

# 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:** October 2024 (reflects activity in September 2024)

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## In the News

- [The Colorado Springs Gazette](#) featured an article on a resolution passed by the El Paso County Board of Health regarding a proposed amendment which outlines a prohibition on retail marijuana establishments within the City of Colorado Springs. The Board’s resolution stated its support for the City of Colorado Springs Charter Amendment ballot measure and its opposition to the City of Colorado Springs ballot measure enacting an ordinance to allow for retail marijuana businesses within the City.
- [The September edition of the New Falcon Herald](#) featured an article from El Paso County Public Health (EPCPH) Emergency Preparedness and Response Program Manager Janel McNair in recognition of September as National Preparedness Month. The article highlighted how communities, families, individuals and businesses across the nation are taking proactive steps to enhance their readiness for emergencies and disasters.

## 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.

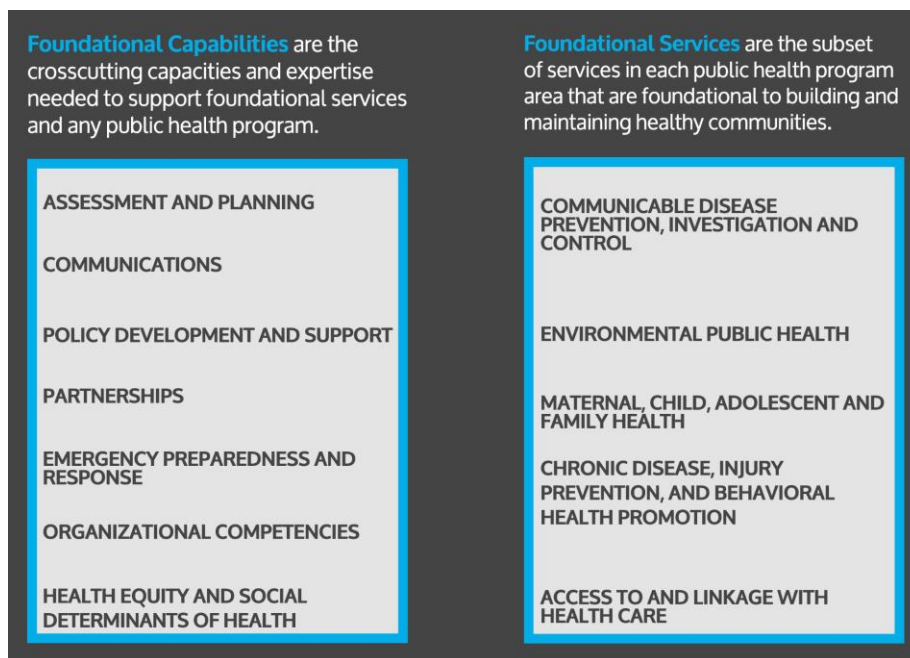


Image courtesy of the [Colorado Association of Local Public Health Officials](#).

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.

### **Staffing Update**

- The agency's turnover rate has fluctuated from 18.2 percent in 2019 to 31.6 percent in 2022. EPCPH turnover decreased to 23.4 percent in 2023 and is at 20.1 percent year-to-date in 2024. Turnover is measured by the number of separations per month divided by the average number of full-time employees (as verified by the Society for Human Resource Management). It does not account for internal employee movements such as promotions, transfers, retirements, county transfers, etc. The national turnover rate in 2022 in the Public Health sector was 46 percent according to the Public Health Workforce Interest and Needs Survey (PH WINS). National turnover rates are provided every two years and data for 2022 will be captured in the 2024 PH WINS.

