understanding of health issues while also helping to inform community partners, stakeholders, and residents of data-driven strategies to address these issues.

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.

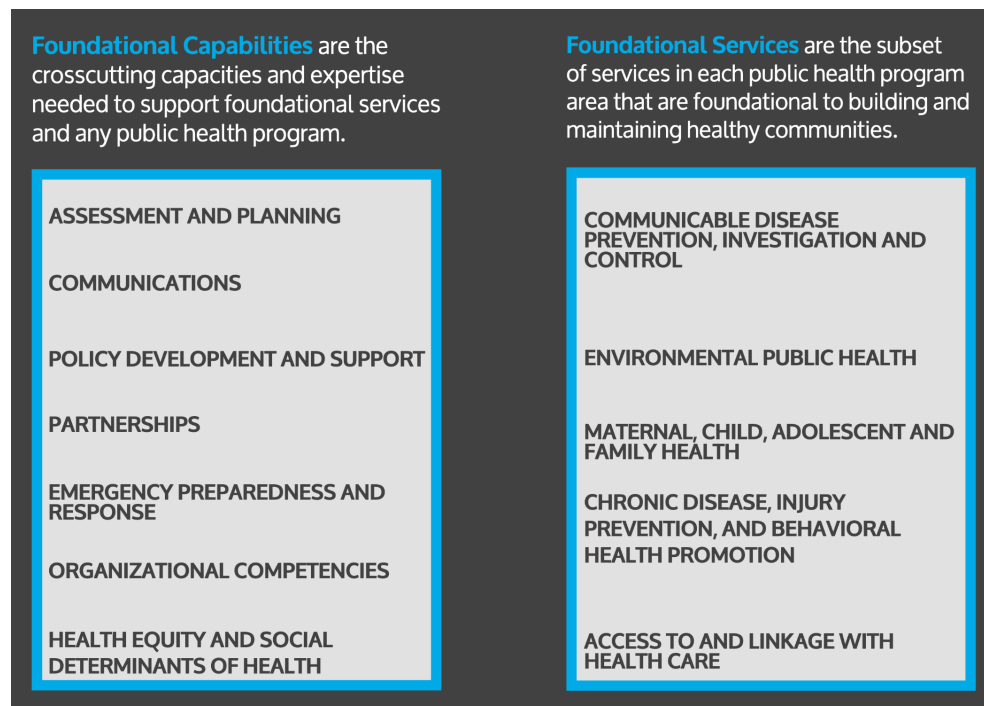


Image courtesy of the [Colorado Association of Local Public Health Officials](#).

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

The Public Health Data & Analytics (PHDA) program is finalizing two dashboards on suicide and overdose deaths which are scheduled to launch in early February. The dashboards mark the first time that EPCPH will pair data visualizations with leading health issues in the Community Health Assessment.

Communications

EPCPH was featured in television news coverage of several emerging topics during January, including radon and respiratory season. The total estimated viewership for these television stories is more than 78,400 and the estimated earned media value is more than \$6,900.

In recognition of January as National Radon Action Month, the Office of Communication (OoC), in collaboration with Environmental Health, worked to raise awareness about the dangers of radon and encourage residents to test for radon through a series of targeted outreach efforts:

- Disseminated a [news release](#) which led to media coverage across KOAA, KRDO and Fox 21.
- Paid advertising, supported by a radon grant from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), to increase outreach across the following platforms:
 - KKTV
 - Tigre Radio
 - Facebook and Instagram

In January, the OoC made significant progress on the website redesign project. The new site, which launched in early February, features a modern and more user-friendly interface, while enhancing ADA digital accessibility.

Emergency Preparedness and Response

The EPCPH Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR) team participated as an observer/evaluator in the “Code Black Full-Scale Exercise” at a local hospital. This provided an opportunity to not only strengthen our partnership with local hospitals, but also served as a training opportunity to develop a better understanding of what is taking place in the field during a response. This in turn will enhance our ability to better serve as the ESF8 lead when activated.

