

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

## **COVID-19 Status and Response**

The County's response continues to be centered around the collective action of Public Health and our multiple health and community partners. Our robust efforts have resulted in significant progress to date. In the last week (May 12-19), the El Paso County and Colorado Springs Vaccine Consortium and federal partners surpassed 558,000 COVID-19 vaccine doses administered in the County. While our community has made tremendous progress in vaccination efforts, we still have much work to do to stem the decrease in community demand for the vaccine in order to meet the state's goal of vaccinating 75% of the vaccine-eligible population with at least one dose by July 4.

As of the date of this report (May 19), our COVID-19 incidence is trending downward, with the lowest seven-day incidence in more than a month. While it is encouraging to see lower disease transmission in our community, there continues to be a consistent number of deaths and hospitalizations as a result of the prior elevated levels of incidence. Widespread vaccination is a critical tool to help overcome the pandemic and help keep our community safe, and this remains the primary focus of Public Health's response activities with the El Paso County and Colorado Springs Vaccine Consortium.

## **Vaccine Strategy**

To further reduce barriers and increase broad access to the vaccine, the El Paso County and Colorado Springs Vaccine Consortium has worked diligently to employ additional strategies:

- Expanding mobile van capacity and resources to bring vaccines directly into the community and make access to the vaccine as low-barrier and convenient as possible.
- Working with the business community, schools, faith-based community, non-profits, and many other partners to pair mobile vaccine units with well-established and high-traffic community events and hubs. Mobile van sites have included Cheyenne Mountain High School, sports venues, and community centers including Creekside Success Center and Westside Community Center.
- Increasing the availability of walk-ins and same day appointments
- Implementing flexible vaccine clinic hours in the mornings and evenings to accommodate work schedules
- El Paso County has nearly 30 COVID-19 vaccine providers with more than 100 convenient locations. An interactive map to find the nearest provider, along with contact information to make appointments, can be found here: [elpasocountyhealth.org/how-can-i-get-a-vaccine](https://elpasocountyhealth.org/how-can-i-get-a-vaccine).

## Vaccine Data

Vaccine data through May 18, including federal estimates:

- **Total doses administered: 482,425**
  - 558,500 with federal estimates
- **People vaccinated: 268,595 (44.1%)**
  - 312,100 (51.2%) with federal estimates
- **People fully vaccinated: 223,813 (36.7%)**
  - 256,300 (42.1%) with federal estimates
- **Seven-day average daily doses administered: 3,209**
- **Percentage of vaccine-eligible people (16+) vaccinated: 43.8%**
- **Percentage of vaccine-eligible people (16+) fully vaccinated: 36.5%**

To reach the goal of vaccinating at least 75% of eligible individuals with at least one dose by July 4, at the current rate of vaccination in the county, would need to vaccinate an additional 2,200-2,300 new people per day. Following the Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announcement earlier this month, providers in El Paso County have started to administer the Pfizer vaccine to youth ages 12-15 years old, which adds approximately 40,000 more people who are eligible for the vaccine in El Paso County, thus increasing the County's delta to goal.

