Prevent
Promote
Protect
Engaging community and guiding innovative partnerships is a cornerstone of El Paso County Public Health’s work. In 2018, these partnerships resulted in significant Public Health achievements and new opportunities.

Our staff reached thousands of new clients in the newly opened Women, Infants and Children (WIC) office in southeast Colorado Springs. With a capacity to serve 4,400 women and their children each month, this service expands nutrition and healthy lifestyle services to an area with high numbers of WIC-eligible residents.

Public Health also leveraged these critical partnerships to receive $1.1 million in funding from The Colorado Health Foundation. This ongoing project involves Public Health working alongside residents and community partners to strengthen southeast Colorado Springs through meaningful community engagement and leadership. The funded activities promote and enhance connectedness, increase the community’s capacity for change, and provide opportunities for improving health and quality of life.

As part of efforts to improve mental health in our community, Public Health worked to enhance resources, data, funding and multidisciplinary partnerships in 2018. Public Health secured grant funding from the Colorado Department of Human Services to support the El Paso County Sheriff’s Office in creating a new co-responder model. This multi-agency partnership helps streamline services and ensure that community members are receiving appropriate care when they need it most. As part of continued efforts to enhance youth suicide prevention resources in our community, Public Health joined with National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) to promote “Below the Surface,” a project that aims to increase help-seeking behavior among youth by encouraging the use of Colorado’s Crisis Text Line. Public Health also advocated for funding to conduct 14 focus groups on youth mental health and suicide prevention in El Paso County, as part of efforts to collect more qualitative data to drive evidence-based practices. These focus groups contributed to the Attorney General’s “Community Conversations to Inform Youth Suicide Prevention” report.

To address these ongoing and emerging critical needs, the El Paso County Board of Health unanimously approved a budget that includes projected increases resulting in additional support through 2023. The additional funding supports the hiring of up to ten new staff positions to address the needs of our growing population. These positions align with the agency’s five-year strategic plan, which aims to build a strong public health workforce and leadership pipeline, develop and strengthen strategic partnerships, solidify core funding, position the agency to be even more nimble and proactive with timely and locally-relevant data, and enhance the agency’s foundational infrastructure. This funding is critical to maintaining Public Health’s high-performing staff and its mandated core services while allowing the agency to address emerging community needs.

As the agency’s new director, I look forward to serving all residents of El Paso County and continuing to grow and enhance our community partnerships.
About El Paso County Public Health

Our public health agency serves all residents and visitors of El Paso County, which includes the cities of Colorado Springs, Manitou Springs and Fountain, and the towns of Calhan, Monument, Palmer Lake, and Ramah. Public health is defined by the Institute of Medicine as “fulfilling society’s interest in assuring conditions in which people can be healthy.” Programs are targeted toward the general population and specific populations with higher health risks or poorer health outcomes to aid in making healthy choices, and provide interventions to prevent spread of disease.

Mission
Our mission is to promote and protect public health and environmental quality across El Paso County through people, prevention and partnerships.

Vision
Our vision is for all El Paso County residents to live in thriving communities where every person has the opportunity to achieve optimal health.

A nine-member Board of Health governs El Paso County Public Health through the establishment of policy, approval of budgets, and appointment of the Public Health Director. Members serve as volunteers and are appointed by the El Paso County Board of County Commissioners.

2018 El Paso County Board of Health

Kari Kilroy
Board of Health President

Dr. James Terbush
Board of Health Vice President

Doris Ralston
Board Member

Peggy Littleton
El Paso County Commissioner

Richard Skorman
Colorado Springs City Council President

Dr. Robert C. Bux
El Paso County Coroner

Sam Gieck
Fountain City Council

Longinos Gonzalez
El Paso County Commissioner

Victoria Broerman
Board Member
Public Health applies for reaccreditation

El Paso County Public Health became the first public health agency in Colorado to achieve accreditation in 2013, and in 2018, Public Health began the process of applying for reaccreditation. There are currently 218 local health departments accredited nationally, eight of which are in Colorado.

Accreditation is the measurement of health department performance against a set of nationally recognized, practice-focused and evidence-based standards established by the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB).

The accreditation standards define the expectations for all public health departments. The goal of voluntary national accreditation is to protect and promote the health of the public by advancing the quality and performance of Tribal, state, local, and territorial public health departments.

