

To: Board of Health
From: Susan Wheelan, M.B.A., Public Health Director
Date: December 2021 (reflects activity October 28, 2021 to date)
Re: Director's Report

COVID-19 Status and Response

In continued collaboration with our community partners, Public Health remains focused on providing easy access for residents to a menu of prevention and treatment options, working to reduce severe illness and lessen the burden on local hospitals.

Monoclonal Antibody (mAB) Treatment

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) deployed a monoclonal antibody treatment bus to El Paso County on November 1 as part of the effort to expand access throughout the state to this COVID-19 treatment. On November 19, CDPHE amended [Public Health Order 21-02](#) to allow individuals who qualify to seek monoclonal antibody treatment for COVID-19 without a doctor's referral.

Monoclonal antibody treatments are available to people who have tested positive for COVID-19, have mild to moderate symptoms, and who are at high risk of developing severe illness ([see the list of conditions that make a person eligible to receive antibody treatments](#)). Monoclonal antibodies are also available as post-exposure prophylaxis for COVID-19 for individuals who are not vaccinated (or who may not be fully protected after vaccination, such as people with immunocompromising conditions) and have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 and are at high risk of developing severe illness.

Free monoclonal antibody treatment is available at the mobile health clinic at the Citadel Mall and individuals can schedule appointments at this clinic by calling 877-268-2926.

Vaccination

During the first weekend of November (the start of COVID-19 vaccination for children ages 5-11) nearly 1,700 children in this age group received the first dose of the Pfizer vaccine in El Paso County. The El Paso County and Colorado Springs Vaccine Consortium have administered pediatric doses at vaccine sites including the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo, Children's Hospital Colorado, Pikes Peak Community Collect, Citadel Mall, Chapel Hills Mall, EPCPH South, Walgreens, and Safeway.

Vaccine Data

Vaccine data through December 7, including federal estimates:

- **Total doses administered: 856,021**
 - 965,600 with federal estimates
- **People vaccinated: 401,205 (59.1%)**
 - 459,700 (68.7%) with federal estimates
- **People fully vaccinated: 361,574 (53.2%)**
 - 412,500 (61.6%) with federal estimates

As of December 7, **48.3 percent of 12–17-year-olds and 14.4 percent of 5-11 year-olds** in El Paso County have been vaccinated (received at least one dose).

To access the latest vaccine numbers for El Paso County, see the [COVID-19 vaccine dashboard](#).

Case Monitoring

COVID-19 data trends through Tuesday, December 7:

- **Seven-day incidence:** 308.8
- **Seven-day positivity:** 10.28%
- **Hospital admissions and deaths in the last seven days (November 30 – December 7):** 63 and 7

For more comprehensive local data, see the [COVID-19 Data Dashboard](#).

Ongoing COVID-19 Response Activities

Communications

- The Office of Communication managed television media inquiries pertaining to emerging issues including COVID-19 incidence, data, hospitalizations and trends, COVID-19 vaccines and boosters, and the FDA advisory panel recommendation of Pfizer for children ages 5-11, expanded access to monoclonal antibody treatment in El Paso County, and the Omicron variant. The total estimated viewership for these television interviews during the October-November timeframe is more than 243,000 and the estimated earned media value is more nearly \$46,000.
- Also managed several print media inquiries on similar topics, with the addition of a front-page Gazette article on the [opioid drug epidemic](#).
- Medical Director participated in an hour-long in-depth segment on KRDO Radio on a variety of topics and questions including general trends regarding COVID-19 in El Paso County, COVID-19 vaccines, the importance of prevention during flu and respiratory season, and how to get connected to resources and information.
- The Office of Communication also managed several print media inquiries on similar topics, including a feature in CPR news entitled, '[Because it helps me.](#)' [Colorado Springs clinic starts vaccinating children against COVID-19](#). The article features in-depth coverage of one of the first EPCPH clinics for 5-11 age group vaccinations, which began the weekend of Nov. 5. The clinic, which was hosted at EPCPH's Southeast Women, Infants and Children (WIC) office, received positive feedback as a convenient and easy-to-access resource.
- EPCPH Deputy Director, along with representation from Children's Hospital Colorado, participated in a City of Colorado Springs "[Behind the Springs](#)" podcast to discuss COVID-19 vaccines for the 5-11 age group. The educational session focused on providing information, facts and resources for community members.
- The agency's website www.elpasocountyhealth.org had 43,573 new visitors in October, with 140,805 unique pageviews and 61,893 new visitors in November, with 175,609 unique pageviews.