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

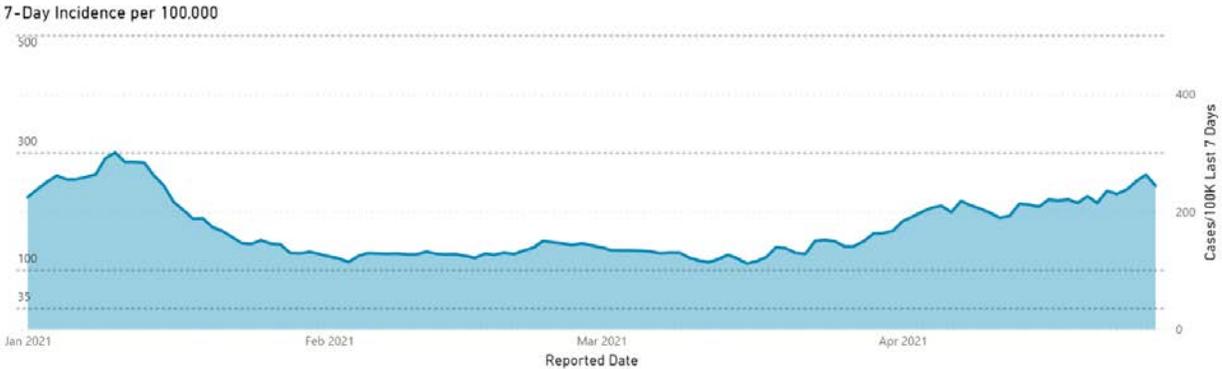
## Ongoing COVID-19 Response Activities

### Testing

COVID-19 testing remains an important tool to help us monitor how widespread the virus is in our community. To date, over 803,000 tests have been conducted in the county, including those completed at Public Health's four community testing sites. Current information on testing sites is available at [www.elpasocountyhealth.org/covid-19-testing-information](http://www.elpasocountyhealth.org/covid-19-testing-information)

### Case Monitoring

During April, El Paso County saw a consistent increase in COVID-19 cases and incidence, with data suggesting that the county was in the early stages of a new wave for COVID-19 metrics. This can be seen in the graph below, which shows incidence trends from January 2021 through the end of April 2021. However, May has brought declines in positive cases.



COVID-19 data trends through Wednesday, May 19:

- **Seven-day incidence:** 196.1 (down from 203.3 the previous day)
- **Average daily cases in the last seven days:** 108 (down from 116 the previous day)
- **Seven-day positivity:** 6.88% (up from 6.85% the previous day)
- **Hospital admissions in the last seven days (May 11 – May 18):** 57 (down from 62 during the previous seven days)
- **Deaths in the last seven days (May 11 – May 17):** 7 (down from 13 during the previous seven days)

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

### Communication

- The Joint Information Center (JIC) managed television and print media inquiries pertaining to emerging issues including COVID-19 vaccine rollout, distribution and expansion, local vaccine clinics, mobile vaccination clinics, National Public Health Week, COVID-19 numbers and trends, outbreaks, the COVID-19 dial framework, and Dr. Moma Health and Wellness Clinic.
  - Of note, on April 8, [KOAA ran a story recognizing the efforts of local public health staff during National Public Health week](#). The story opened by highlighting that, “Public health workers have been nothing short of heroes since the pandemic began, and this week is a time to recognize their work because it’s National Public Health week.”
- On April 8, EPCPH Medical Director Dr. Robin Johnson completed a podcast with the City of Colorado Springs’ [Behind the Springs Podcast](#). For this episode, Dr. Johnson focused on providing in-depth information and education on why it’s important to get vaccinated, as well as how, where, and when to get vaccinated.
- On April 23, EPCPH, along with El Paso County and the City of Colorado Springs launched a “[Don’t Wait. Vaccinate!](#)” [multimedia COVID-19 vaccine outreach campaign](#). The campaign is part of a community-wide grassroots effort to encourage residents to get the vaccine to help our community overcome the pandemic. The aspirational and forward-looking campaign—which includes a schoolteacher, college student, families, physician, businesses owners and everyday people—features community members taking part in activities they miss most. The bilingual English and Spanish campaign is being shared widely on

social media, English and Spanish radio, outdoor and bus advertising.

- The agency's website [www.elpasocountyhealth.org](http://www.elpasocountyhealth.org) had 89,865 new visitors in April, with 284,871 unique pageviews.
- The Public Health team has provided [presentations](#) on the vaccine to Manitou Springs City Council and Board of County Commissioners, and will be providing updates to Colorado Springs City Council and Fountain City Council, among other groups, over the next several weeks to help community leaders understand the data as it relates to the vaccine and how they can work with us to provide information and outreach to the community and help improve vaccine rates in the county.