Requirements

The requirements for accreditation align with the Public Health Act of 2008 (SB 194), requiring the development of a Community Health Assessment (CHA) and a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) for greater accountability and transparency. Additional plans required for accreditation include:

- Strategic Plan
- Annual Work Plan
- Workforce Development Plan
- Quality Improvement Plan
- Emergency Operations Plan
Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan

In 2018, Public Health developed and released two vital guiding documents – the Community Health Assessment (CHA) and the 2018-2022 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The CHA provides a comprehensive look at the overall health status of the community, and the CHIP provides strategies to address health issues.

These documents are the result of a combined effort of Public Health and the Healthy Community Collaborative (HCC), with a shared vision of utilizing a data-driven approach to address health concerns. The HCC is a stakeholder group of community partners who have been working together since 2011 to discuss health issues, create and implement population-based solutions, and monitor and evaluate progress. The HCC is a multidisciplinary network of more than 60 representatives from health, education, social service, economic development, nonprofit, and for-profit organizations.

In 2016, the HCC and Public Health data experts engaged in an intensive 18-month community health assessment to collect and analyze health data, identify the top health concerns in El Paso County, and assess community readiness to address these issues.

From the assessment process, the HCC created a vision to increase healthy life expectancy for all in El Paso County—through collective action—by offering opportunities and removing barriers that prevent people from achieving optimal health. Upon reviewing the data, the HCC chose two areas to focus on in the CHIP: 1) reverse the upward trend of obesity across the lifespan by addressing its root causes and 2) decrease the incidence of poor mental health and substance use and misuse. Over the next five years, the HCC will focus community efforts and resources using evidence-based practices to work towards these goals.

To measure progress, Public Health is working with Thriving Colorado, a statewide community health dashboard that provides an online gateway to data, information and strategies. Public Health will be collecting data and working with stakeholders to monitor progress toward measurable goals.
As part of ongoing efforts to proactively monitor and prevent the spread of rabies in our community, Public Health partnered with law enforcement, the Humane Society, physicians, and veterinarians, and launched a new online system for reporting animal bites. Rabies spreads through the bite of an infected animal or through saliva in an open wound, cut, or in the eyes, nose or mouth. The new bite report system gives people a convenient, online portal to report animal bites or wild animal exposures. Reporting allows Public Health to respond quickly, investigate whether the biting animal may have transmitted rabies to the bite victim, and provide proper recommendations to ensure people and pets receive the correct treatment to prevent disease.


Number of rabies cases since 2010, by year

We continued to see increases in rabies, with record-breaking numbers in 2018. A total of 67 animals tested positive for the disease—more than double the previous year, and about six times the amount of infected animals that a typical year might yield. The increase was primarily due to an outbreak of rabies in skunks along the Front Range.

Number of rabies cases since 2010, by animal

1 Cat + 1 Raccoon + 7 Foxes + 50 Bats + 97 Skunks = 156 Animals

As part of ongoing efforts to proactively monitor and prevent the spread of rabies in our community, Public Health partnered with law enforcement, the Humane Society, physicians, and veterinarians, and launched a new online system for reporting animal bites.

Rabies spreads through the bite of an infected animal or through saliva in an open wound, cut, or in the eyes, nose or mouth. The new bite report system gives people a convenient, online portal to report animal bites or wild animal exposures. Reporting allows Public Health to respond quickly, investigate whether the biting animal may have transmitted rabies to the bite victim, and provide proper recommendations to ensure people and pets receive the correct treatment to prevent disease.

New online rating system for retail food establishments

In May 2018, Public Health launched a new online rating system for retail food establishments. This new rating system was implemented to increase transparency and provide a convenient way for community members to make informed choices based on the food safety practices of retail food establishments. Retail food establishments include restaurants, fast food operations, delis, markets, school cafeterias, convenience stores and mobile units or food trucks. There are over 2,600 retail food establishments in El Paso County.

The rating system provides a uniform methodology for analysis of inspection reports, and it aligns with guidance from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. It assigns one of five categories to a retail food establishment following a routine inspection, ranging from “Excellent” to “Unacceptable.” As part of a risk-based system, points are assigned to violations found during an inspection. Violations that pose a greater risk of foodborne illness are weighted more heavily. With a risk index system, a lower final number means a better rating. There are five risk-rating categories: excellent (0-19); good (20-39); fair (40-69); marginal (70-99); unacceptable (100 or greater).

