

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: June 2024 (reflects activity from May 2024)

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In the News

- In recognition of Mental Health Awareness Month, the [May edition of the New Falcon Herald](#) featured an article from Youth Resilience and Suicide Prevention Planner Brittany Riffle and Behavioral Health Planner Maggie Youkhana. The article featured an in-depth overview of the importance of raising awareness around mental health while reducing stigma and increasing access to resources.
- The Community Health Assessment (CHA) received extensive media coverage across El Paso County outlets. A small snapshot of this coverage can be viewed through stories on [KOAA](#), [KRDO](#), [Fox21](#) and the [Gazette](#).

Program Spotlight

On May 13, El Paso County Public Health (EPCPH) released the [2023 Community Health Assessment \(CHA\)](#). The CHA is a comprehensive evaluation of health needs throughout all El Paso County communities. Its overarching purpose is to identify the leading public health issues throughout the county. The CHA process involved collaboration with the Healthy Community Collaborative (HCC), an inclusive stakeholder group of cross-sector community partners dedicated to improving public health outcomes. Through data analysis and stakeholder engagement, the CHA identified four leading public health issues:

1. Barriers to accessing health care
2. Suicide prevention
3. Drug overdose
4. Housing stability

The CHA was disseminated to the public through a [news release](#) which garnered media coverage across three out of four local TV stations, along with a story in the Gazette. TV media coverage explored many of the key findings in the CHA through 15 various media stories, equating to 87,397 in local viewership and \$19,018 in local publicity value.

Findings from the CHA guides the development of the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), which outlines community-driven strategies to improve health outcomes and address public health disparities throughout El Paso County communities.

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, 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](#).

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

Communications

- On May 21, the Office of Communication, in partnership with Communicable Disease, disseminated a [news release announcing the first rabid animal of the season](#). The news release—which aimed to increase awareness around how rabies spreads along with steps to prevent it—led to media coverage across all four local TV stations, the Gazette and several Denver-based outlets.
- On May 10, EPCPH participated in the second countywide spokesperson media relations training, which aimed to equip staff with key knowledge and strategies to serve as agency spokespersons. The Office of Communication’s public health information officer and deputy public health information officer joined other public information officers (PIOs) from across county departments to facilitate the training. EPCPH’s public health planner, epidemiologist and injury & violence prevention planner attended the training to gain skills needed as spokespersons.

Emergency Preparedness and Response

Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR) staff led the development of an all-staff training session centered on fostering resilience and increasing understanding of the public health emergency operations plan and incident command activation procedures.

Social Determinants of Health

Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) helped address the determinants of health for clients enrolled in their program by providing 28 referrals on behalf of 21 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).

Foundational Public Health Services

Communicable Disease Prevention, Investigation and Control

In May, the first rabid bat of 2024 was identified in El Paso County. Typically, rabies cases in wildlife—including bats—increase during summer months. In anticipation of seasonal increases, Communicable Disease (CD) staff conducted outreach to educate community stakeholders regarding rabies exposure, expected seasonal increases in disease activity and post-exposure prophylaxis assessment and treatment for potentially exposed individuals. Presentations were provided to emergency department staff at UCHHealth and Common Spirit as well as the Humane Society of the Pikes Peak Region.

EPCPH, in partnership with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), hosted the seventh annual Colorado Epidemiology Conference and pre-conference workshop on May 1 and 2. This annual conference represents a unique partnership between state and local agencies, with the opportunity to cultivate a community of learning and professional networking across the state. This year's conference offered a total of 16 presentations, including two plenary sessions and 14 breakout sessions on a variety of topics such as West Nile virus, the opioid response and managing outbreaks in congregate settings. More than 150 people participated in person, with twice as many registered for online participation.

EPCPH's Immunization (IZ) Program conducted several mobile vaccination clinics in May, including First Congregational Church, the annual NAMIWalks event hosted by the National Alliance on Mental Illness, and the El Paso County Criminal Justice Center. These clinics—which focus on bringing services directly into the community—are key in meeting community members where they are in order to help prevent disease.