### **Statewide mask update**

Following the CDC guidance on May 13 declaring that fully vaccinated individuals need not wear a mask, Gov. Polis announced an update to the statewide mask mandate. As a general rule, masks are not required any longer. For individuals who have not been vaccinated or are not fully vaccinated, it is suggested they wear a mask, though not required. There are exceptions to this, with masks being required for unvaccinated or not fully vaccinated individuals in specific settings. The updated Executive Order can be found [here](#).

In light of changes to the mask mandate, Public Health has established procedures related to our staff's interactions with the public. In sum, staff who are fully vaccinated are no longer required to wear masks indoors, except when:

- Working with members of the public in a health care or clinical setting. This would apply to our programs in Family Planning, Immunizations, Women, Infants and Children (WIC), the Laboratory, Tuberculosis, Nurse-Family Partnership and Maternal Child Health (when with clients), in addition to staff working at vaccine points of dispensing.
- Working with members of the public in the field or other face-to-face setting. This would apply to Environmental Health when in the field, Vital Records, front desk staff, and other staff members who have public interactions.

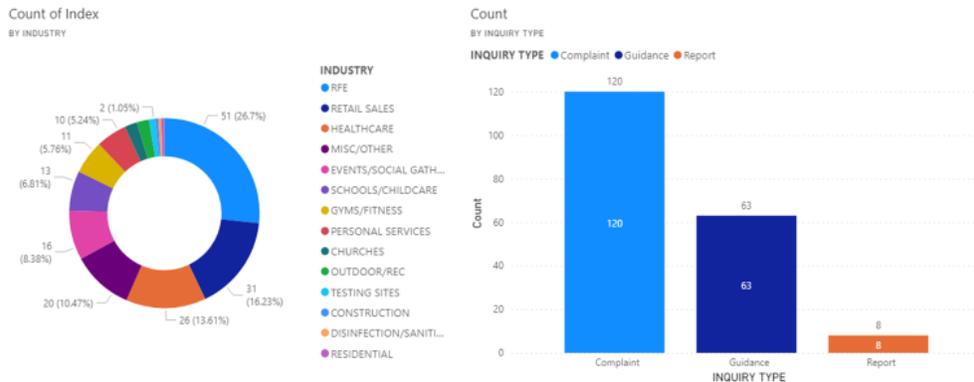
Additional guidance has been issued and communicated to staff and shared with Board of Health members.

### **Continuity of Operations**

#### **Environmental Health (EH)**

Environmental Health continues to be primarily engaged with helping with interpretation of evolving Public Health Orders (PHOs) as they relate to businesses and other concerns (events, camps, etc.). With the continued easing of restrictions, the EH team is seeing a decrease in the volume of PHO related inquiries -- as noted in the report below for the month of April relative to prior months -- and is beginning to turn its attention to planning for the return to normal operations, with particular focus on enhancing processes related to our Onsite Wastewater Treatment System (OWTS) program and other key EH services.