Public Health responds to Carson Midway Fire

Public Health plays an important emergency response role in keeping the community safe. In 2018, Public Health assisted in the response to the Carson Midway Fire by providing tetanus vaccinations, fire cleanup and debris removal guidance, and air quality education to protect the health of those affected by the fire.

Public Health engaged multiple partners to conduct disaster assessment of structures within the impacted area and assist with the tire fire that resulted from the Carson Midway Fire. Staff coordinated with the County Office of Emergency Management, the State Fire Inspector, and the Environmental Protection Agency to monitor and extinguish the tire fire, provide air quality alerts, and remove remaining debris. These multi-agency partnerships are critical for a coordinated response to assist affected residents in recovery and create a resilient community.
Community coalitions address youth suicide and substance use

Convened by Public Health, the Youth Suicide Prevention Workgroup and Fountain Valley Communities that Care coalition bring together community partners from youth serving organizations, the Coroner’s Office, law enforcement, healthcare, faith-based communities, schools and mental health partners to address youth suicide and substance use in El Paso County.

**Youth Suicide Prevention Workgroup**

The Youth Suicide Prevention Workgroup works to identify community assets and needs and create an action plan for countywide youth mental health and suicide prevention activities.

In 2018, the Workgroup supported the following activities that will further promote youth health and well-being efforts in El Paso County:

- Advocated for funding to conduct 14 focus groups on youth mental health and suicide prevention in El Paso County. These focus groups contributed to the Attorney General’s “Community Conversations to Inform Youth Suicide Prevention” report.
- Supported the expansion of the National Alliance on Mental Illness *Below the Surface* campaign to rural school districts in El Paso County. *Below the Surface* aims to increase help-seeking behavior among youth by encouraging use of the Colorado Crisis Text Line (text “TALK” to 38255).
- Launched an initiative to provide training in Youth Mental Health First Aid to faith-based leaders who work with youth.

**Fountain Valley Communities that Care**

Fountain Valley is part of a statewide effort to implement Communities that Care (CTC), a model that has been proven to promote healthy youth development, improve outcomes, and reduce problem behaviors among youth.

In 2018, Fountain Valley Communities that Care (FV-CTC) completed a resource assessment that identified existing programs and policies that serve youth in Fountain Valley and opportunities for improvement and growth. From this assessment, FV-CTC will move towards building community capacity and support for:

- Quality child care early in life
- Community spaces for youth engagement
- Community-wide implementation of the Kids Club 360, an in-school child care program that focuses on developing positive social interactions and life skills
- Community-wide implementation of KidPower’s programs, which focus on teaching children the skills to be emotionally and physically safe, with themselves and others
The Healthy Kids Colorado Survey provides insight on the health of our youth

The Healthy Kids Colorado Survey (HKCS) is Colorado’s only comprehensive survey on the health and well-being of youth. In 2017, the survey sampled approximately 56,000 youth from 190 randomly selected middle and high schools statewide. Although the survey occurs every two years, this is the first time since 2013 that El Paso County had enough schools participate to have regional data.

The survey collects a wide range of health and behavioral information that helps community organizations better understand the youth in our community and direct resources more efficiently through collaborations.

The 2017 HKCS data, released in 2018, showed that our community has made great strides in strengthening factors that contribute to improving the health of youth including school safety, parental involvement, extracurricular activities and access to trusted adults.

**Youth who have the following factors in their life are less likely to experience poor mental health and engage in risky behaviors such as substance use:**

- **FAMILY RULES**
  - 91% of El Paso County youth have clear rules in their family.

- **TALKING WITH ADULTS**
  - 71% of El Paso County youth have a trusted adult they can ask for help.

- **SCHOOL SAFETY**
  - 87% of El Paso County youth feel safe at school.

However, the survey revealed that El Paso County falls short with measures pertaining to healthy eating and active living, mental health, and substance use among youth. El Paso County youth reported higher rates of mental health indicators such as feeling sad and hopeless, considering or attempting suicide, and self-harm than the state average.

The survey also shed light on the alarming rise in youth e-cigarette use, also known as vaping. The number of Colorado teens who have used an e-cigarette tripled in only four years from 15 percent in 2013 to 44 percent in 2017. In El Paso County, almost half of high school students reported having tried an e-cigarette, making it the second most tried illegal substance among youth.

