To: Board of Health  
From: Susan Wheelan, M.B.A., Public Health Director  
Date: January 2020 (reflects December 2019)  
Re: Director’s Report

Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) Priority Areas:
El Paso County Public Health and all public health agencies in Colorado are required by Senate Bill 194 to complete a CHIP for the community each serves. The CHIP defines the vision for the health of the community through a collaborative process with over 60 partner agencies who participate in the Healthy Community Collaborative. Community input on these goals can be viewed on a data dashboard at www.ThrivingColorado.com. These are EPCPH’s activities:

Healthy Eating and Active Living
Reverse the upward trend of obesity across the lifespan by addressing its root causes

- The Women, Infant and Children (WIC) caseload for December was 12,586. Through social media and consistent follow-up with the online WIC referral form, WIC staff continues efforts to reach those in our community who are eligible but not enrolled in the program. WIC staff works diligently to retain client caseload by reaching out to all who miss their scheduled appointment, by providing phone and on-line education options and by assisting clients to fully utilize their food benefits.

- MCH (Maternal Child Health) Early Childhood Obesity Prevention (ECOP) provided ongoing technical assistance to two family home childcare providers.

Mental Health and Substance Use Prevention
Decrease the incidence of poor mental health and substance use and misuse

- The WIC program works with pregnant and post-partum women to identify depression, refer for behavioral health treatment and reduce the stigma of seeking behavioral health services. WIC staff completed 219 two-question Patient Health Questionnaires (PHQ-2s) and made eight referrals to AspenPointe for further evaluation and connections to meet their specific behavioral health needs.

- Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) assessed pregnant and postpartum clients to identify depression and completed 21 PHQ-9s and made 10 referrals to counseling services for further evaluation and connections for behavioral health needs.

- YSUP Planner submitted a final draft of the Fountain Valley Communities That Care Community Action Plan to CDPHE for review and approval. This plan included implementation and evaluation plans for three community and societal-level strategies for the prevention of adolescent substance abuse, a funding plan, and a health and behavior outcomes evaluation plan.

- Tobacco Education and Prevention Partnership (TEPP) met with health care providers at Matthews-VU Woodman, local pharmacies, and Aspen Pointe to encourage the use of tobacco cessation resources such as the Colorado QuitLine. Information and resources were also provided.
**Surveillance, Epidemiology and Emergency Preparedness**

Emergency Preparedness and Response Coordinators attended the Cities Readiness Initiative meeting at Tri-County Health Department. This meeting was attended by the CDC Project Officer and updates were provided on the forward direction of the medical countermeasures operational readiness review platform to include the expansion of additional capability assessments.

Emergency Preparedness and Response Program Manager attended the National Healthcare Coalition Preparedness Conference in Houston. The goal of the 2019 Conference was to look at healthcare coalitions as force multipliers for resiliency, and topics focused on creating an evidence base that is vital to making the case for ongoing investment in resiliency (the ability for a community to return to normal functioning after an emergency event).

**Hepatitis A Outbreak (2018-2020)**

El Paso County Public Health conducted 119 vaccine outreach events from October 2018 through December 2019. In coordination with community partners, including the El Paso Sheriff’s Office, Penrose St. Francis parish nurses, and UCHealth/Memorial Emergency Department, EPCPH has administered 6,891 Hepatitis A vaccine as of December 31, 2019. There were 131 positive Hepatitis A cases in El Paso County through December. Statewide, there have been 322 cases and two deaths.

**Influenza Season 2019-2020**

Influenza surveillance for the 2019-2020 season began on September 29, 2019. As of January 4, 2020, 108 people in El Paso County have been hospitalized for influenza, 69% caused by influenza B. As of January 15, our Immunization program has administered 1,113 flu vaccines this season and has already used 94% of the 317 flu vaccine allotted to EPCPH by the state. EPCPH has offered two walk-in clinics at SE WIC, and one flu clinic for staff at Atlas Prep. We have also offered flu vaccines at the past 16 ‘walk-in’ Tuesdays.

**Rabies**

The communicable disease program responded to 12 calls regarding possible rabies exposures. There were a total of 16 animals with rabies identified in 2019 compared to 67 animals in 2018.

**Foundational Public Health Services**

Foundational public health services include: communicable disease prevention, investigation and control, environmental health, maternal, child, adolescent, and family health, chronic disease and injury prevention and behavioral health promotion, and clinical care.
• Laboratory performed 517 Bacteriological water tests, 320 for public water systems and 197 for private wells. Seventy-seven water samples were assayed for inorganic anions.