## **Foundational Public Health Capabilities**

### **Assessment and Planning**

- The Public Health Data & Analytics (PHDA) team published updates to the suicide and overdose dashboards, with 2023 data now available to the community in English and Spanish. To view the dashboards, visit:  
[www.elpasocountyhealth.org/community-health-data-reports/data-dashboards-2/](http://www.elpasocountyhealth.org/community-health-data-reports/data-dashboards-2/)
- The PHDA team launched a request tool for programs and external partners to get help finding, analyzing and presenting data, or identifying ways to apply new technology to their processes to increase efficiency in the delivery of services.
- On Sept. 5, the PHDA supervisor attended the Colorado Springs Business Journal's kick-off summit which informed the community on the latest economic trends. Dr. Tatiana Bailey of Data-Driven Economic Strategies (DDES) and Bryce Cooke, head economist of the Colorado Office of State Planning and Budgeting, presented local, state and national data.
- During the week of Sept. 23, members of the PHDA team attended the Public Health in the Rockies conference in Keystone, CO, to network with public health professionals from around the state and explore practices that could be applied in El Paso County.
- In alignment with the requirements for the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB), EPCPH is finalizing the 2024 annual report submission due to PHAB by Dec. 31, 2024. Efforts have been made to streamline the annual report process, in addition to the upcoming 2025 reaccreditation process, in terms of public health program input, secondary reviews and executive approvals.

### **Communications**

- EPCPH was featured in television and print news coverage of several emerging topics in September, including World Suicide Awareness Day, marijuana ballot issues, COVID-19 cases rising, and respiratory season. The TV news coverage resulted in 15 stories totaling nearly 380,594 in local viewership and nearly \$11,312 in earned media value.
- The Office of Communication (OoC) supported Commissioner Gonzalez during a community townhall at the Public Health South building in Fountain, CO. The townhall provide local government officials an opportunity to share their insight on issues affecting El Paso County. Residents also had an opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback on the topics presented. This was Commissioner Gonzalez's last community townhall event prior to his term end on Dec. 31, 2024.

## Partnerships

- Nurse-Family Partnership and the Colorado Community Health Alliance (CCHA) jointly hosted a quarterly Community Advisory Board meeting, bringing together a variety of health care professionals and community resources that serve families and young children in El Paso County. Presenters included Jamie Morris from EPCPH's Reproductive Health Clinic, who spoke to syphilis rates, treatment and prevention, and Maggie Youkhana, who presented on the new Pikes Peak Rising 360 behavioral health self-help platform.
- The Reproductive Health Clinic manager facilitated a joint shadow day at the El Paso County Criminal Justice Center for Arapahoe County Public Health and members of El Paso County Sheriff's Office (EPSO). The goal was to help Arapahoe County understand the implementation process of STI testing in the jail setting, helping to foster trusting community partnerships with other counties.
- On Sept. 6, the PHDA team toured the El Paso County Coroner's Office to establish relationships and discuss opportunities for sharing data, including a mapping project of annual deaths due to suspected overdose.
- Between September 2023 – September 2024, membership of the Healthy Community Collaborative (HCC) increased by 64 community partner representatives. This increased engagement offers wider access to resources and capacity for implementing the goals and objectives from the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP).
- EPCPH is partnering with the City of Colorado Springs Housing and Vitality department, through the HCC, to adopt newly developed housing initiatives to support the 2024-2028 CHIP efforts toward addressing housing stability.
- Director Wheelan shared agency-wide information regarding EPCPH services, and Communicable Disease program manager Haley Zachary presented information regarding respiratory illness and prevention to nearly 80 attendees at the September Latino Community Luncheon on Sept. 11, 2024.
- Public Health initiated a collaborative for EPCPH professionals and military partners to share information, promote collaboration and discuss key public health initiatives impacting the community. The goal of the collaborative is to discuss shared objectives, identify essential areas of strategic partnership, develop coordinated mechanisms to strengthen communication, address health challenges and improve community resilience. Representatives included Fort Carson, Schriever Space Force Base, United States Air Force Academy and Peterson Space Force Base.
- Director Wheelan was surprised and honored to receive the Latina of the Year award for demonstrated outstanding leadership in the Colorado Springs community. This award was presented by the Latina Equity Foundation at the Fiestas Patrias event held Sept. 14-15 in downtown Colorado Springs.