Emergency management specialists attended Access and Functional Needs (AFN) University and Colorado Volunteer Mobilizer (CVM) administrator training through the Colorado Division of Homeland Security Emergency Management. Both trainings contribute to strengthening local response capabilities.

Team members participated in the Extreme Cold Weather Workgroup. This group is comprised of a wide range of partners across the community that actively work to support homeless outreach and support the provision of a safe environment for vulnerable populations during extreme cold weather events.

EPR supported Children's Hospital in conducting a comprehensive Hazard Vulnerability Assessment for the entire community. This assessment serves as a valuable tool to conduct a systematic approach to identifying hazards or risks that are most likely to have an impact on a healthcare facility and the surrounding community.

Social Determinants of Health

Care Coordinators attended the 2nd annual Stand Up for Community event hosted by Homeward Pikes Peak. This event targeted outreach to unhoused community members by providing coats, food, survival gear, and services. Care Coordinators connected with 65 individuals and provided resource navigation linking attendees to services offered within the community and at EPCPH.

Foundational Public Health Services

Communicable Disease Prevention, Investigation and Control

The Communicable Disease team attended the Fort Carson Rabies Quarterly Council Committee Meeting.

The EPCPH Communicable Disease and Environmental Health teams partnered to create a Foodborne Illness Task Force. This task force has been established to enhance response to foodborne illness outbreaks in El Paso County.

Since early January, Denver County has faced a concerning outbreak of serogroup Y meningococcal disease (MenY) among individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability. Although no confirmed cases have been reported in El Paso County, EPCPH is taking a proactive approach to collaborate with community partners and offer quadrivalent meningococcal vaccine (MenACWY) to individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability within the local jurisdiction. This vaccine protects against four different strains of the meningococcal bacteria.

EPCPH activated a coordinated response related to a confirmed case of measles in Colorado. Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment officially ended the response activation on January 11th. This case was associated with an international traveler to Arapahoe County who became ill with the measles virus. No further cases were identified. EPCPH conducted an internal hotwash and will be applying lessons learned from this response to enhance response capabilities for the future.

Environmental Public Health

Body Art

Environmental Health attended the Spring Creek Youth Services Center Health Fair on January 12, 2024. At the fair, which drew approximately 45 participants, the team highlighted the importance of utilizing a licensed facility when getting body art procedures and health risks associated with body art in unlicensed facilities. Additionally, the team was able to share educational videos, handouts, and other resources with critical information on the importance of safe body art.

Retail Food

In January, the Colorado Board of Health formally adopted the 2022 FDA Food Code, which will be implemented on March 16, 2024. In anticipation of this transition, EPCPH has been engaging with our partners in the local retail food sector to assist with understanding and compliance. Among the significant amendments, the revised code mandates the presence of a

certified food safety manager during all operational hours where food handling occurs. Retail food establishments have a grace period of one year to comply. The code introduces a stipulation for consumer notification regarding the inclusion of major food allergens in non-packaged food items and necessitates documented protocols for addressing incidents of vomiting and diarrhea.

To support industry adaptation, Environmental Health plans to convene a Food Safety Advisory Group meeting in late February. This session is designed to disseminate additional insights and offer a platform for addressing questions from the industry. Concurrently, the Division of Environmental Health is proactively enhancing internal readiness through staff training focused on the new code, particularly in relation to inspection report documentation.

Maternal, Child, Adolescent and Family Health

Maternal Child Health (MCH) presented part two of a training series related to social and emotional wellbeing at CDPHE's HCP statewide meeting. HCP is a program for children and youth with special health care needs. The audience consisted of Title V care coordinators from across the state and other state partners. This training focused on social and emotional wellbeing topics and resiliency. There was a total of 22 participants.

