

El Paso County Public Health Director’s Report

To: The El Paso County Board of Health
From: Susan Wheelan, M.B.A. Public Health Director
Date: March 2023 (reflects February 2023)

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Program Spotlight

March is National Nutrition Month, an annual nutrition and education campaign focused on the importance of healthy eating and physical activity habits. This year's theme, "Fuel for the Future" is an provides the opportunity to highlight the work of El Paso County Public Health's (EPCPH) Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program in supporting access to healthy foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and community referrals.

WIC serves pregnant and postpartum women, infants, and children up to age five. Any family who meets eligibility criteria and has a family member in one of these categories—including single fathers, foster parents, and grandparents—can participate. The goals of the program are to improve maternal and child health outcomes and to increase affordable access to healthy foods.

The EPCPH WIC program serves over 25,000 clients a year, with a monthly average enrollment of over 12,000. Clients live in nearly every zip code in the county and are served across three clinics located at the Citizens Service Center, Public Health South in Fountain, and Valley Hi in Southeast Colorado Springs. . In addition, the EPCPH WIC program further expands access to services by providing mobile clinic services across the county to enroll and serve populations with barriers to geography and transportation. EPCPH WIC operates a breastfeeding peer counselor program for WIC clients residing in El Paso County and Boulder County. The program—which utilizes an evidence-based peer-to-peer model— is a two-time recipient of the United States Department of Agriculture's WIC Breastfeeding Award of Excellence.

WIC staff include a program manager, two coordinators, eight registered dietitian supervisors, 24 paraprofessional WIC educators, four program assistants, two program specialists, and four breastfeeding peer counselors. Seven staff are Certified Lactation Counselors, one is an International Board-Certified Lactation Counselor (IBCLC), and nine staff are Registered Dietitians. March 1 celebrates IBCLC Day and March 8 celebrates National Registered Dietician Nutritionist Day.

WIC makes a substantial impact in the lives of clients. Below is a small snapshot of the positive remarks which clients have taken the time to share:

- "WIC has always done well with providing resources surrounding health and nutrition."
- "My WIC educator is one of the most kind and knowledgeable educators I've ever had the pleasure of working with. She is very [thorough] during our appointments and always gives wonderful advice/tips. I get excited for our appointments because [she] is so personable and genuine."
- "I really liked that I could talk to her without feeling rushed or judged. She was able to give me advice with meals and liquid intake for both [me] and my child."

Photos of the WIC team:



Agency Operations

In 2008, the Colorado Public Health Act required the State Board of Health to establish, by rule, the core public health services that each county and district public health agency must provide or assure as well as establish minimum quality standards for those public health services. A revised ruling ([6 CCR 1014-7](#)), effective January 1, 2020, now requires state and local health departments in Colorado to ensure provision of seven Foundational Capabilities and five Foundational Services.



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

El Paso County Public Health (EPCPH) fulfills its statutory requirement of providing these core public health services through the work of its divisions and programs. Activities supporting these services for the timeframe of this report follow. Definitions of each Foundational Public Health Capability and Services can be found on page 19 and 20 of this report.

Foundational Public Health Capabilities

Communications

- The Office of Communication (OoC) managed television inquiries pertaining to meth contamination in local libraries and Shigella during the month of February. The total estimated viewership for these television interviews is more than 57,000 and the estimated earned media value is more than \$9,800. The OoC also managed several print media inquiries on similar topics.
- The OoC's bilingual communications specialist provided an interview in Spanish for Tigre Radio on the topic of behavioral health, with a focus on local resources for parents and youth. Tigre Radio—the first Spanish station in all of northern and southern

Colorado managed and operated locally—reaches Spanish-speaking residents throughout the region.

- The agency’s website www.elpasocountyhealth.org had 23,850 new visitors during February, with 39,892 unique pageviews.