Maternal, Child, Adolescent and Family Health

In collaboration with Beginnings Birth Center, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) held a special event where WIC clients visited the Valley Hi WIC classroom to shop for free items donated by Beginnings Birth Center for pregnant moms, babies and young children. Items included clothing, coats, shoes, toys, diapers and more. Approximately 49 clients participated in the event.

The Care Coordination team was invited to attend "LEVEL UP! Creative Professionals Night," an Arts and Culture Resource Fair hosted by the Cultural Office of the Pikes Peak Region on May 8. This event was targeted toward artisans and small business owners for the purposes of networking and providing education on community resources. Care Coordinators provided information about services offered at El Paso County Public Health and connected with 32 individuals.

Chronic Disease, Injury Prevention and Behavioral Health Promotion

The Injury and Violence Prevention Planner (IVPP) was interviewed on the [May 21 episode of El Paso County's Beyond the Dais podcast](#), where she spoke about an upcoming impaired driving prevention campaign.

EPCPH was recognized with an award for outstanding community partnership from CommonSpirit's Trauma Services and Injury Prevention Program at the Choose SAFE (seatbelts and Safe Speeds, Avoid Alcohol and Drugs, Focus, Eliminate Distractions) awards ceremony. The IVPP partnered with CommonSpirit Penrose Hospital to help them implement Choose SAFE programming— which focuses on preventing injuries and fatalities for young drivers, passengers, cyclists and pedestrians—and provide outreach at multiple elementary, middle and high schools.

The WIC community outreach planner and the IVPP participated in the Safe Kids Day at Pikes Peak United Way Family Success Center. The event focused on outreach to families and children on a variety of safety and injury prevention topics. WIC provided information on how to make healthy and safe food choices, while the IVPP offered information about animal safety and bite prevention. Other resources offered at the event included free helmets and helmet safety checks education on infant safe sleep, child passenger/car seat safety, pedestrian and cyclist safety, consumer product safety and fire/burn prevention.

Appendix A: Upcoming Events

Event	Department(s) Participating	Date
Widefield Family Health & Fitness Day	Injury and Violence Prevention	6/8/2024
Pride	Tobacco Education and Prevention Partnership; Maternal and Child Health; Immunizations; Nurse-Family Partnership; Injury and Violence Prevention	6/8-6/9/2024
Juneteenth Health Fair	Tobacco Education and Prevention Partnership; Care Coordination; Injury and Violence Prevention	6/15/2024
Immunizations Clinic at Penrose Library	Immunizations	6/20/2024
Catholic Charities Summer BBQ and Resource Fair	Care Coordination	6/20/2024
Calhan Summer Fest	Injury and Violence Prevention	7/12/2024
El Paso County Fair	Tobacco Education and Prevention Partnership and Care Coordination	7/16-7/17/2024
Pikes Peak United Way Community Block Party	Injury and Violence Prevention	7/20/2024
Tri-Lakes Cares	Care Coordinators	7/26/2024
2024 Walk like MADD Colorado Springs	Injury and Violence Prevention	8/24/2024
Ponte la Mochila	Tobacco Education and Prevention Partnership; Maternal and Child Health; Immunizations; Nurse-Family Partnership; Injury and Violence Prevention	8/24/2024
Calhan Safety Event	Injury and Violence Prevention	8/30/2024

Appendix B: Environmental Health Activity

Environment Health Activity	2024 Total <i>As of 06/01/2024</i>	2023 Total	2022 Total
Air Quality Construction Permits	49	136	163
Air Quality Open Burn Permits	15	51	19
Air Quality Complaints	13	23	38
Animal Bites Reported	496	1091	877
Body Art Routine Inspections	51	112	86
Body Art Follow-up Inspections	1	7	8
Body Art Complaints	7	31	22
Child Care Regular Inspections	103	202	138