Continuity of Operations

Data and Analytics

With flu season officially underway, El Paso County Public Health has launched a new influenza (flu) data dashboard to enhance its standard weekly flu reporting with new data visualizations. This new dashboard is designed to provide easy access for the public to timely and relevant local flu data.

The dashboard—which is updated weekly by close of business on Mondays—captures a weekly snapshot of flu activity in the community, including flu hospitalizations and pediatric deaths, which are reportable per Colorado law to local public health agencies. To view the flu data dashboard, visit www.elpasocountyhealth.org/flu-prevention.

Environmental Health (EH)

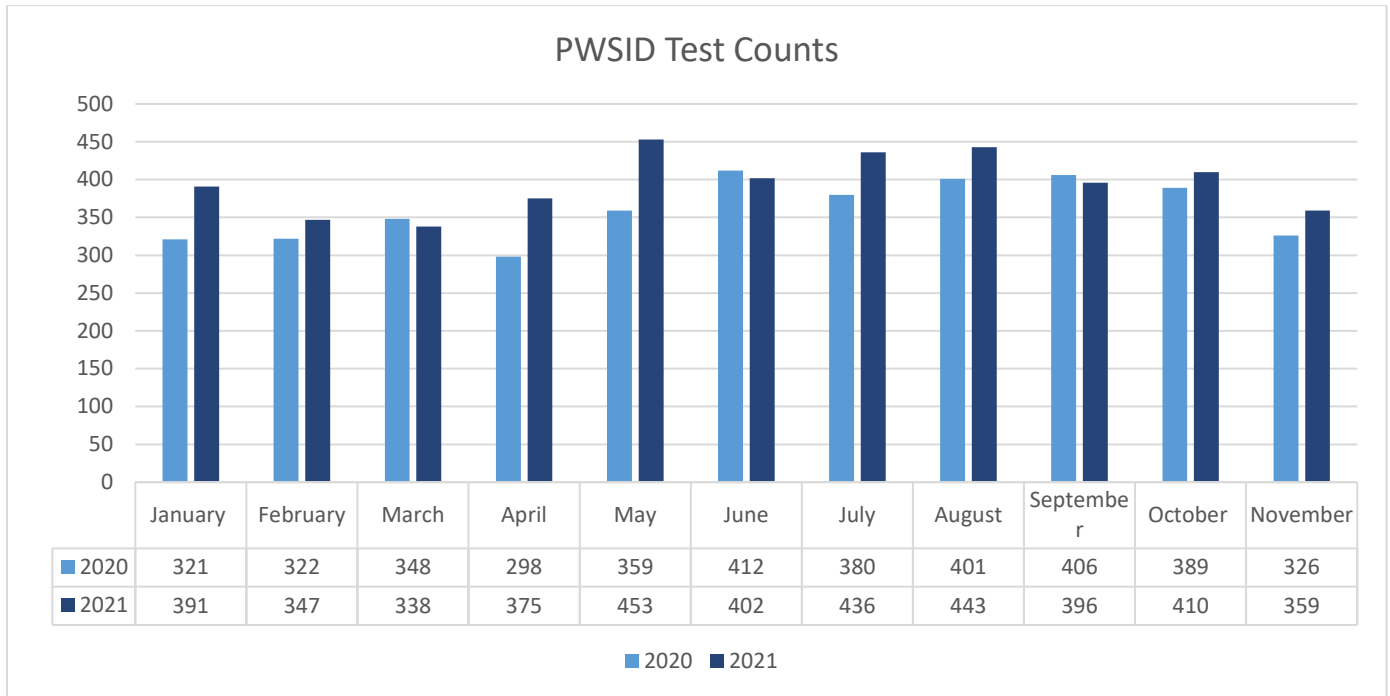
Environmental Health is addressing an increasing number of inquiries from schools, childcare, and the general public about school COVID-19 guidance, individual school mask mandates, and potential vaccine mandates.