## **Organizational Competencies**

- In September, the Office of Communication (OoC) began working through an audit of the EPCPH website to comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) version 2.1, which was passed into Colorado law on July 1, 2024. The updated WCAG guidelines are created to assure technology accessibility for users with sensory, cognitive and mobility disabilities and to enhance usability for all individuals regardless of ability. The EPCPH Communications team finalized the first step of this process early this year, with updated website navigation for ease of use.
- With the completed 2024-2028 Quality Improvement (QI) Plan, the inclusive and multi-disciplinary internal QI team is working on the objectives and strategies to achieve goals related to expanding QI trainings and learning opportunities for staff and to enhance staff engagement in QI activities.

## **Emergency Preparedness and Response**

- The Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR) team participated in an airport tabletop exercise led by Pikes Peak Regional Office of Emergency Management, designed to enhance collaboration among partners in preparing for potential aviation incidents within the local jurisdiction. EPR also participated in a community wide evacuation exercise, organized by the Pikes Peak Regional Office of Emergency Management. This full-scale exercise involved multiple partners focused on facilitating a mass evacuation during a wildfire. Team members engaged by supporting the evacuation center and acting as players by directly evacuating their homes and checking in pets with the Humane Society at the evacuation center.

## **Foundational Public Health Services**

### **Communicable Disease Prevention, Investigation and Control**

- Environmental Health and Communicable Disease staff collaborated to conduct a tabletop exercise related to foodborne illness investigations and response. The goal was to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of these teams in working together to address foodborne illness outbreaks among retail food establishments.
- Clinical Services Division and Reproductive Health Clinic staff presented a two-hour workshop at Public Health in the Rockies (PHiR) on implementation of the STI testing program at the El Paso County Criminal Justice Center, helping share new ideas and innovation among public health professionals and helping other counties combat the rising rate of congenital syphilis.

- EPCPH's Immunization (IZ) program conducted several outreach vaccination clinics in September, including a back-to-school vaccination clinic at Public Health South, a clinic held at El Paso County Criminal Justice Center, and another at the Para Ti Mujer event. The goal is to meet community members where they are in order to help prevent disease while helping to address health equity.

### **Maternal, Child, Adolescent and Family Health**

- Maternal and Child Health (MCH) staff, along with a community partner from Colorado Springs School District 11, presented at two conferences in September: Strengthening Colorado Families and Communities with nearly 80 attendees and Public Health in the Rockies with more than 40 attendees. Presentations focused on improving healthy childhood outcomes and the value of community partnerships.
- MCH provided a social and emotional well-being training which included an overview of Adverse Childhood Experiences and education on protective factors for improving healthy childhood outcomes. This training was given to a number of staff from Colorado Springs School District 11, Manitou Springs School District 14, Joint Initiatives and Falcon School District 49.
- Care Coordination and Women, Infants and Children (WIC) staff attended the Mamas Haven Community Baby Shower event on Sept. 7, 2024, focused on expecting military spouses, service members, and women in Colorado Springs. This provided an opportunity to connect with our military community and provide information on EPCPH services such as resource navigation and WIC benefits. Staff were able to connect with 43 individuals. In addition, Care Coordination staff attended the Race Against Suicide event on Sept. 15, to share about resource navigation and linkage to mental health services in the community. Staff connected with 116 individuals and provided 28 hygiene kits. Finally, Care Coordinators participated in the Community Mothers Health and Resource Fair on Sept. 21. This event focused on providing information and health resources for families in Colorado Springs. Staff provided information about services and programs offered at EPCPH, connecting with 10 individuals.