MCH and members from Colorado Springs School District 11's Family School Community Partnership, provided social and emotional wellbeing training to Columbine Elementary School. This elementary school has been selected as a pilot to demonstrate collective support from school staff, community partners, and volunteers. Approximately 28 staff and volunteers were trained in trauma responsive practices that will be utilized in classrooms. MCH and other community partners were celebrated at the January Colorado Springs School District 11 Board of Education meeting for providing support and trauma-responsive training to the district.

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) received a Special Breastfeeding Bonus Award in the amount of \$7,404 from CDPHE. This funding will be used to support advanced lactation training and professional development for staff, lactation supplies, and resources for clients such as milk storage items and clinic teaching materials.

EPCPH's WIC program was recognized for an innovative approach to lactation support utilizing breastfeeding toolkits in prenatal appointments for clients. The toolkits have been recognized as a best practice and were included as part of the funding model and recommendations for the WIC Special Breastfeeding Bonus Award. The practice will now be implemented throughout Colorado WIC programs.

Chronic Disease, Injury Prevention and Behavioral Health Promotion

The Injury and Violence Prevention Planner (IVPP) participated in the Harrison School District 2 Community Café and Resource Fair at Carmel Community School. Information about the Graduated Driver's License process, car seat safety checks, traffic safety outreach, and education opportunities were provided to 50 teachers and principals from D2.

The IVPP co-hosted a traffic safety day for 500 K-12 students in Calhan School District RJ-1. Activities to teach students about staying safe on the road and around vehicles included a distracted driving pedal bike obstacle course, seatbelt musical chairs/relay races, impaired

driving simulations, and traffic safety trivia games. Students participated in a mock traffic stop and tour the cab of a semi-truck. Community partners included DriveSmart CO, CommonSpirit, Calhan Fire and Police, Sammie's Sunshine, Students Against Destructive Decisions, Kids on Bikes, and Teens in the Driver's Seat.

The IVPP assisted with Safe Driving Week at Coronado High School. Activities included a traffic safety table at freshmen orientation night and a winter driving safety expo where students had their car tire air pressure checked and could participate in an icy driving conditions simulation with pedal bikes.

Appendix A: Upcoming Community Events

Event	Department(s) Participating	Date
Conrad Early Learning Center Community Health Fair	CHP/Care Coordination	2/21/2024
Traffic Safety at Mesa Ridge High School	CHP/Injury and Violence Prevention	2/26/24 and 2/29/24
Maternal Child Health (MCH) Community Voice Collaborative	CHP/MCH	2/27/24
Kindergarten Round-Up Resource Fair at Library 21c	CHP/Injury and Violence Prevention, Maternal Child Health, Care Coordination	2/29/24
Falcon School District 49 Community Wellness Night	CHP/Tobacco Education and Prevention Partnership	2/29/24
Kindergarten Round-Up Resource Fair at Library 21c	CHP/Injury and Violence Prevention	3/2/24
2024 Central Colorado Foodshed Gathering	Strategic Initiatives Office/Health Environment Planner	3/8/24
African American Youth Leadership Conference	Fountain Valley – Communities That Care (FV-CTC)	3/9/2024
Cheyenne Mountain School District 12 - Screenagers Viewing	CHP/Youth Suicide Prevention	3/13/24
FV-CTC Youth Summit	FV-CTC	3/16/2024

Appendix B: Environmental Health Activity

The table below captures a snapshot of activities across the Environmental Health (EH) Division. This work is accomplished through science-based risk assessment and policy development, inspections, consultation, education, and regulations designed to protect the food we eat, the water we drink, the air we breathe, and the places we live, work and play.