Standard EH Activities

Environment Health Activity	2021 Total As of 11.30.21	2020 Year -endTotal
Air Quality Construction Permits	117	109
Air Quality Open Burn Permits	15	16
Air Quality Complaints	45	29
Animal Bites Reported	1320	1397
Body Art Inspections	65	74
Body Art Follow-up Inspections	6	0
Body Art Complaints	17	13
Child Care Regular Inspections	194	91
Child Care Follow-up Inspections	0	0
Child Care Complaints	4	1
Land-Use Planning Review	136	166
OWTS Pumper Truck Inspections	71	88
OWTS Final Inspections	474	512
OWTS Partial Inspections	152	71
OWTS Application Design Reviews	656	687
OWTS Design Revision Requests	234	132
OWTS New Permit Applications	359	330

Environment Health Activity	2021 Total As of 11.30.21	2020 Year -endTotal
OWTS Repair Permit Applications	266	267
OWTS Modification Permit Applications	11	19
OWTS Acceptance Doc for Title Transfer	984	1009
OWTS Soil and Site Evaluations	479	464
OWTS Complaints	28	31
OWTS O&M Systems	170	131
Recreational Water Safety Inspections	290	230
Recreational Water Follow-up Inspections	24	5
Recreational Water Complaints	13	3
RFE Regular Inspections	2509	846
RFE Re-Inspections	110	28
RFE Complaint Investigations	298	226
RFE Plan Reviews	136	142
School Safety Regular Inspections	0	5
School Safety Complaints	6	4
School Safety Self-Certification Audits	0	0
School Safety Self-Certifications Returned	289	0
Waste Tires Facilities Regular Inspections	115	30
Waste Tires Follow-up Inspections	5	0

Laboratory: Public Water System Tests conducted



Other EH Activities

- The Air Quality Program Manager, Lead and Environmental Health Specialists attended visible emissions and opacity training. Staff attending became certified Visible Emissions Evaluators, which is required by the US EPA to conduct Method 9 observations during complaint investigations.
- The Air Quality Program Manager and Environmental Health Specialists attended and successfully completed the Odor Intensity Rating and Observation Certification Course hosted by CDPHE. Staff became certified to determine and grade odor emissions in terms of Regulation No. 2 of the Colorado Air Pollution Control Commission. This certification is required to conduct odor readings during complaint investigations.

Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program

The Women, Infant and Children (WIC) caseload for October was 12,139 and 11,973 for November. Despite staffing shortages, including four WIC educator vacancies, WIC staff continue to provide exceptional customer service to clients. To continue services while maintaining necessary social distancing, WIC educators continued phone appointments. The clinic remained open and available to clients for new benefit cards and breast pump issuance and returns. Due to federal congressional action, WIC clients received an increased dollar amount of fruits and vegetables in their November and December food packages. A considerable amount of staff time was dedicated to re-issuing food packages.

The WIC program continues to work with pregnant and post-partum women to identify depression, refer for behavioral health treatment, and reduce the stigma of seeking behavioral health services. During the October-November timeframe, WIC staff completed 774 PHQ2

screenings and completed 13 referrals to Diversus Health and CCHA for further evaluation and connection to meet their specific behavioral health needs.

WIC continues to utilize an internal referral form for client facing services throughout EPCPH. During the October-November timeframe, 42 referrals were made to and from WIC, NFP, HCP (a program for children with special healthcare needs), Family Planning, and Quitline tobacco cessation program.

The WIC Program Manager and WIC Supervisors worked on filling various staffing vacancies. Three new WIC educators and one new Breastfeeding Peer Counselor (BFPC) joined the team.