Partnerships

Environmental Health

- On Feb. 21, the Retail Food Program sent out a survey to solicit input from industry partners prior to resuming Food Safety Advisory Group (FSAG) meetings March 2023. Fifty-one industry members--across diverse sectors including restaurants, schools, hospitality, bars, breweries, mobile food trucks, grocery stores, convenience stores, bakeries, caterers, and consultants— expressed interest in participating in the FSAG. Based on industry feedback, the has been scheduled for Tuesday, March 21 as a hybrid in-person and virtual meeting.
- In, mid-February, Environmental Health met with the Body Art Advisory Group (BAAG) and the Child Care stakeholders to discuss timely issues important to each of the industry partners, post pandemic. The two meetings—which served as a platform for information sharing—provided an interactive opportunity for numerous small businesses to ask questions from public health experts. These meetings also provided a forum in the early stages of reviewing fee structures, partner input is key to informing the process. Environmental Health demonstrates service excellence and a commitment to collaboration by proactively working with industry partners to enhance customer service. At the request of Harrison School District 2, on Feb. 23, the Schools program manager and lead environmental health specialist provided an in-depth training to Harrison School District 2 science staff members which focused on proper chemical management, storage and disposal, in addition to lab safety protocols.

Community Health Promotion

- The Tobacco Education and Prevention Partnership (TEPP) hosted the Tobacco-Free Alliance with approximately 20 participants. Building upon previous discussions regarding the past and present state of tobacco control, this meeting focused on the future of tobacco control efforts. TEPP had the opportunity to discuss ongoing challenges in response to the tobacco industry, such as flavor bans and menthol. The Community Partner Spotlight featured Crossroads’ Turning Point, whose staff presenting on their programs, including how they support tobacco cessation in substance use recovery.
- Fountain Valley Communities that Care (FV-CTC) hosted the Community Board meeting, which includes all members of the community-led coalition. The meeting drew approximately 25 sector representatives, who had the opportunity to learn from CTC mobilizers about the recently awarded Colorado Trust grant, which will fund the Connect Fountain Project. As part of this grant, coalition members who are interested in implementing the grant and increasing access to safe spaces for youth in the community had the opportunity to join the existing Community Spaces for Youth strategy team.

Emergency Preparedness and Response

The EPCPH Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR) team attended the Colorado Emergency Management Association (CEMA) conference. This conference is an annual event which fosters relationship building among Colorado emergency management partners and key information on the latest emergency/disaster trends. This event provides a forum for organizations to communicate and collaborate with numerous partners across diverse sectors, including state and national disaster response nonprofits, government agencies, and emergency management professionals.

EPR continues to attend weekly behavioral health meetings as part of the planning process for the opening of a long-term resiliency center that will provide support for those impacted by the Club Q shooting.

EPR conducted a site survey of the Citizens Service Center, Public Health South, and Valley Hi to draft a proposal for placing stop the bleed kits in strategic locations. Additionally, the team is in the process of assessing the potential to provide stop the bleed training for public health staff. February exercises, drills and workshops included:

- The EPR team attended the Pikes Peak Regional Office of Emergency Management (PPROEM) evolution of an incident training. This training brought together the importance of consequence management and incident management on wildfire to include incident support coordination in the emergency operations centers. During a major wildfire event, the EPR team would be activated to manage the Emergency Support Function-8 activities.
- EPR team provided a training to EPCPH leadership on after actions and improvement planning. This training provided the opportunity for an update on the after actions review process and review current improvement plans. These components also inform agency training and exercise plans to support workforce development and quality improvement.
- EPR team facilitated an EPR 101 training to staff in Teller County. This training helps support rural agencies in training new staff to perform emergency preparedness functions. Training highlights included an overview of the public health emergency preparedness grant and the role of public health in emergencies.
- EPR team attended the initial planning meeting for the 2023 full scale Colorado Springs Airport exercise. This exercise will take place in June 2023 and will incorporate partners from across the local jurisdiction to exercise response activities during a major aviation accident / event.

Foundational Public Health Services

Communicable Disease Prevention, Investigation and Control

The Communicable Disease (CD) program hosted meetings with public health partners from Fort Carson and the United States Air Force Academy to discuss the role of EPCPH and coordination with military installations in El Paso County. During the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's (CDPHE) regional epidemiology meeting, the CD team presented on EPCPH's response to a Shigella outbreak. The CD program manager led the creation of a peer group of local public health program managers leading communicable disease response in their

respective agencies. These managers will come together bi-monthly to discuss issues pertinent to local communicable disease response and prevention.

The Immunization program continued to support outbreak response efforts through the provision of a mobile clinic at Marian House offering pneumococcal vaccine (PCV20) and flu shots to people experiencing homelessness, in addition to offering eight mpox vaccines. A total of 91 flu vaccines were also provided in February.