### **Chronic Disease, Injury Prevention and Behavioral Health Promotion**

- Through a competitive application process open to all El Paso County (EPC) middle and high schools, the Tobacco Education and Prevention Partnership (TEPP) selected 12 schools to participate in its Tobacco-Free Schools (TFS) Mini-grant program to help strengthen, communicate and enforce Tobacco Free School policies. The TFS Mini-grant funding for the 2024-2025 school year is \$48,000. Participating schools include Calhan Middle School, Carson Middle School, Discovery High School, Falcon Middle School, Fountain-Fort Carson High School, Fox Meadow Middle School, Grand Peak Academy, Manitou Springs Middle School, Rocky Mountain Classical Academy, Sand Creek High School, Skyview Middle

School and Sproul Junior High School. Representatives from each school attended an orientation to learn about the grant requirements, expectations and resources available.

- TEPP was a bronze-level sponsor of the third annual Fiestas Patrias event held on September 14-15 in downtown Colorado Springs. Approximately 55,000 people attended the event. TEPP's sponsorship was a unique opportunity to engage with the Hispanic community to provide tobacco and nicotine education, prevention and cessation resources.
- As part of Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, EPCPH, Youth Suicide Prevention Workgroup members, and numerous community partners championed Weekends of Hope. Weekends of Hope is a way to model and celebrate collaboration, reduce mental health stigma, and increase support of suicide prevention efforts in EPC. Through this endeavor, over 970 people registered to attend the four awareness and fundraising events which encouraged residents to take steps for suicide prevention: 5,025,600 steps were taken for suicide prevention and more than \$65,000 was raised for local nonprofits and schools to continue providing mental health resources and suicide prevention trainings throughout EPC.

### Impact of Pikes Peak Rising 360

- As of Oct. 15, just three months since launch, more than 3,300 people have accessed self-help behavioral health resources and assessments through the web-based platform.

Item	Details	Metric
Site Visits	The number of times the site was visited	4,065
Assessments	The number of assessments taken	888
Average View Time	The length of time someone is actively using the site	6min 11sec
Top Assessments	The top 3 most common assessment taken: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Are Your "Off Days" a Sign of Depression</li> <li>2. Mental Health Check-In</li> <li>3. Are Your "Worry Days" a Sign of Anxiety</li> </ol>	
Top Topics	The top 5 most visited topics: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Depression</li> <li>2. Anxiety</li> <li>3. Flourishing or Languishing</li> <li>4. Stress</li> <li>5. Self Care</li> </ol>	

<b>Additional Highlights</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For every individual accessing the platform, 24% take an assessment</li> <li>• Of the device type used, 62% use a mobile device and 37% use a desktop</li> <li>• Word of mouth has been the greatest source of accessing the platform</li> <li>• Spanish speaking users have accessed this platform</li> </ul>
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### Narcan Education and Outreach

- EPCPH has trained more than 50 staff in Narcan administration and distribution.

### Narcan State Restrictions

- Due to state Narcan restrictions issued by the CDPHE in July, EPCPH can only request 500 kits per quarter.

### Access to and Linkage with Healthcare

Care Coordination YTD 2024 (January 1, 2024-September 30, 2024)	
Referrals	1220
Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs specific referrals	167
Outreach (emails, tours, meetings, conferences, presentations and trainings)	53
Events	20
Narcan kits distributed	35
Care packages distributed	68

### Environmental Health

### Appendix A: Environmental Health Activity

Environment Health Activity	2024 As of 9/30/2024	2023 Total	2022 Total
Air Quality Construction Permits	92	136	163
Air Quality Open Burn Permits	23	51	19
Air Quality Complaints	30	23	38
Animal Bites Reported	988	1091	877
Body Art Routine Inspections	91	112	86
Body Art Follow-up Inspections	1	7	8
Body Art Complaints	14	31	22
Child Care Regular Inspections	155	202	138
Child Care Follow-up Inspections	9	6	15

