

**To:** Board of Health  
**From:** Susan Wheelan, M.B.A. Public Health Director  
**Date:** October 2019 (reflects September 2019)  
**Re:** Director's Report

**Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) Priority Areas:**

El Paso County Public Health (EPCPH) 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](http://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 September was 12,952. This is an increase of 23 from the August caseload. WIC staff continue efforts to reach those in our community who are eligible but not enrolled through the "*Happy Birthday*" campaign, social media and consistent follow-up with the online WIC referral form.
- Maternal Child Health (MCH) Early Childhood Obesity Prevention (ECOP) Community Health Educator (CHE) and Program Manager attended the ECOP in Early Childhood Education (ECE) Annual Stakeholder meeting in Denver, where they received information about ECOP innovations and programs around the state, networked with other public health agencies, early childhood educators, and community partners.

**Mental Health and Substance Use Prevention**

Decrease the incidence of poor mental health and substance use and misuse

- The Women, Infants and Children (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 262 two-question Patient Health Questionnaires (PHQ-2s) and made 11 referrals to AspenPointe for further evaluation and connections to meet their specific behavioral health needs.
- Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) attended a meeting with Colorado Community Health Alliance (CCHA), regional Medicaid organization, and local community partners regarding women and children behavioral health to assist nurses in assessing and coordinating care for behavioral health services.
- The Bullying and Youth Suicide (BYS) CHE and HCP Care Coordinators conducted a *BrainWise* training for home childcare providers, which provides essential tools to help those specializing in child and adolescent development teach critical thinking skills to children. Over 80 participants completed this training which was held at Holy Cross Lutheran Church.

- The BYS CHE began collaboration on a project with Peaceful Households, a community-based organization that focuses on improving life outcomes through trauma-informed care. The goal of this project is to bring Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) education to parents, educators, and families in our community with the aim of preventing bullying and youth suicide.
- Youth Substance Use Prevention (YSUP) Planner attended a Community Education Workgroup meeting for the Coalition for Prevention Education and Recovery (CPAR - formerly the opioid coalition).
- YSUP Planner participated in a meeting of Colorado Association of Local Public Health Officials (CALPHO's) Substance Use Subcommittee. This subcommittee provides input to and advises CALPHO and the CALPHO representative on the *Colorado Consortium for Substance Abuse Prevention Coordinating Committee* and any Consortium subcommittee as needed.
- YSUP Planner assisted the Bullying and Youth Suicide Community Health Educator (CHE) at a training for teachers on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) at Community Prep High School.

### **Surveillance, Epidemiology and Emergency Preparedness**

- Emergency Preparedness and Response Coordinator completed the medical countermeasure action plan and identified three primary planning activities to be developed during FY 2019. A coordination call was also held with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) to discuss the action steps of the plan.
- September was National Preparedness Month. Emergency Preparedness and Response staff offered a presentation to EPCPH staff during the September Town Hall on ways to ensure personal preparedness and also created a short video that was featured on our Facebook page on how to pack a preparedness kit.

### **Hepatitis A Outbreak (2018-2019)**

- El Paso County Public Health conducted 85 vaccine outreach events from October 2018 through September 2019. In coordination with community partners, including the El Paso County Sheriff's Office, Penrose St. Francis parish nurses, and UHealth/Memorial Emergency Department, EPCPH has administered 5,338 Hepatitis A vaccine. There were 110 positive Hepatitis A cases in El Paso County through the end of September. This continues to be a formidable undertaking as all normal business functions in the Communicable Disease and Immunizations programs have proceeded during the time of the outbreak.

### **Influenza Season 2018-2019**

- Influenza surveillance for the season began on September 29, 2019. As of October 8, 2019, two cases had been hospitalized in El Paso County.

### **Rabies**

- The communicable disease program responded to 51 calls regarding possible rabies exposures. Six bats, two raccoons and three skunks were tested for rabies. One bat tested positive for the virus. Six people were recommended for post-exposure prophylaxis.

### Tuberculosis

- The tuberculosis team supported a local school to conduct a contact investigation related to a recent case. EPCPH tested fifty-five students and staff for tuberculosis. No one tested positive.