**High school students who have used substances at least once in their life:**

- **ALCOHOL**
  - 60%

- **E-CIGARETTES***
  - 44%

- **MARIJUANA**
  - 39%

- **CIGARETTES**
  - 17%

*Does not include marijuana

Public Health will continue to build strong partnerships with the shared mission of promoting the health and well-being of youth as a priority for future strategies and programming.
The new Women, Infants and Children (WIC) office in southeast Colorado Springs, which opened its doors to clients in January 2018, was part of an intentional effort to provide public health resources where the community needs them most. Public Health’s WIC program works to reduce obesity by promoting healthy eating habits early in life, and giving clients the resources and education needed to achieve optimal health.

In 2018, southeast WIC staff saw a total of 36,339 clients. In addition to receiving the healthy food, nutritional education, breastfeeding support and other benefits that WIC has to offer, clients can also connect to other resources in the community. At the southeast WIC office, Penrose-St. Francis nurses offer weekly health screenings and referrals, and Public Health immunization nurses provide vaccines once a month. There is also a community room which is open to the public for meetings and trainings. These collaborative endeavors help increase access to key services for residents in southeast Colorado Springs.

The RISE Coalition is a collaboration of over 60 partner organizations and resident leaders working to enhance southeast Colorado Springs through citizen-led change. Growing the coalition, continuing to build diverse partnerships, and working to improve the environments where residents live, work, and play were the primary focus areas for RISE in 2018.

A key accomplishment in 2018 included laying the groundwork to receive funding for the renovation of Panorama Park. RISE was instrumental in engaging the community, which ultimately led to the selection of Panorama Park for the improvement project. As part of these efforts, RISE collected over 700 surveys from community members to identify the selected park. To help involve local residents in this process, RISE hosted two community park events.

As a result of RISE’s community engagement activities, The Colorado Health Foundation will award a $935,000 grant over three years to the Trust for Public Land (TPL) to fund the revitalization of Panorama Park. This will be the largest neighborhood park renovation in city history. This funding is the product of a collaborative effort between RISE, the City of Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department, and TPL. TPL is coordinating the master plan process to develop the vision for Panorama Park, in partnership with RISE and the City of Colorado Springs.
Public Health is awarded the Healthy Places Grant as part of efforts to improve the built environment

Public Health secured $1.1 million from The Colorado Health Foundation to assist with improvements to the built environment in southeast Colorado Springs. The built environment refers to the spaces where people live, work and play. How we interact with the surrounding environment impacts our ability to be physically active, access healthy food and other resources, and interact socially—all of which determine our overall quality of life and well-being. The goal is to use this funding to enhance community connectedness by improving the built environment, cultivating a centralized physical space where residents can engage in healthy activities, and fostering a sense of social cohesion.

The funding, spread over three years, will be used to promote spaces for local residents to interact and engage in activities that improve quality of life. This includes the creation of a community hub, and collaboration with a community development corporation to guide community-building activities and increase advocacy power and funding opportunities. Based on input from community members, the vision for the hub is to create a vibrant local resource center that brings people together around activities, jobs, and shared services.

Public Health hepatitis A outbreak response

Public Health works around the clock to protect the public from over 60 infectious diseases such as hepatitis A, a highly contagious liver disease. In 2018, Public Health began investigating an outbreak of hepatitis A with 10 confirmed cases in El Paso County and two in Pueblo with cases ongoing into 2019.

Although the source of the outbreak was not identified, the majority of cases had several risk factors for hepatitis A in common, including homelessness and the use of street drugs.

In response to the outbreak, Public Health:

- Conducted disease investigations on all reported cases and provided preventative hepatitis A vaccination to identified contacts.
- Established active systems to screen individuals for hepatitis A, administer vaccines, and provide respite care within hospitals, shelters, the criminal justice system, and substance abuse treatment centers.
- Offered vaccines at locations that serve high-risk individuals including homeless shelters. Vaccines were also offered at homeless camps, public parks and motels through mobile outreach teams.
- Provided health education and guidance to retail food establishments for food handlers.