Environment Health Activity	2024 Total <i>As of 01/31/2024</i>	2023 Total	2022 Total
Air Quality Construction Permits	11	136	163
Air Quality Open Burn Permits	3	51	19
Air Quality Complaints	2	23	38
Animal Bites Reported	90	1091	877
Body Art Routine Inspections	2	112	86
Body Art Follow-up Inspections	0	7	8
Body Art Complaints	4	31	22
Child Care Regular Inspections	18	202	138
Child Care Follow-up Inspections	0	6	15
Child Care Complaints	1	20	8
Child Care High Risk Field Consults	3	12	18
Land-Use Planning Review	22	204	232
Onsite Wastewater Treatment System (OWTS) Pumper Truck Inspections	19	77	85
OWTS Final Inspections	31	551	576
OWTS Partial Inspections	7	227	235
OWTS Application Design Reviews	19	490	558
OWTS Design Revision Requests	8	120	221
OWTS Design Revision (add) Requests	5	63	0
OWTS New Permit Applications	11	232	351
OWTS Repair Permit Applications	14	266	276
OWTS Modification Permit Applications	0	19	15
OWTS Acceptance Doc for Title Transfer	41	731	866
OWTS Soil and Site Evaluations	12	376	425
OWTS Complaints	0	30	27
OWTS O&M Systems	2	116	65
Recreational Water Safety Inspections	24	313	295
Recreational Water Follow-up Inspections	0	22	17
Recreational Water Complaints	2	14	9
Retail Food Establishment (RFE) Regular Inspections	214	2481	1908
RFE Re-Inspections	20	315	171

Environment Health Activity	2024 Total <i>As of 01/31/2024</i>	2023 Total	2022 Total
RFE Complaint Investigations	41	517	391
RFE Plan Reviews	27	210	193
School Safety Regular Inspections	4	24	13
School Safety Complaints	4	15	4
School Safety Self-Certification Audits	3	45	15
School Safety Self-Certifications Returned	0	327	332
Waste Tire Facilities Regular Inspections	14	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											
Private Wells	299											
Totals	647											

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	Vaccines
January	720

Appendix E: Nurse-Family Partnership Client Visits

Month	2023 # of Client Visits	2024 # of Client Visits
January	237	241
February	213	
March	254	
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 01/31/2024	2023	2022
Food/Waterborne Diseases				
	Campylobacter	12	190	118
	Cryptosporidium	3	42	25
	Cyclosporiasis	0	8	10
	Giardia	4	68	47
	Hepatitis A	0	2	3
	Legionellosis	0	19	11
	Salmonella	4	89	54
	Shigella	4	46	57
	Shiga Toxin-producing E. coli (STEC)	7	59	42
	Vibriosis	2	9	7
Food/Waterborne Diseases Totals		36	532	373
Viral Hepatitis				
	Hepatitis B (acute)	0	2	3
	Hepatitis B (chronic)	8	91	92
	Hepatitis C (acute)	0	1	3
	Hepatitis C (chronic)	17	256	296
Viral Hepatitis Totals		25	350	394
Healthcare Associated Infections				
	Carbapenem-Resistant Acinetobacter baumannii (CRAB)	0	0	1
	Carbapenem Non- susceptible Enterobacteriaceae (CRE)	3	57	47
	Carbapenem-Resistant Pseudomonas Aeruginosa (CRPA)	3	44	43
Healthcare Associated Infections totals		6	101	91

Vaccine Preventable Diseases				
	Haemophilus influenzae (H. flu)	1	18	14
	Measles	0	0	0
	Meningococcal Disease	0	1	0
	Mumps	0	2	3
	Pertussis	0	24	29
	Rubella	3	0	0
	Varicella	3	33	21
Vaccine Preventable Diseases Totals		7	78	67
Respiratory Diseases				103,347
	Hospitalized COVID-19	99	1,092	529
	Hospitalized Influenza*	157	265	24
	Hospitalized RSV	141	154	
Respiratory Disease Total		397	1,511	

*Flu Seasons:

- September 27, 2020- May 22, 2021; 2
- 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	Foodborne Illness Complaints	# Referred to Env. Health
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	Foodborne Illness Complaints	# Referred to Env. Health
January	20	1

Table 3 – Annual rabies control activities

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

2024 Month	Rabies Related Calls	Animals Tested	Positive Results	PEP Recommendations
January	12	1	0	0

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.