The Tuberculosis (TB) clinic team evaluated 10 individuals for latent tuberculosis in the month of February. TB clinic staff observed a total of 47 doses of medications taken for both active (infectious) TB cases and latent (non-infectious) pediatric TB cases via in-person and video visits.

- There is currently one active TB case and 11 latent TB cases under the care of EPCPH's TB program.
- One patient is under care for presumptive infectious TB.
- The TB program also screened three El Paso County residents who were exposed to an active TB case while traveling outside of El Paso County.

Additionally, the TB clinic continues to provide clinical consultations to community partners such as Peak Vista Community Health Centers and Lutheran Family Services, in addition to collaborating with state partners regarding ongoing case management of local TB cases.

Environmental Public Health

Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (OWTS)

As compared to last year, there is a slight decline in OWTS permit applications. Custom home builds (those on OWTS) are only seeing a slight decline as compared to the custom/track homes (typically on central wastewater). It is important to note that new home build permit applications continue represent the majority of submissions. However, the EH team continues to receive minor repair applications related to property sales and OWTS repairs. Property sale inspection reviews are seeing a slight increase over the previous month.

Maternal, Child, Adolescent and Family Health

The Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program continued to serve pregnant and postpartum women, infants and children up to age five through food benefits, community referrals, nutrition education and breastfeeding support. Staff prepared for decreases to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits on March 1, which will affect the 3,904 clients who are enrolled in the SNAP program. This included staff training, actively referring to care coordination and material preparation.

In follow up to a previous partnership meeting, the WIC registered dietician community outreach planner completed four WIC information sessions at Peak Vista Community Health Centers, which provided valuable program information sharing between the two organizations. WIC also re-launched the mobile clinic, starting with a new site at Fort Carson Army Community Services. This will provide on-base WIC services to military families. In March, WIC will begin planning stages for all other community sites with a goal of fully re-launching mobile clinics in June.

WIC staff continued to maintain strong partnerships with internal resources such as Nurse-Family Partnership, the Reproductive Health Clinic, Maternal Child Health and care coordination, resulting in 41 referrals between the programs.

Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) nurses conducted 213 visits in February 2023. Of these visits, 137 were conducted in client homes and 76 were conducted through telehealth. In February, El Paso County Public Health NFP nurses served 161 families, enrolled 13 new clients to the program, and graduated 3 clients who had participated in the NFP program for a full 2 ½ years. Connecting Nurse-Family Partnership clients to other needed community resources is a significant role of the NFP program. In February, NFP nurses made 41 referrals on behalf of 20 individual families. These referrals were to housing, mental health treatment, childcare, lactation support, WIC, and Medicaid among others.

Chronic Disease, Injury Prevention and Behavioral Health Promotion

The Tobacco Education and Prevention Partnership (TEPP)—in collaboration with James Irwin High School’s Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) club— provided tobacco cessation resources and information about the dangers of smoking and vaping at the school’s Valentine’s Day – Love Your Lungs event. TEPP engaged with approximately 75 students and staff.

Access to and Linkage with Healthcare

The care coordinators provided outreach to the East and Penrose libraries and attended two community events where they shared flyers in English and Spanish. From these and other ongoing partnership efforts, the care coordinators received 73 new referrals (three of which were Spanish-speaking) seeking housing, food access, utility and rental assistance, mortgage assistance, transportation, health insurance, disability, child care, infant supplies, employment, COVID-19 information, and COVID-19 testing.

Care coordinators attended the Black History Month event on Feb. 26 to share flyers about the care coordination program and the numerous resources available to the community. Care coordinators also toured Springs Rescue Mission on Feb. 14 to learn about ways to streamline and collaborate on supports and services. Additionally, care coordinators distributed 11 COVID-19 test kits and provided eight households with hygiene products and personal protective equipment.

Lastly, care coordinators were able to successfully navigate clients to several key resources including:

- Working together with the CD program to get a last-minute food delivery to an individual in COVID-19 isolation at a local hotel.
- Organizing an emergent need delivery for a family isolating due to COVID through collaboration with COSILoveYou.
- Delivering multiple food boxes to a family in need.
- Assisting a client in establishing primary care services.
- Assisting multiple clients in applying for Low-income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP).