Hepatitis A outbreaks are becoming more common across the United States among those experiencing homelessness and using street drugs. In the past few years, outbreaks of hepatitis A among this population have occurred in San Diego, Utah and Michigan.
Mobile clinics and education on vaccine-preventable diseases

Targeting efforts to ensure our citizens have access to public health resources, in 2018 Public Health’s immunization team provided numerous vaccine clinics in the community. These clinics enhance community partnerships, increase access to services, and prevent the spread of disease. Public Health’s immunization nurses worked with local businesses and schools to host a number of influenza (flu) clinics, provided travel clinics for schools and faith-based groups traveling to other countries, and offered hepatitis A clinics to people most at risk. Public Health also participated in the annual Back-to-School Summerfest event, providing vaccines to children and families in southeast Colorado Springs.

Public Health responds to severe influenza season

The 2017-18 influenza (flu) season was severe nationwide. The number of influenza-related hospitalizations in El Paso County and Colorado were greater than any influenza season on record. Throughout the 2017-18 influenza season, Public Health provided education and technical support for health care providers, schools, long-term care facilities and the public.

### Hospitalized influenza cases in El Paso County by influenza season:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-16</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016-17</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017-18</td>
<td>489</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Strengthening mental health services in El Paso County through El Paso County Sheriff’s Office

In Colorado, there were 1,175 deaths by suicide during 2017, the highest rate of suicide ever recorded in Colorado. In El Paso County, 163 residents died by suicide in 2017, and working aged men accounted for 75 percent of those deaths.

Public Health secured grant funding in 2018 from the Colorado Department of Human Services to support the El Paso County Sheriff’s Office in creating a new co-responder model, also known as Behavioral Health Connect (BHCON). This initiative pairs sheriff’s deputies with licensed behavioral health clinicians to respond to emergency calls where mental health is a factor.

The grant also provided funding to support the implementation of a community awareness campaign, Man Therapy, targeted at reducing the stigma surrounding men’s mental health.

Partners from the El Paso County Sheriff’s Office, Coroner’s Office, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, and the El Paso County Youth Suicide Prevention Workgroup participated in the planning and launch of the campaign.

Man Therapy promotes resources that provide men and their loved ones with the education, tools and community connections needed to empower them to take control of their overall wellness and mental health. Man Therapy reshapes the conversation about mental health, using humor to cut through stigma and encourage men to seek help.

This groundbreaking new approach to men's mental health issues was developed in Colorado and has since launched in several states across the U.S. as well as internationally.
Public Health by the Numbers

Local health departments that serve 500,000 - 999,999 people have on average 259 employees.

With 148 employees, Public Health serves 713,856 people in El Paso County.

- **2,283** Reproductive Health Clinic Visits
- **412** Tuberculosis Skin Tests Completed
- **1,981** Infectious Disease Cases Reported
- **51** Reported Infectious Disease Outbreaks
- **645** People reported ill from infectious disease outbreaks
- **4,658** STD tests performed
- **8,961** Immunizations provided
- **21,783** Birth certificates issued
- **35,975** Death certificates issued
- **1,678** Colorado Quitline calls from El Paso County residents
- **2,704** Private well water tests
- **606** On-site wastewater permits issued
- **4,212** Public water system tests
- **5,894** Retail food establishment inspections
- **983** Food workers completed food safety education classes
- **175** Retail food establishment plan reviews
- **2,683** Nurse-family partnership home visits
- **293** Coordinated care for children with special needs
- **13,476** WIC average monthly case load
- **241** Child care center inspections
- **40** School safety inspections
- **120** Air quality permits issued
- **222** Land use reviews
- **102** Body art establishment inspections
- **4,061** Public pool inspections
### 2018 Total Projected Revenue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Revenue</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Specific Grants</td>
<td>$8,162,905</td>
<td>50.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso County Funding</td>
<td>$3,285,804</td>
<td>20.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licenses, Fees &amp; Permits</td>
<td>$3,591,326</td>
<td>22.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Per Capita</td>
<td>$934,221</td>
<td>5.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest Income</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>0.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous Revenue</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
<td>0.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Intergovernmental Revenue</td>
<td>$55,000</td>
<td>0.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Revenue</strong></td>
<td><strong>$16,100,000</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many thanks to the City of Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services, David Deitemeyer, and the Deerfield Hills Community Center for many of the photos featured in this report.

Icons made by Freepik from www.flaticon.com