**Total Inquiries: 191**  
(Includes Complaints, Guidance/Questions, and Reports of Cases)



**EH Communication and Outreach**

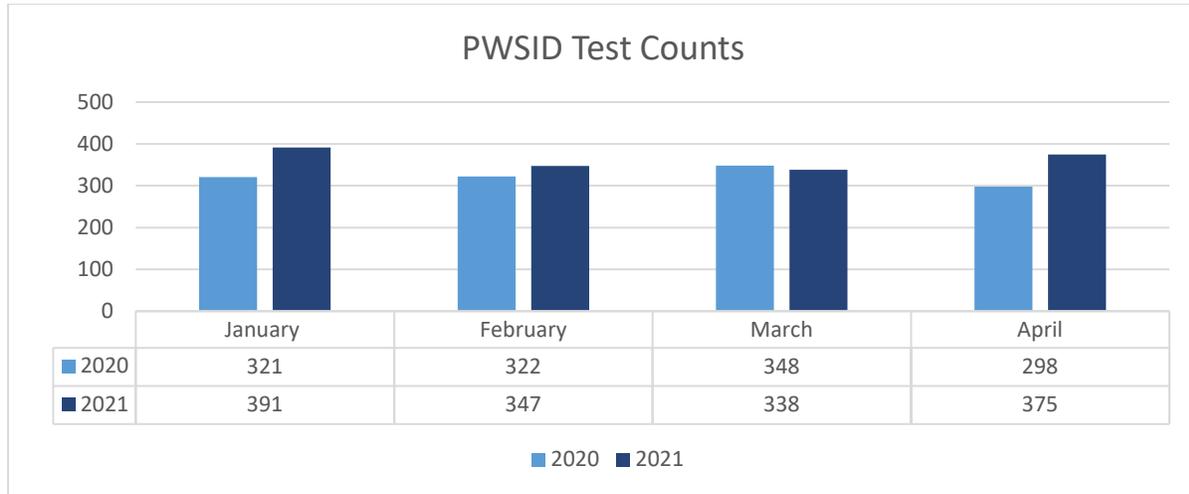
- On April 8th the Retail Food Program Manager was a guest speaker on a webinar with the Southern Colorado Women’s Chamber of Commerce. The webinar provided Public Health Order requirements for businesses and offered guidance on the mask mandate and vaccine information. Business owners expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to ask questions and obtain up-to-date information.
- The Retail Food Program resumed on-site, scored inspections of Retail Food Establishments in April. EHS staff conducted refresher trainings with CDPHE on conducting Risk Based Inspections. The Retail Food Team has received positive feedback from industry on the education they are receiving in the field during inspections.
- Environmental Health Leadership attended multiple partner event-planning meetings to provide special event guidance regarding COVID-19 best practices. This included planning for: Western Street Breakfast, Porchfest, School Events, Summer Camps, and large venues to include: Broadmoor World Arena, The Switchbacks and The Vibes.
- The Retail Food Program Manager worked with the Fire Department and Regional Building to update the expanded outdoor seating requirements for restaurants. This was a collaboration between Colorado Springs Chamber & EDC, City of Colorado Springs, Colorado Springs Fire Department, Pikes Peak Regional Building Department, Downtown Partnership and EPCPH.
- On April 28<sup>th</sup> the Water Quality Program Manager participated in a live community webinar in partnership with Regional Building Department. The live webinar was intended to provide information related to permitting of wastewater systems to include onsite wastewater treatment systems and wastewater treatment works. It was an interactive session providing the community and industry members an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the permitting process.

## Other EH Activities

<b>Environment Health Activity</b>	<b>As of 4.30.21</b>	<b>2020 Total</b>
<b>Air Quality Construction Permits</b>	56	109
<b>Air Quality Open Burn Permits</b>	8	16
<b>Air Quality Complaints</b>	15	29
<b>Animal Bites Reported</b>	214	1397
<b>Body Art Inspections</b>	32	74
<b>Body Art Follow-up Inspections</b>	3	0
<b>Body Art Complaints</b>	9	13
<b>Child Care Regular Inspections</b>	98	91
<b>Child Care Follow-up Inspections</b>	0	0
<b>Child Care Complaints</b>	0	1
<b>Land-Use Planning Review</b>	71	166
<b>OWTS Final Inspections</b>	161	512
<b>OWTS Partial Inspections</b>	30	71
<b>OWTS Soil And Site Evaluations</b>	141	464
<b>OWTS New Permit Applications</b>	121	330
<b>OWTS Repair Permit Applications</b>	99	267
<b>OWTS Modification Permit Applications</b>	3	19
<b>OWTS Application Design Reviews</b>	156	687
<b>OWTS Acceptance Doc for Title Transfer</b>	310	1009
<b>OWTS Pumper Truck Inspections</b>	14	88
<b>OWTS Complaints</b>	3	31
<b>Recreational Water Safety Inspections</b>	131	230
<b>Recreational Water Follow-up Inspections</b>	9	5
<b>Recreational Water Complaints</b>	1	3
<b>RFE Regular Inspections</b>	1030	854
<b>RFE Re-Inspections</b>	5	27
<b>RFE Complaint Investigations</b>	88	226
<b>RFE Plan Reviews</b>	45	142
<b>School Safety Regular Inspections</b>	0	5
<b>School Safety Complaints</b>	0	4
<b>Waste Tires Facilities Regular Inspections</b>	28	30
<b>Waste Tires Follow-up Inspections</b>	2	0