- Working with the EPCPH CD program to support a family in finding a hotel stay, then worked with COSILoveYou to coordinate food delivery which could be prepared in their hotel, to support isolation and protect the community from COVID exposure.
- Assisting an elderly client with a disability to receive transportation services through Silver Key.

Appendix A: Environmental Health Activity

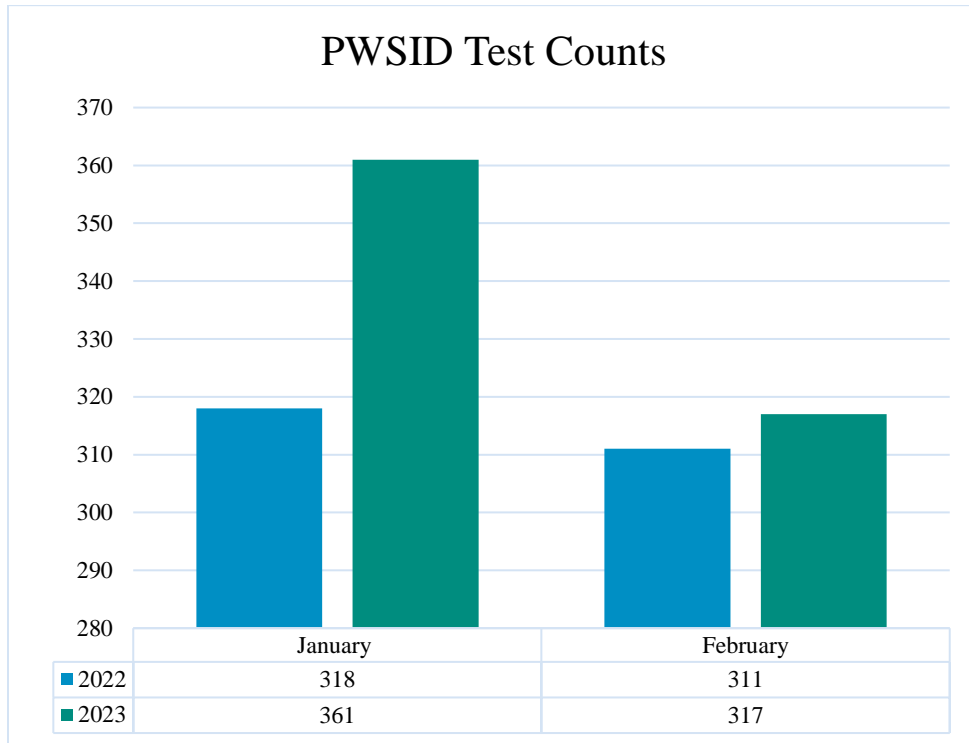
The table below captures a snapshot of activities across the Environmental Health (EH) Division. This work is accomplished through science-based risk assessment and policy development, inspections, consultation, education, and regulations designed to protect the food we eat, the water we drink, the air we breathe, and the places we live, work and play. **2022**

Environment Health Activity	2023 Total as of 2/28/23	2022 Total
Air Quality Construction Permits	29	163
Air Quality Open Burn Permits	10	19
Air Quality Complaints	3	38
Animal Bites Reported	151	877
Body Art Routine Inspections	15	86
Body Art Follow-up Inspections	0	8
Body Art Complaints	2	22
Child Care Regular Inspections	23	138
Child Care Follow-up Inspections	0	15
Child Care Complaints	2	8
Child Care High Risk Field Consults	0	18
Land-Use Planning Review	30	232
Onsite Wastewater Treatment System (OWTS) Pumper Truck Inspections	8	85
OWTS Final Inspections	75	576
OWTS Partial Inspections	32	235
OWTS Application Design Reviews	66	558
OWTS Design Revision Requests	24	221
OWTS Design Revision (add) Requests	15	
OWTS New Permit Applications	39	351
OWTS Repair Permit Applications	33	276
OWTS Modification Permit Applications	3	15
OWTS Acceptance Doc for Title Transfer	108	866
OWTS Soil and Site Evaluations	30	425
OWTS Complaints	0	27
OWTS O&M Systems	14	65
Recreational Water Safety Inspections	22	295
Recreational Water Follow-up Inspections	2	17
Recreational Water Complaints	2	9
Retail Food Establishment (RFE) Regular Inspections	321	1908
RFE Re-Inspections	48	171
RFE Complaint Investigations	82	391