### **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 640 Bacteriological water tests, 372 for public water systems and 268 for private wells. 85 water samples were assayed for inorganic anions.
- The Laboratory Team and EnvisionConnect (Environmental Health Services' database system) contractors completed the development and testing of the electronic data management process for water sample testing. Training of all lab staff on the process and moving the test system to production will occur in early October.
- The Laboratory performed a prevalence study of Mycoplasma genitalium (MG) - a type of bacteria that can cause a sexually transmitted disease - which compared equally to the national average.

### **2018-2022 Strategic Plan Goals**

The goals selected for each strategic plan topic area represent broad achievements that 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 the agency and programmatic objectives to meet each goal.

**Workforce Development:** strengthen EPCPH's workforce to improve public health and environmental quality.

- The Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) virtual site visit occurred on September 19<sup>th</sup>. Every EPCPH division contributed to the success of the site visit. EPCPH was commended for its strong partnerships and community collaborations; excellence in fostering a culture of quality improvement; and tracking of environmental health inspections and productivity. We look forward to receiving a final report in November.
- Several Environmental Health (EH) Program Managers and staff attended the Colorado Environmental Health Association's (CEHA) Annual Education

- Conference in Keystone, CO. One EH Program Manager led the “Food Track,” which provides educational sessions pertaining to the Retail Food Program. Another EH staff member was elected as CEHA President after serving as President-Elect. Staff attended a variety of relevant sessions covering a range of environmental health topics, including retail food, onsite wastewater, air quality, body art and emerging topics in the industry, and leadership development. Close to 200 people attended representing regulatory, industry, and academic entities.
- Emergency Preparedness and Response Coordinators attended the Medical countermeasures point of dispensing (POD) training. This course addresses medical preparedness with other community partners in preparation for the coordination of plans relating to the Division of Strategic National Stockpile (DSNS) Program.
  - Emergency Preparedness and Response Coordinator participated in Inventory Management training with Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE). This training focused on a new inventory and management training system, which will be utilized in a Strategic National Stockpile event.
  - Emergency Preparedness and Response Coordinators completed the critical workforce group tiers webinar presented by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. This training will support planning efforts for providing vaccinations during pandemic influenza.
  - HCP attended the Colorado Children’s Campaign Annual Luncheon with Alliance for Kids to learn about expanding access to high-quality care for young children. All MCH staff focused on strengthening relationships and communication within their team while identifying and building on individual strengths with the help of a *StrengthsFinder* assessment as well as individual and team coaching sessions.
  - Teen Suicide Prevention (TSP) Planner attended the 2019 Bridging the Divide: Suicide Awareness and Prevention Summit. The theme for this one-day conference was “Enhancing Community Impact and Engagement in Suicide Prevention.”
  - The Disease Prevention Nurse attended a week-long clinical intensive on tuberculosis management.
  - Tobacco Education and Prevention Partnership (TEPP) community health educator attended the Tobacco Free Schools Policy 201 Training provided by RMC Health to enhance knowledge on effective tobacco prevention strategies for schools and develop a plan to strengthen partnerships with schools, through communication about and enforcement of the State’s Tobacco-Free Schools law.

**Technology, Informatics, Data Analysis:** strengthen EPCPH’s capabilities to collect, analyze, share, and use data to make timely and information-driven decisions.

- The Development and Strategic Initiative Office welcomed an Applied Epidemiologist to EPCPH. This position will support agency wide evaluation and assessment activities and expand EPCPH’s capacity to engage in advance data analytics and predictive modeling that measure and predict community impacts, priorities and challenges.