Child Care Complaints	16	20	8
Child Care High Risk Field Consults	32	12	18
Land-Use Planning Review	189	204	232
Onsite Wastewater Treatment System (OWTS) Pumper Truck Inspections	74	77	85
OWTS Final Inspections	326	551	576
OWTS Partial Inspections	98	227	235
OWTS Application Design Reviews	278	490	558
OWTS Design Revision Requests	42	120	221
OWTS Design Revision (add) Requests	7	63	0
OWTS New Permit Applications	129	232	351
OWTS Repair Permit Applications	192	266	276
OWTS Modification Permit Applications	9	19	15
OWTS Acceptance Doc for Title Transfer	566	731	866
OWTS Soil and Site Evaluations	214	376	425
OWTS Complaints	25	30	27
OWTS O&M Systems	86	116	65
Recreational Water Safety Inspections	249	313	295
Recreational Water Follow-up Inspections	15	22	17
Recreational Water Complaints	12	14	9
Retail Food Establishment (RFE) Regular Inspections	1928	2481	1908
RFE Re-Inspections	186	315	171
RFE Complaint Investigations	350	517	391
RFE Plan Reviews	241	210	193
School Safety Regular Inspections	16	24	13
School Safety Complaints	9	15	4
School Safety Self-Certification Audits	45	45	15
School Safety Self-Certifications Returned	91	327	332
Waste Tire Facilities Regular Inspections	90	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
<b>Totals</b>	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	353	321	466	368	388	370	411			
Private Wells	299	267	289	378	364	334	398	308	334			
<b>Totals</b>	647	607	642	699	830	702	786	678	745			

## 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	693	20
June	726	10
July	738	29
August	879	18
September	798	18
October		
November		
December		

\*Number of vaccines administered by 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	221
June	245	229
July	186	267
August	215	236
September	213	208
October	231	
November	230	
December	188	

## Appendix E: Disease Prevention and Control

Category	Disease	2024 As of 9/30/2024	2023	2022
<b>Food/Waterborne Diseases</b>				
	Campylobacter	142	189	118
	Cryptosporidium	21	42	25
	Cyclosporiasis	27	8	10
	Giardia	57	68	47
	Hepatitis A	2	2	3
	Legionellosis	8	19	11
	Salmonella	90	89	54
	Shigella	44	46	57
	Shiga Toxin-producing E. coli (STEC)	39	59	42
	Vibriosis	9	9	7
<b>Food/Waterborne Diseases Totals</b>		<b>439</b>	<b>531</b>	<b>373</b>
<b>Healthcare Associated Infections</b>				
	Carbapenem-Resistant	2	0	1

	Acinetobacter baumannii (CRAB)			
	Carbapenem Non-susceptible Enterobacteriaceae (CRE)	47	58	47
	Carbapenem-Resistant Pseudomonas Aeruginosa (CRPA)	40	45	43
<b>Healthcare Associated Infections Totals</b>		<b>89</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>Vaccine Preventable Diseases</b>				
	Haemophilus influenzae (H. flu)	8	18	14
	Measles	0	0	0
	Meningococcal Disease	0	1	0
	Mumps	1	2	3
	Pertussis	61	24	29
	Rubella	0	0	0
	Varicella	17	33	21
<b>Vaccine Preventable Diseases Totals</b>		<b>87</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Respiratory Diseases</b>				
	Hospitalized COVID-19	<b>694</b>	<b>1,091</b>	<b>2,847</b>
	Hospitalized Influenza*	<b>371</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>529</b>
	Hospitalized RSV	<b>327</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Respiratory Disease Total</b>		<b>1,392</b>	<b>1,518</b>	<b>3,400</b>

\*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

2023 Month	Complaint Received Regarding Foodborne Illness	EH 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 Regarding Foodborne Illness	EH Foodborne Illness Investigation
January	1	0
February	3	1
March	22	2
April	23	2
May	20	0
June	18	1
July	16	0
August	18	1
September	14	0
October		
November		
December		

Table 3 – Annual rabies control activities

Year	Rabid animals total	Animal type
2024	6	Bats
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	31	3	0	12
July	56	11	0	12
August	41	13	4	8
September	21	6	1	2
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	172
June	198	191
July	147	189
August	225	129
September	164	121
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	0/1	0	6
June	0/4	1	2
July	0/4	6	5
August	2/4	3	11
September	3/5	2	1
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 well-being, 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.