WIC continued the use of video services to address barriers to care. Lactation Management Specialists (LMS) provided appointments via Teams to assist clients during latch appointments. WIC continued to offer virtual breastfeeding classes while in-person group classes are suspended. The virtual class has seen a 300% increase in Spanish-speaking client enrollment. Year to date, 50 clients have completed the Spanish-speaking class, while 12 completed it in all of 2020. 469 clients have completed the English-speaking virtual class. WIC registered dietitians continue to provide a limited number of in-person appointments for high-risk clients. These mainly include latch appointments for mothers struggling to adapt to the use of technology and/or were about to stop breastfeeding without enhanced support.

Immunization Program

During November, the Immunization Program focused on COVID-19 vaccination of 5–11-year-olds and booster doses. Many vaccine clinics were held by EPCPH to kick off the vaccination of these groups, including at the EPCPH South building as well as locations in the community such as schools, with parental consent. Immunization Program staff supported these vaccine events, through staffing, vaccine transport, oversight of POD events, and planning. Many community members expressed their gratitude for access to the vaccine for their children after months of waiting. The Immunization Program continued to support other vaccine activities such as Operation House Call, Long Term Care Facilities, Colorado Springs Fire Department's efforts to vaccinate those experiencing homelessness, refugee vaccination, and limited clinic appointments for routine vaccines including flu vaccines.

The Immunizations Clinic received additional funding for core services for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2021-2022.

Family Planning

Family Planning is currently offering services five days per week in-person, as well as telehealth visits. The program requested and secured additional funding for Title X Family Planning services for Fiscal Year 2021-2022.

The Family Planning Program Manager joined multiple providers in Colorado by participating in the Congenital Syphilis Review Board hosted by CDPHE. It is critical to address this issue as the number of cases continue to rise in Colorado. Family Planning has recently implemented a new process to detect and address maternal-child morbidity and mortality due to congenital syphilis.

Family Planning met with Pueblo County Public Health's Division Director, to assist Pueblo with their plans to restructure their clinic and to build relationships for future collaboration and resource-sharing.

Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP)

During the October-November timeframe, Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) nurses conducted 333 visits mostly via telehealth. The NFP team shifted back to telehealth in September as COVID incidence rates increased.

Through the generosity of the Jacqueline Wonder Fund, NFP nurses were able to connect several at-risk mothers with valuable educational opportunities, including one client who received financial support to complete her CNA certification despite difficult personal circumstances. The client is now employed, actively participating in her new community, and busy preparing for the birth of her first child. This is an example of the impact that an NFP nurse and her assessment skills can have on the life of an individual family.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Core Services Funding

The Colorado State Office of Public Health Practice, Planning, and Local Partnerships (OPHP) was provided an additional \$30 million over the next three years to support core services. OPHP has allocated this funding to Local Public Health Agencies with EPCPH awarded \$1.038 million. EPCPH reviewed the agency's critical needs and alignment with the strategic plan to propose 15 FTE positions to expand capacity and meet the needs of the agency. ARPA funds designated for this fiscal year -- years two and three will be rolled into the State's General Fund as the regular OPHP Local Support funding.

Workforce Surveys

The administration team is working on collecting data for the Colorado Public Health Administrative Directors (COPHAD) 2021 Salary Survey and Workforce Survey. The purpose of the COPHAD surveys is to provide vital, foundational information related to workforce needs and gaps. From the responses, COPHAD can put into place a strategic plan and take action to strengthen and support the public health system. Both surveys were submitted on November 2.

Strategic Initiatives and Health Equity

Dr. Tarik Walker has EPCPH as the new Strategic Initiatives and Health Equity Officer. Previously the agency's leadership team included a similar position -- Development and Strategic Initiatives Officer (DSIO). As the agency's needs have evolved so did the vision for the DSIO position leading to the development of this new position. In his new role Tarik will work closely with Carolyn Gery, our Development Officer, in identifying and planning for implementation of new initiatives as well as supporting and leading initiatives related to health equity and COVID-19 Recovery.

There was considerable interest in this position, and after multiple rounds of interviews, Tarik stood out to the panel as a candidate with exceptional experience in community engagement, leading initiatives and building opportunities to support health equity.