Environment Health Activity	2023 Total as of 2/28/23	2022 Total
RFE Plan Reviews	34	193
School Safety Regular Inspections	4	13
School Safety Complaints	1	4
School Safety Self-Certification Audits	12	15
School Safety Self-Certifications Returned	0	332
Waste Tire Facilities Regular Inspections	25	115
Waste Tire Follow-up Inspections	0	1

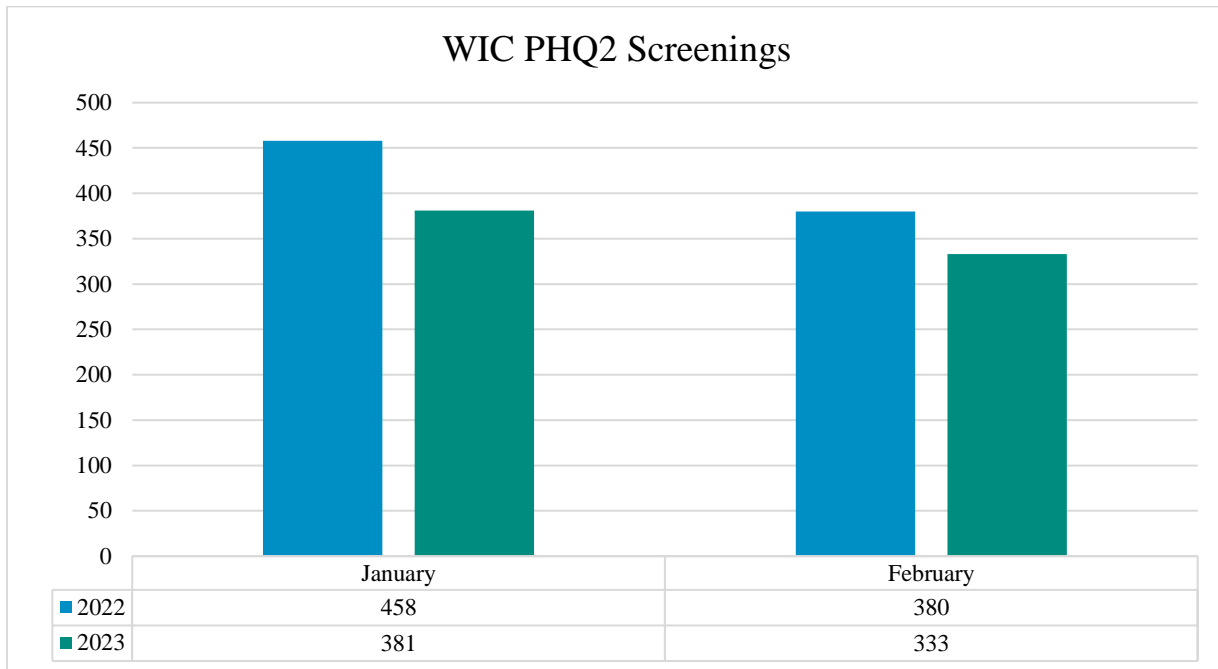
Appendix B: Laboratory Public Water System Test Counts

The EPCPH Laboratory is certified to test drinking water and wastewater for naturally occurring contaminants in which the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has defined contamination limits. The laboratory performs testing for El Paso County and several surrounding county's public water systems and private wells to assure safe water sources and protect public health. Testing includes bacteriological tests for pH, coliforms and E. coli, and inorganic anions such as nitrates, nitrites, fluoride, and chloride. The graph below shows data for public water system identification (PWSID) counts for public water system tests.



Appendix C: WIC Patient Health Questionnaire-2 for Depression

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 for this at-risk group of women. CDC research shows about one in eight women with a recent live birth experiences symptoms of postpartum depression. Screening can provide a referral and connection to treatment resources. WIC staff completed 333 Patient Health Questionnaire-2 (PHQ2) screening see chart below.