• Environmental Health successfully passed FDA Voluntary Standards 2 (Trained Regulatory Staff) and 3 (Inspection Program Based HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points) Principles) audits in the Retail Food Program.

2018-2022 Strategic Plan Goals
The goals selected for each strategic plan topic area represent broad achievements EPCPH plans to reach by the end of 2022. The goals are expressed at a high-level in order to capture all possible forward movement across the agency and within specific programs. The strategies selected represent the most important ways in which EPCPH can focus its agency and programmatic objectives to meet each goal.

Workforce Development: strengthen EPCPH’s workforce to improve public health and environmental quality.
• The Women, Infants and Children (WIC) staff received training from Amanda Baker, MSW, LCSW, PMH-C, with the purpose of improving skills related to identifying clients who may have perinatal mood disorders, including anxiety and depression, and how/where to refer them for professional support and counseling. As indicated earlier in this report, WIC staff routinely screen for depression and refer clients to services when warranted.
• Nurse-Family Partnership hired two new home visiting nurses to the team. The team now consists of eight home visiting nurses which will allow for improved organizational capacity to serve more clients and reach our contracted caseload of 250. Nurse-Family Partnership held a staff professional development day in December to discuss how to use technology to create process efficiencies, especially pertaining to client charting.
• Members of our leadership and management teams participated in a “Successful People Management” training as part of the agency’s ongoing effort to improve efficiencies across the agency by providing opportunities for supervisory staff to enhance their performance management, decision-making, and goal-setting skills, among other key managerial skillsets.
• MCH ECOP Prevention and Policy Specialist passed the examination to earn the credential of Dietetic Technician Registered (DTR) which will support work in providing nutrition education and technical assistance to community partners, especially Early Childhood Education Centers.

Technology, Informatics, Data Analysis: strengthen EPCPH’s capabilities to collect, analyze, share, and use data to make timely and information-driven decisions.
• Tobacco Education and Prevention Partnership (TEPP) met with the Community Epidemiology & Program Evaluation Group (CEPEG) at the University of Colorado School of Public Health Anschutz Medical Campus in Aurora,
Colorado. CEPEG is the external evaluator for the TEPP innovative multi-unit housing grant; assisting with data collection techniques, analysis and planning for future activities. A logic model has been created based on analysis of results from the survey conducted at Colorado Springs Housing Authority resident buildings in late October and November that will maximize the reach of the program and help residents succeed in their attempts to quit use of tobacco and nicotine products.

**Communication:** strengthen EPCPH’s capabilities to provide information on public health issues and public health functions to external partners and strengthen EPCPH’s internal communication capabilities.

- The Office of Communication managed media inquiries pertaining to emerging issues including influenza, measles, hepatitis A and fentanyl. The total estimated viewership for these television interviews is 54,752 and the estimated earned media value is $9,930.17.
- The Immunization Program Manager completed an [interview](#) with the Gazette on measles vaccination rates in El Paso County. The Gazette reaches an integrated audience in print and online of 122,200 daily readers.
- The Medical Director completed an [interview](#) with the Gazette on fentanyl in El Paso County.
- In partnership with Leadership Team, the Office of Communication helped develop content for a local panel at the Colorado Counties, Inc. winter conference. This event was a valuable opportunity to provide insight into Public Health’s innovative prevention efforts to address youth suicide in our community. A testament to robust county partnerships, the Public Health Director participated on this panel along with the County Coroner, Executive Director for the Department of Human Services, the County Administrator, and the Colorado Springs Conservatory.
- The agency’s website [www.elpasocountyhealth.org](http://www.elpasocountyhealth.org) had 7,262 new visitors in December, with 20,963 page views.

**Community Partnerships:** develop and maintain strong relationships with key community partners to support public health or assure the provision of health care services.

- Retail Food Program Leads attended the Pikes Peak Colorado Restaurant Association’s meeting to update members on enforcement changes to ensure a collaborative transition to the new state enforcement and rating protocol effective January 1, 2020.
- The Immunization Clinic is working on a partnership with the Pikes Peak Library District to vaccinate their employees using a voucher system.
- Nurse-Family Partnership continues to build relationships with community organizations to coordinate care. Due to our continued work with Healthy Communities, we received 22 prenatal referrals and 4 postpartum referrals, which is an increase from past referral history.
- As a result of strengthened relations between the El Paso and Fort Carson Child Fatality Review Teams, forged by our Youth Health and Development (YHD)
Planner, data from the military was included in two fatality case reviews, a key development in the teams’ efforts to conduct comprehensive analysis of these cases.