- Emergency Preparedness and Response team conducted the Colorado Public Health Capacity Assessment for El Paso County. The results of the capacity assessment will inform a state-wide public health emergency preparedness capacity report.
- Emergency Preparedness and Response, along with members of the Communicable Disease team, met to discuss Syndromic Surveillance (SyS) and ways in which Tri-County Health Department (TCHD) can support onboarding, information sharing, and bi-directional communication related to timely SyS data.
- TCHD was awarded an initial Syndromic Surveillance grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in 2012 through a joint application with Denver Public Health (DPH) and a subsequent award for the National Syndromic Surveillance Program (NSSP) in 2016 to expand the footprint to include Boulder and Jefferson County and now El Paso County facilities. NSSP is a public health syndromic surveillance system that enhances the ability of health officials at local, state, and national levels to efficiently, rapidly and collaboratively monitor and respond to harmful health effects of exposure to disease or hazardous conditions.
- MCH purchased laptop computers and touchscreen tablets to improve timely coordination and management of activities while out in the field as well as secure access to the electronic health record while conducting care coordination activities in the community.
- The CD/TB program and Environmental Health introduced an improved bite portal to reduce the amount of response time required for high-risk animal bites.
- TEPP, in collaboration with the Population Health Epidemiologist, developed a survey tool and procedures for assessing the smoking rates in low income housing.

**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.

- TEPP and the Office of Communication completed the filming of a vaping presentation. This presentation provides educational content suitable for parents, teachers, and youth, and it enhances the agency’s ability to provide timely, credible information to external partners and community members.
- The Office of Communication managed media inquiries pertaining to emerging issues including vaping, suicide prevention, and tuberculosis. The total estimated viewership for these television interviews is 70,257, and the estimated earned media value is \$14,682.62.
- The agency’s website [www.elpasocountyhealth.org](http://www.elpasocountyhealth.org) had 8,571 new visitors in August, with 24,030 page views.
- EH Staff hosted the Onsite Wastewater Treatment System (OWTS) Technical Advisory Group (TAG), which is a quarterly meeting that includes industry stakeholders and professionals. At these meetings, current regulatory topics and programmatic trends are shared and discussed, providing an opportunity to engage external customers and solicit feedback. EH staff gleans valuable information from these interactions to address emerging concerns and to ensure fair and consistent application of

- the regulations.
- In an effort to increase cross-program collaboration and communication to improve internal and external customer service, Women, Infants and Children (WIC) hosted Maternal Child Health and Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) staff for a presentation provided by therapists from The Resource Exchange. Topics included finicky eaters vs problem feeders, autism, and tips for handling challenging behaviors.
  - TSP Planner and Youth Health and Development Planner presented a resolution to the El Paso County Board of Health and a proclamation to the El Paso County Board of County Commissioners in recognition of National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month.
  - TEPP CHE provided an interview for the Colorado Springs Gazette on vaping. The article shared information on what EPCPH is doing to provide vaping prevention information to the community.
  - TEPP CHE in collaboration with EPCPH's communication team and El Paso County Public Information Office produced a twenty-minute video of the agency's "Tobacco, Vaping and Nicotine" student presentation. This video has shared with schools and will help TEPP reach more youth in our community with facts about vaping.
  - TEPP CHE presented to students in District 20 at the New Opportunities Program. The presentations focused on dispelling commonly heard myths around vaping. The presentation reach was 40 students.

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

- Staff from the Office of Development and Strategic Initiatives represented EPCPH in focus group discussions for the North Nevada Transit Connectivity Study. The north-south corridor extends from Downtown Colorado Springs to the UCCS campus. This study is anticipated to determine the appropriate transit mode, if other than the existing local bus, that will serve the needs of the diverse neighborhoods, major destinations including Downtown and the UCCS campus, and the anticipated growth in the North Nevada area and develop a preferred alignment for this new transit mode. Representation in the discussions reflects the agency's desire to participate on key community collaborations, coalitions, committees, or other work groups that can influence health outcomes and policy, including those that address the social determinants of health.
- EH Program Manager attended the Air Quality Technical Committee meeting with Pikes Peak Areas Council of Governments; this meeting discussed ground-level ozone data from 2019 and other relevant, local air quality issues for future planning purposes in El Paso County.
- The Immunization Program Manager spoke to the Pikes Peak area superintendent group on the importance of up-to-date immunizations for students. District-specific immunization rates were presented on a map developed by the Colorado

- Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE). Resources for student immunizations were also discussed.
- The Immunization Clinic was invited to meet with the Colorado Springs Fire Department and other community partners to discuss flu immunization outreach. We anticipate this partnership will help each of our agencies make better use of the flu vaccine we receive and reach groups we have not reached in the past.
  - Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) Program Manager met with Healthy Communities to discuss NFP program, referrals, and the use of waivers to benefit clients. Discussed seeking referrals prior to delivery to increase impact on women and children, as well as improve client retention.
  - Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) Program Manager met with Tim Sibert, Peak Vista's Director of Clinical Operations Women's Health Center and Camille Rhoades, Prenatal Plus Care Coordinator about the NFP program and referral process. Tim Sibert has offered to have NFP present to their providers at a future Lunch & Learn to increase collaboration and referrals.
  - Teen Suicide Prevention (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 and Youth Health and Development (YHD) Planner led the September Youth Suicide Prevention Workgroup meeting with over 40 partners in attendance. The agenda included a panel of middle and high school students representing five different school districts discussing their experiences with *Sources of Strength*. *Sources of Strength* is a strength-based comprehensive wellness program that focuses on suicide prevention but impacts other issues such as substance abuse and violence. The program is based on a relational connections model that uses teams of peer leaders mentored by adult advisors to change peer social norms about help-seeking and encourages students to individually assess and develop strengths in their life.
  - 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. The group reviewed and discussed utilizing The Aspen Ethical Leadership Program's *Triple A Framework* for Ethical Decision-Making to frame firearm safety messaging.
  - YHD Planner facilitated three multidisciplinary local child fatality case reviews and provided data and prevention recommendations to local, state and national partners.
  - YHD and TSP Planners attended Tri-County Health Department's local Child Fatality Review Team (CFRT) meeting and met with Jefferson County's CFRT facilitator to discuss the child fatality review process and share recent child fatality prevention successes.

- Youth Substance Use Prevention (YSUP) Planner and Community Health Educator (CHE) continue to convene the Fountain Valley Communities That Care (FV-CTC) coalition. The Key Leader Board and the Community Board both held their quarterly meetings in September.
- YSUP Planner facilitated the monthly meeting of the Fountain Community Services (FCS). Led by a vision to provide a safe and supportive environment for all individuals, FCS convenes over 50 agencies monthly to share information and resources and to serve the Fountain Valley through the recognition, enhancement and strengthening of community resources. CTC began facilitating the group in 2018 when the previous leader retired.
- TEPP CHE along with community partner Dr. Grace Houser of Children's Colorado presented information on vaping, health effects and how to start a conversation with youth to over 60 parents at the District 20 Parent Academy.
- TEPP hosted a Tobacco-Free Schools Task Force Meeting for nine mini-grant recipient schools. The task force is made up of facilitators from the Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) clubs in each school. The task force reviewed district Tobacco-Free Schools policies and discussed current and future school-level initiatives.
- TEPP CHE participated in the District 20 Health Advisory Committee, and the District 14 Partners for Healthy Choices meeting. The District wellness committees promote and support health and wellness initiatives for staff and students.
- TEPP CHE participated in the Community Outreach Coalition's Health and Education Fair held in Calhan. The fair brought together healthcare organizations, service providers and the Calhan community to share health education and resources. TEPP provided information on vaping and Colorado QuitLine resources. There were approximately 200 community members in attendance.

**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.

- Youth Health and Development (YHD) Planner met with community partners involved in Children's Hospital Colorado's Safe Kids Coalition to review a national funding opportunity to address safe sleep education in the community.
- Youth Substance Use Prevention (YSUP) Planner, in partnership with Alliance for Kids, submitted a proposal to the Daniels Fund to request funding to hire an Early Childhood Specialist that will be dedicated to carrying out the *Build Public Support for Quality Childcare Early in Life* Implementation and Evaluation plan.