Child Care Follow-up Inspections	6	6	15
Child Care Complaints	10	20	8
Child Care High Risk Field Consults	9	12	18
Land-Use Planning Review	113	204	232
Onsite Wastewater Treatment System (OWTS) Pumper Truck Inspections	55	77	85
OWTS Final Inspections	183	551	576
OWTS Partial Inspections	59	227	235
OWTS Application Design Reviews	137	490	558
OWTS Design Revision Requests	22	120	221
OWTS Design Revision (add) Requests	5	63	0
OWTS New Permit Applications	67	232	351
OWTS Repair Permit Applications	87	266	276
OWTS Modification Permit Applications	2	19	15
OWTS Acceptance Doc for Title Transfer	281	731	866
OWTS Soil and Site Evaluations	104	376	425
OWTS Complaints	12	30	27
OWTS O&M Systems	40	116	65
Recreational Water Safety Inspections	129	313	295
Recreational Water Follow-up Inspections	11	22	17
Recreational Water Complaints	5	14	9
Retail Food Establishment (RFE) Regular Inspections	1119	2481	1908
RFE Re-Inspections	107	315	171
RFE Complaint Investigations	189	517	391
RFE Plan Reviews	122	210	193
School Safety Regular Inspections	16	24	13
School Safety Complaints	7	15	4
School Safety Self-Certification Audits	45	45	15
School Safety Self-Certifications Returned	1	327	332
Waste Tire Facilities Regular Inspections	53	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	321	466							
Private Wells	299	267	290	377	364							
Totals	647	607	642	698	830							

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	674	35
May	693	20
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	272
May	222	221
June	245	
July	186	
August	215	
September	213	
October	231	
November	230	
December	188	

Appendix F: Disease Prevention and Control

Category	Disease	2024 <i>As of 06/01/2024</i>	2023	2022
Food/Waterborne Diseases				
	Campylobacter	67	184	118
	Cryptosporidium	8	41	25
	Cyclosporiasis	0	8	10
	Giardia	22	68	47
	Hepatitis A	1	2	3
	Legionellosis	0	19	11
	Salmonella	38	87	54
	Shigella	26	46	57
	Shiga Toxin-producing E. coli (STEC)	20	58	42
	Vibriosis	5	9	7
Food/Waterborne Diseases Totals		187	522	373
Viral Hepatitis				
	Hepatitis B (acute)	0	2	3
	Hepatitis B (chronic)	13	95	92
	Hepatitis C (acute)	0	1	3
	Hepatitis C (chronic)	41	255	296
Viral Hepatitis Totals		54	353	394
Healthcare Associated Infections				
	Carbapenem-Resistant Acinetobacter baumannii (CRAB)	0	0	1
	Carbapenem Non- susceptible Enterobacteriaceae (CRE)	30	58	47
	Carbapenem-Resistant Pseudomonas Aeruginosa (CRPA)	21	45	43
Healthcare Associated Infections Totals		51	104	91

Vaccine Preventable Diseases				
	Haemophilus influenzae (H. flu)	8	18	14
	Measles	0	0	0
	Meningococcal Disease	0	1	0
	Mumps	1	2	3
	Pertussis	25	24	29
	Rubella	0	0	0
	Varicella	14	33	21
Vaccine Preventable Diseases Totals		48	78	67
Respiratory Diseases				
	Hospitalized COVID-19	350	1,091	2,847
	Hospitalized Influenza*	370	261	529
	Hospitalized RSV	322	149	24
Respiratory Disease Total		1,042	1,524	3,400

*Flu Seasons:

- October 3, 2021- May 21, 2022; 188
- October 2, 2022- May 20, 2023; 399
- October 1, 2023-May 18, 2024; 586

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 Communicable Disease 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 Communicable Disease Team Requesting EH to Complete a Foodborne Illness Investigation
January	1	0
February	3	1
March	22	2
April	23	2
May	20	0
June		
July		
August		
September		
October		
November		
December		

Table 3 – Annual rabies control activities

Year	Rabid animals total	Animal type
2024	1	Bat
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	44	7	1	7
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	184
May	161	172
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	1/4	0	7
May	0/1	0	6
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.