- TSP Planner and YHD Planner met with the Monument Social Emotional Wellness (SEW) Coalition Steering Committee to discuss collaboration opportunities between their collaborative and the Youth Suicide Prevention Workgroup.
- TSP Planner and YHD Planner continued collaboration with an active community member in Aspen, CO who is working to replicate the efforts and successes of EPCPH’s Youth Suicide Prevention Workgroup. EPCPH will provide technical assistance and share lessons learned and strategies for launching efforts in Pitkin County.
- TSP Planner and YHD Planner met with the new executive director of Pikes Peak Suicide Prevention, Cassandra Walton, to discuss opportunities for further collaboration between our organizations.
- TSP Planner met with members of the El Paso County Suicide Prevention Task Force Steering Committee to plan a suicide prevention summit to be held in January 2020 in support of the goals of the Colorado-National Collaborative (CNC). The CNC is a partnership of local, state, and national scientists and public health professionals working to identify, promote, and implement successful state- and community-based strategies for suicide prevention in Colorado.
- TSP Planner attended a meeting of the Colorado Springs Firearm Safety Think Tank, convened by the Colorado Springs Branch of the University of Colorado School of Medicine. This group meets monthly to identify ways to reduce firearm-related injuries and deaths in our community, particularly those related to suicide. We discussed continued data collection and preparation for future action regarding firearm-related suicides.
- TSP Planner met with representatives from Community Health Partnership (CHP) to discuss lessons learned from the Youth Suicide Prevention Workgroup. CHP is preparing to become the backbone organization for a number of groups forming to address suicide prevention in target populations such as: young adults, working age adults, older adults, first responders, military, LGBTQ+, and the disabled community.
- TEPP participated in a Manitou Springs City Council work session and first reading of a local ordinance to license all tobacco products and increase the minimum legal sales age to 21. The first reading passed unanimously.
- TEPP convened City of Fountain administrative and law enforcement staff to begin discussions around updating the community’s existing non-cigarette tobacco retail license to include all tobacco products, including cigarettes.
- TEPP participated on the District 20 Health Advisory Committee. The Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) club from Liberty High School presented to the committee on vaping. The SWAT facilitator from Pine Creek High School presented on the events and activities Pines Creek SWAT club has hosted to educate and communicate their tobacco-free schools policy with students.
• MCH is developing a partnership with Metro State University in Denver with the intent of collaborating to provide trauma and resiliency training for El Paso County schools.
• MCH staff, in collaboration with Peaceful Households, Penrose-St. Francis Health Center, and representatives from several school districts, completed development of a new tool for Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) training for Educators. The training is now ready for presentation in schools.
• The Communicable Disease Program Manager met with Peak Vista and the Southern Colorado Health Network to discuss partnership on a hepatitis C screening and care navigation project.

Funding for the Agency and Community Partners: increase funding for EPCPH from diverse sources to support core public health services, programmatic services, and innovative strategies, and provide technical support for funding to key community partners.
• With support from the El Pomar Foundation, staff from Development and Strategic Initiatives presented progress and upcoming opportunities of the RISE (Resilient Inspired Strong Engaged) Southeast Colorado Springs Coalition to a group of investors at a luncheon on December 6. Participants included the Joseph Henry Edmonson Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, CO Department of Local Affairs, and Pikes Peak Community Foundation. Progress highlights included the Panorama Park redevelopment and the Hub at Mission Trace, as well as reports from partners including City of Colorado Springs and Council of Neighbors and Organizations (CONO) on their work in Southeast. Strategic goals of the luncheon were to build relationships with key foundation partners, academic institutions, and business leaders to support public health activities and funding and increase public awareness of health equity issues, its systemic causes, and opportunities to foster health equity.