**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.

- EPCPH is working with the Knobhill Urban Arts District and Colorado Springs Food Rescue (CSFR) on a mural project funded by the CO Department of Public Health and Environment focusing on healthy food. The department is supporting the creation of murals to connect with Coloradans and motivate them to get involved in improving their health and environment. Knob Hill is one of four target neighborhoods in which EPCPH and CSFR are working with community to design and evaluate interventions with the potential to significantly improve access to nutritious, affordable food as part of the Food System Assessment. Alongside the mural project (slated for December of this year), there will be a complementary “pop-up” demonstration project resembling a “third space” that has a food purchase element to be evaluated for long-term feasibility and impact potential. This is a unique approach and opportunity to the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) objectives to reduce household food insecurity and increase access to a variety of healthy foods.
- The Immunization clinic served 104 “walk-in” clients, and Family Planning clinic also served 63 “walk in” clients in the month of September. The Immunizations clinic administered vaccines at the SE WIC clinic in September and continue to promote this opportunity. Offering the public walk-in clinic times helps to break down barriers and improve access to healthcare for those who have difficulty coordinating a traditional scheduled appointment.
- Nurse-Family Partnership made 206 nurse home visits during September 2019. Bi-monthly structured playgroups were hosted at the Southeast WIC location clinic to encourage clients to build healthy supportive relationships and positive interactions with their children. Visiting clients in their home and hosting activities in areas close to clients’ homes decrease barriers to care.
- Maternal Child Health (MCH) staff attended the CityMatCH, conference in Providence, RI which showcased communities across the nation that are prioritizing a health equity focus to improve maternal child health outcomes.
- In 2017, FV-CTC coalition identified poverty as an elevated risk factor in their community. Children who live in deteriorating neighborhoods characterized by extreme poverty, poor living conditions, and high unemployment are more likely to develop problems with alcohol and other drug use during adolescence and adulthood. FV-CTC prioritizes the best-practice strategy, “Build Public Support for Quality Childcare Early in Life” in order to decrease the risk factor of poverty. Following a systematic review of available evidence, “center-based early childhood education” has been deemed as recommended by the CDC’s Community Preventive Services Task Force. Research shows the impact of early childhood experiences on adolescent substance abuse.

**Critical Needs Funding – 3rd Quarterly (July-September) Report** – As of September 30, we’ve recruited and hired eight of the ten full-time employees with the additional (2019-2023) funding plan provided jointly by the El Paso County Board of County Commissioners and the Board of Health to meet the core mandated services, health protection and safety needs of the County’s growing population.

Specifically, we recently hired environmental health specialists to focus on retail food establishments and on-site wastewater treatment systems, an applied epidemiologist (as noted earlier in this report) to expand capacity to assist county offices and community organizations to effectively direct resources through evidence-based and best practices, and an emergency preparedness and response coordinator which allows us to focus on El Paso County rather than being stretched to cover the south central region of Colorado, which is a requirement of current grant funding.

An immunization nurse who was hired during the first quarter has increased our capacity to administer vaccinations. In the month of September, we were able to send staff to our Southeast WIC clinic to give immunizations while continuing clinic operations at our Citizens Service Center location. Immunization staff will participate in walk-in flu vaccine events being offered at the Southeast location in the coming months and three evening “Boo to the Flu” outreach events in October for school District 49. The additional nurse makes these outreach events possible and also increases the capabilities of our clinic. When comparing the third quarters of 2018 and 2019, we have seen a 38.9% increase in the number of vaccines administered, and a 61.7% increase in the number of travel clients served.

These positions allow our agency to be proactive and meet our core public health statutory requirements.

### **2019 Quality Improvement Projects**

During the third quarter of 2019, Vital Records Offices throughout the state of Colorado converted to a new vendor for security paper. This is a critical move to maintain the integrity and security of records issued from more than 70 vital records offices throughout the state. As part of the security process every sheet of security paper must be accounted for in the Colorado Vital Information System (COVIS). The CDPHE Field and Fraud unit reviews logging of security paper on a quarterly basis. As a result, our team’s attention to detail and vigilance, every piece of security paper was accounted for in the COVIS system—that is 15,035 pieces of security paper that our team tracked and logged successfully. Although it is not unusual for our Vital Records Team to attain 100% accountability this is especially notable given the transition that occurred during this quarter.