- May 14 suspected plague in squirrels was reported in the Patty Jewett and Divine Redeemer neighborhoods necessitating EH and Communicable Disease Team collaboration on communication efforts to the community and tracking of cases.

**Laboratory: Public Water System Tests conducted**



**EH Workforce Development Activities**

- On April 15 the Air Quality Program Manager, Program Lead and Environmental Health Specialists attended visible emissions and opacity training and became certified Visible Emissions Evaluators, which is required by the US EPA to conduct Method 9 observations during complaint investigations.
- On April 21 the Air Quality Program Lead and Environmental Health Specialists attended and successfully completed the Odor Intensity Rating and Observation Certification Course hosted by CDPHE and became certified to determine and grade odor emissions in terms of Regulation No. 2 of the Colorado Air Pollution Control Commission, which is required to conduct odor readings during complaint investigations.
- Through the month of April, the Waste Tire Program Lead and an Environmental Health Specialist (EHS) completed training and shadowed inspections with representatives of CDPHE, which filled a gap in the program and increased the amount of 'signed-off' EHS to ensure compliance with the Solid Waste Sites and Facilities Regulations.

**Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program**

- The Women, Infants and Children (WIC) caseload for April was 12,756. 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.
- WIC worked with the Communications team to develop a provider resource that displays breastfeeding services throughout El Paso County. Communications also assisted in planning for social media posts pertaining to the summer increase of the cash value benefit for fruits and vegetables.

- WIC enhanced its partnership with Fort Carson by arranging an open line of communication with Fort Carson Public Health Nurses to assist mutual clients.
- WIC's Breastfeeding Coordinator works with Newborn Hope and various other organizations to strategize on ways to best support families with infants in the NICU. Additionally, Newborn Hope provided "heart cloths" for WIC to give to families to help decrease stress that newborns in the NICU can experience.
- WIC 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 April, WIC staff completed 369 PHQ2 (Patient Health Questionnaires) for mental health screenings. Staff completed 14 referrals to Diversus Health and 2 referrals to CCHA (Colorado Community Health Alliance/Medicaid) for further evaluation and connection to meet their specific behavioral health needs. 10 clients declined a referral but requested contact information for CCHA or Diversus Health to reach out on their own. 22 clients were already getting services and declined a referral for that reason. WIC created a system to refer clients on Tricare who need further behavioral health and care management resources.
- WIC continued the use of video services to address barriers to care. Lactation Management Specialists (LMS) provided appointments via Microsoft Teams to assist patients during latch appointments. WIC continued to offer virtual breastfeeding classes while in-person group classes are suspended. WIC RDs began having a limited number of in-person appointments for very high-risk clients. These mainly included latch appointments for mothers struggling to adapt to the use of technology and/or were about to stop breastfeeding without enhanced support. Two WIC staff began participating in Colorado's new Black Breastfeeding Coalition. WIC received a Lactation Mini-Grant through the Colorado Breastfeeding Coalition to engage with partners in areas that have higher barriers to breastfeeding. Throughout the next year, WIC plans to utilize the funds to provide breastfeeding education toolkits and train-the-trainer sessions to providers in rural areas, providers who work with teen parents, and providers in low-income areas.

### **Immunization Program**

The Immunization Program nurses are currently working with the El Paso County and Colorado Springs Vaccine Consortium providers to assist with vaccine allocation and transfers, as well as assist the public with accessing vaccine locations. The administrative staff continues to assist with COVID-19 case investigation. Due to community need, the Immunizations team offers vaccination services one day per week in the Citizens Service Center clinic, following all safety precautions for staff and clients.