Grant-Seeking Activity – November-December 2019

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<th>Application Name</th>
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<th>Response</th>
<th>Next Steps</th>
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<td>CDPHE Radon Grant</td>
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<td>CDPHE LPHA EHR Solution</td>
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<tr>
<td>RWJF - Community Impact Contracts R5</td>
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• During Spring 2019, EPCPH applied for a grant titled Strategic Prevention Framework: Partnerships for Success through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The grant would have funded
$300,000 over the course of five years to prevent the onset of and reduce alcohol and marijuana use among youth aged 9-20; prevent and address problems associated with youth alcohol and marijuana use; and increase El Paso County’s capacity to implement a comprehensive prevention approach of evidence-based programs, policies and practices. EPCPH was notified in August 2019 that it was not funded and recently received a scoring summary and feedback on the application. The application scored 90/100 total points and was given several marks of “outstanding”. EPCPH is reviewing all feedback and is currently considering applying for the same grant again in 2020.

Health Equity: increase public awareness of health equity issues, its systemic causes, and opportunities to foster health equity, and remove barriers to health care and community resources to improve health outcomes among health disparate populations.

- The Immunization clinic served 204 “walk-in” clients, and Family Planning clinic also served 69 “walk in” clients in the month of December. Offering the public walk-in clinic times at different locations helps to break down barriers and improve access to healthcare for those who have difficulty coordinating a traditional scheduled appointment.
- The Family Planning Clinic conducted 1,696 Qualifying Visits in 2019, surpassing their contract requirements for 1,571 Qualifying Visits. A Qualifying Visit is an appointment that includes contraceptive counseling service and cancer prevention screening. The program has provided 210 cervical screening tests in 2019. Family Planning has also been increasing private insurance services, diversifying revenue sources so we can continue to serve individuals who are uninsured and underinsured.
- The Immunizations clinic has provided 12,115 vaccines from January through December 2019, an increase of 3,154 vaccines (26%) above the number of vaccines given in the entire year of 2018. Some of the increase was due to the Hepatitis A outbreak and consistent efforts in the clinic to offer the vaccine.
- Nurse-Family Partnership conducted 162 home visits during the month of December. Meeting clients at their desired location or via telephone helps to reduce barriers to health care.

Goal 5 Strive to Ensure a Safe, Secure, Resilient and Healthy Community

Critical Needs Funding – 4th Quarterly (October-December) Report:

As of December 31, we have recruited and hired nine of the ten full-time positions (which includes the Chief Data Scientific Strategist who joined the staff in December) made possible with the additional critical needs funding provided jointly by the El Paso County Board of County Commissioners and the Board of Health. Recruitment efforts for the Health Equity Planner position are under way to complete the ten full-time critical needs positions. On-boarding for recently hired staff continues and, as previously
outlined, these positions are intended to expand the agency’s capacity to enhance and lead strategic agency and community efforts with the use of more robust surveillance data and technology resources, and meet the growing population needs.

We have seen continued growth in the Immunization Clinic’s abilities with the addition of the critical needs nurse position. The program was able to administer over 12,000 vaccines in 2019, a 26% increase from 2018. During the on-going hepatitis A outbreak, the additional nurse provided increased capacity for the Immunization Program to continue work in the community. The program worked with school nurses to discuss ways to improve student immunization rates and set up immunization clinics in underserved areas. The program manager was able to meet with school superintendents to discuss the importance of fully immunized students and explain how vaccines prevent disease. Many school districts in the County are enforcing the immunization requirements this school year and, as a result, we are seeing an increase in our walk-in clinic. The additional nurse enables us to expand our services to the community with more appointments and decreased wait times.

**El Paso County Strategic Plan Update 2017-2021**

Strategy D, Objective 3: Continue to work collaboratively with other stakeholders, via the Groundwater Quality Study Committee (GWQS), to study and protect groundwater quality and identify emerging issues through periodic monitoring, sharing data among stakeholders, and report to the Board of County Commissioners annually. The GWQS continues to meet quarterly, which includes stakeholders from the United States Geological Survey (USGS), Upper Black Squirrel Creek Basin, water districts (such as Cherokee Metro, and Woodman Hills), and other county agencies.

Efforts continue with the GWQS in the Upper Black Squirrel Creek Basin located in the northeastern part of the County by Falcon and Peyton. This study is being conducted by the USGS. A committee was formed with Commissioner Gonzales as the liaison, industry stakeholders, key water districts, and select county staff to address concerns by subdivisions to investigate groundwater quality in the Basin under phased plan. The goal of the study is to have science and data to review for potential regulatory changes. This project will provide information on changes in groundwater nitrate concentration over time and identify potential nitrate sources and other potential contaminants. USGS is currently in phase 3 which is resampling 50 wells. USGS will prepare a final report in 2022 for publication.