The screenings led to a total of 16 referrals:

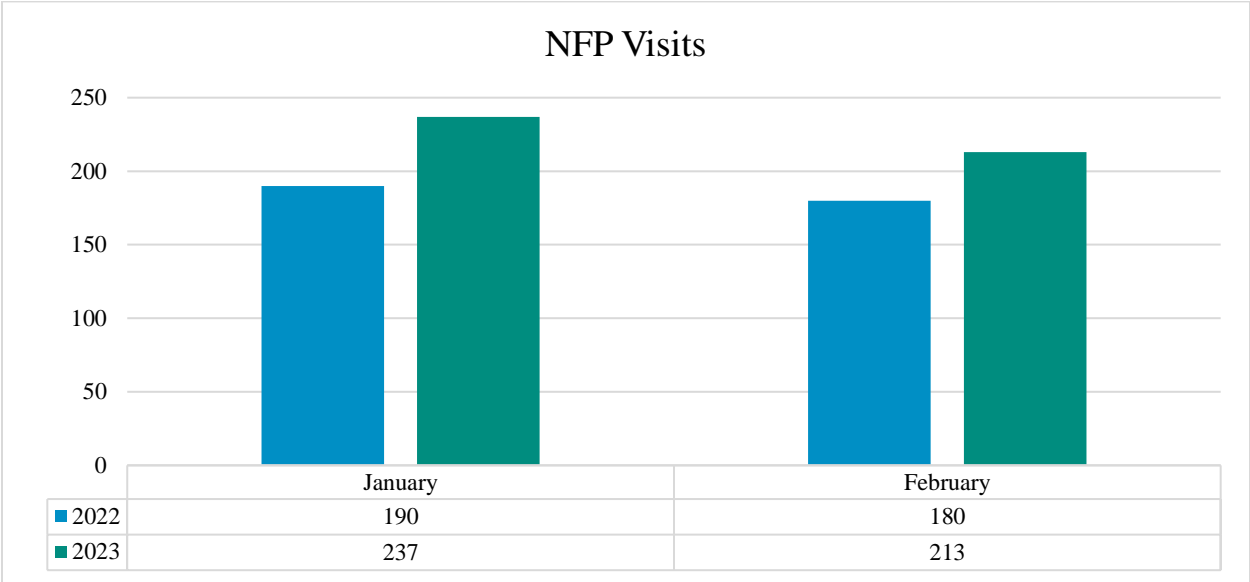
- Six referrals were made to local behavioral health resources.
- Four referrals were made to Colorado Community Health Alliance (CCHA) for further evaluation and connection to meet their specific behavioral health needs.
- Four individuals requested resource numbers to call themselves.
- One client on private insurance was advised on where to find providers.
- One client on Tricare was referred to active-duty resources on base.
- 31 clients were already receiving services and declined a referral for that reason.

Appendix D: Immunizations Program Vaccines Administered

Month	Non-COVID Vaccines	COVID Vaccine Administered in Clinic/Distributed (Long-Term Care Facilities and Operation House Call)	COVID Vaccine Administered by EPCPH Mobile Team
January	502	115	14
February	592	89	0*

*The mobile van team supported other vaccine efforts in the community (PCV20, flu, mpox)

Appendix E: Nurse-Family Partnership Client Visits



Appendix F: Disease Prevention and Control

Category	Disease	2023	2022	2021	2019
Food/Waterborne Diseases					
	Campylobacter	18	118	75	89
	Cryptosporidium	5	25	14	16
	Cyclosporiasis	0	10	4	3
	Giardia	12	46	52	42
	Hepatitis A	0	3	0	127
	Legionellosis	2	11	10	7
	Salmonella	4	54	65	71
	Shigella	9	57	8	29
	Shiga Toxin-producing E. coli (STEC)	6	42	29	26
	Vibriosis	0	6	2	4
Food/Waterborne Diseases Totals		56	372	259	414
Viral Hepatitis					
	Hepatitis B (acute)	3	3	0	3
	Hepatitis B (chronic)	20	92	81	76
	Hepatitis C (acute)	0	3	0	10
	Hepatitis C (chronic)	47	293	245	614
Viral Hepatitis Totals		70	391	347	703
Healthcare Associated Infections					
	Carbapenem-Resistant Acinetobacter baumannii (CRAB)	0	1	0	0
	Carbapenem Non-susceptible Enterobacteriaceae (CRE)	10	46	42	40
	Carbapenem-Resistant Pseudomonas Aeruginosa (CRPA)	8	43	66	32
Healthcare Associated Infections Totals		18	90	108	72