### **Family Planning**

Most of the Family Planning (FP) clinic staff provided direct vaccination services and vaccine preparation at the EPCPH South POD location in April. Administrative staff continue to assist the epidemiology team performing case investigation duties, in addition to working at the EPCPH South POD and in the Family Planning clinic. Due to community need, we offer limited services in the clinic by appointment only and are following all safety precautions for staff and clients. Staff will transition back into the Family Planning clinic as the demand for the COVID-19 vaccine decreases.

### **Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP)**

Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) nurses held 211 telehealth visits during April. NFP graduated 9 clients during the month, which is a success in light of ongoing challenges and limitations related to COVID-19. Meeting clients via telehealth and video conferencing has helped continue client engagement as well as meet the needs of the most vulnerable during COVID-19. Telehealth and video conferencing help remove barriers to health care and resources for our clients. The NFP team is exploring plans to visit some clients in person on a limited basis in the near future.

### **Health Equity/Southeast Colorado Springs Initiatives**

On May 8, groundbreaking for the Panorama Park renovation project was held. This renovation project is the largest neighborhood park renovation in Colorado Springs' history. The project is made possible with grants from Great Outdoors Colorado, The Colorado Health Foundation, the Colorado Springs Health Foundation and Transforming Safety Colorado. The Trust for Public Land, Southeast Colorado Springs RISE Coalition and El Paso County Public Health are providing leadership for the project -- one in a multi-pronged effort to address social determinants of health (SDoH) and the impact of built environments. Construction will begin in May and last until approximately July 2022.

### **Recognition**

The Regional Recovery Council, formed in April 2020 shortly after the launch of Public Health's COVID-19 response, has been recognized by the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) with "Honorable Mention" status for its 2021 Innovation Practice Award. The Council, spearheaded by Chamber & EDC President and CEO Dirk Draper and Director Wheelan, is recognized for its work in helping to create policy and public health order variances that enabled local retailers to provide curbside and online sales, restaurants to safely resume in-person dining, and local high schools to allow graduates to receive diplomas in-person, creating a model for other areas in Colorado to follow.

Public Health's Data and Analytics application to NACCHO, *Supporting Data-based Dialogue During the COVID-19 Pandemic*, was selected as a 2021 Innovative Practice Bronze Awardee. The award recognizes a high level of program innovation to meet the needs of the El Paso County community during the COVID-19 pandemic and recognizes our effective community partnerships, collaboration, adaptability and resilience.

Public Health's abstract submission, *Balancing Public Health with Economic Development: Coalition Building During and Beyond COVID-19* has been accepted as a Live Session during the Virtual 2021 NACCHO Annual Conference on July 1, 2021. The session will be facilitated by Director Wheelan and Dirk Draper, President and CEO of Colorado Springs Chamber & EDC.

## Grant Updates

CDC COVID-19 Health Disparities grant application has been submitted. The CDC team is reviewing applications with the anticipated notice of award on June 1, 2021.

CDC Drug-Free Communities Support Program grant was submitted to address drug misuse among youth in the Fountain Valley. Over the 5-year grant period, Fountain Valley Communities that Care plans to strengthen community collaboration to address youth substance use and reduce substance use and misuse of prescription drugs and marijuana among youth. Notice of award is August 30, 2021.

Children's Hospital Colorado has partnered with Public Health to submit a proposal to Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for the project: *A Universal Preventative School-based Intervention to Address Worsening Symptoms of Anxiety and Depression among Middle-school Youth Delivered by a County Public Health Department: Building Resilience for Healthy Kids*. The project has already been piloted in El Paso County and will continue implementation among additional local middle schools. Application is due June 15.

Together We Protect funding application in partnership with The Resource Exchange was not awarded. Over 90 applications were submitted for limited funding.

The Colorado Health Foundation has several available funding opportunities with the deadline of June 15. EPCPH team is exploring multiple opportunities.