Category	Disease	2023	2022	2021	2019
Vaccine Preventable Diseases					
	Haemophilus influenzae (H. flu)	0	14	11	13
	Measles	0	0	0	0
	Meningococcal Disease	1	0	0	1
	Mumps	0	3	0	3
	Pertussis	11	29	10	75
	Rubella	0	0	0	0
	Varicella	8	22	10	45
Vaccine Preventable Diseases Totals		20	68	31	137
COVID-19		3095	103,343	85,884	0
Hospitalized Influenza*		63	527	17	506
Monkeypox		0	24	-	-

*Flu Seasons:

- September 27, 2020- May 22, 2021; 2
- October 3, 2021- May 21, 2022; 188
- October 2, 2022- May 20, 223; 383

Table 2 – Foodborne illness complaints received at El Paso County Public Health in February.

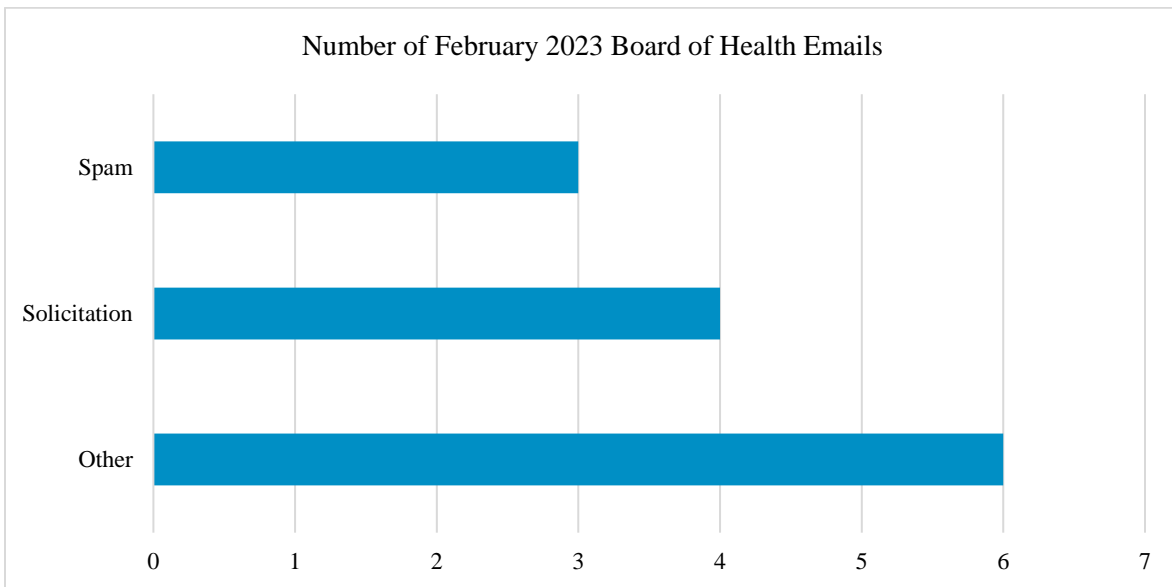
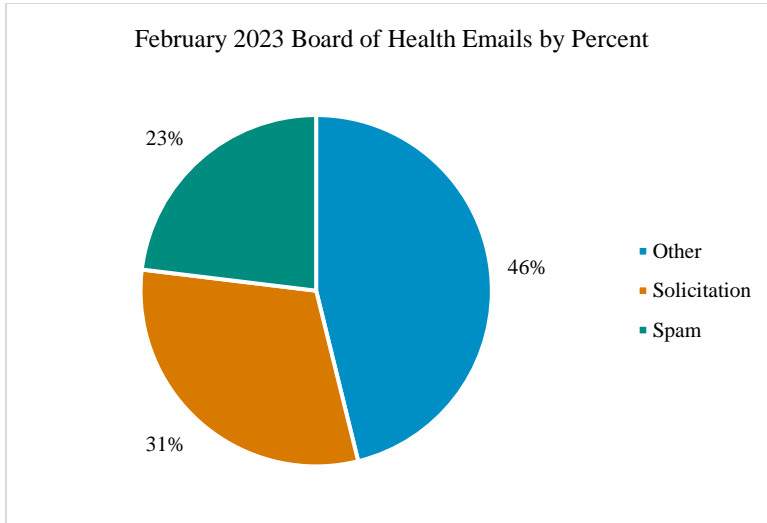
Foodborne Illness Complaints	# Referred to Env. Health
26	2

Table 3 – Annual rabies control activities

Year	Rabid animals total	Animal type
2023	0	--
2022	4	Bat (4)
2021	7	Bat (3), Skunk (3), Cat (1)
2020	10	Bat (5), Skunk (4), Coyote (1)

Appendix G: Board of Health Email Inquiries

The Board of Health email (boardofhealth@elpasoco.com) received 13 unique emails during the month of February. Six of the emails were classified as other, four emails were solicitations and three emails spam.



Definitions of Foundational Terms

Foundational Public Health Capabilities

Assessment and Planning- Colorado’s governmental public health system will apply the principles and skilled practice of epidemiology, laboratory investigation, surveillance and program evaluation to support planning, policy and decision making in Colorado.

Communications - Colorado’s governmental public health system will be a trusted source of clear, consistent, accurate and timely health and environmental information.

Policy Development and Support - Colorado’s governmental public health system will inform and implement policies to meet the community’s changing health needs. Public health policies will aim to eliminate health disparities, reduce death and disability, and improve environmental quality and health outcomes for all people in Colorado.

Partnerships - Colorado’s governmental public health system will create, convene, and support strategic partnerships, engage community members and cross-sectoral partners, agencies, and organizations to achieve public health goals.

Organizational Competencies – No official definition from CDPHE but this section will be used to report on QI, accreditation, finance/budget, governance, awards, etc.

Emergency Preparedness and Response - Colorado’s governmental public health system, in coordination with federal, state and local agencies and public and private sector partners, will have the capability and capacity to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies with health, environmental and medical impacts.

Social Determinants of Health - Colorado’s governmental public health system will intentionally focus on improving systems and institutions that exacerbate health disparities so that all people and communities in Colorado can achieve the highest level of health possible. Governmental public health will have the requisite skills, competencies, and capacities to play an essential role in creating comprehensive strategies needed to address health inequities, and social and environmental determinants of health.

Foundational Public Health Services

Communicable Disease Prevention, Investigation and Control - Colorado’s governmental public health system will carry out state and locally coordinated surveillance, disease investigation, laboratory testing, and prevention and control strategies to monitor and reduce the incidence and transmission of communicable diseases. Programs will target illnesses that are vaccine-preventable, zoonotic, vector-borne, respiratory, food- or water-borne, bloodborne, healthcare associated, and sexually transmitted as well as emerging threats. Communicable Disease Control will collaborate with national, state, and local partners to ensure mandates and guidelines are met and timely, actionable information is provided to the public and to health professionals.

Environmental Public Health - Colorado's governmental public health system will use evidence-informed practices to understand the cause and effect relationships between environmental changes and ecological and human health impacts, to protect, promote, and enhance the health of the community and environment. Agencies will participate in the protection and improvement of air quality, water, land, and food safety by identifying, investigating, and responding to community environmental health concerns, reducing current and emerging environmental health risks, preventing communicable diseases, and sustaining the environment in a coordinated manner with agencies at the federal, state, and local levels as well as industry stakeholders and the public.

Maternal, Child, Adolescent and Family Health - Colorado's governmental public health system will develop, implement and evaluate state-wide, regional and local strategies related to maternal, child, adolescent and family health to increase health and wellbeing, reduce adverse health outcomes and advance health equity across the life course. Strategies may include but are not limited to identifying and providing information, promoting evidence-informed and multi-generational approaches, identifying community assets, advocating for needed initiatives, and convening partners.

Chronic Disease, Injury Prevention and Behavioral Health Promotion - Colorado's governmental public health system focuses on common risk and protective factors that affect social, emotional and physical health and safety. To prevent chronic disease and injuries and promote behavioral health, Colorado's governmental public health system will use policy, systems and environmental change strategies to comprehensively address the root causes of poor health outcomes and advance health equity. Priority areas include, but are not limited to, nutrition, physical activity, oral health, access to care and disease management, injury prevention, violence prevention, suicide prevention, mental health and substance use (including tobacco, alcohol and other substances).

Access to and Linkage with Healthcare - All Coloradans should be connected with and have access to needed personal health care services that include primary care, maternal and child health care, oral health care, specialty care, and mental health care. All Coloradans should be connected with and have access to needed personal health care services that include primary care, maternal and child health care, oral health care, specialty care, and mental health care.