

To: Board of Health
From: Susan Wheelan, M.B.A., Public Health Director
Date: October 2021 (reflects activity September 23, 2021 to date)
Re: Director's Report

COVID-19 Status and Response

October 13 marked a monumental achievement in El Paso County's COVID-19 response: 70 percent of eligible residents received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Providers from the El Paso County and Colorado Springs Vaccine Consortium, in addition to federal agencies, have vaccinated approximately 428,500 individuals since the beginning of the vaccine rollout 10 months ago across hospitals, clinics, pharmacies, mobile outreach, pop-up events and high-volume points of dispensing including drive-thru sites.

While 70 percent of residents is a remarkable milestone, unvaccinated individuals make up approximately 85 percent of those hospitalized with COVID-19 in El Paso County, putting stress on the hospital system. The El Paso County Public Health (EPCPH) team and our partners continue to emphasize and promote the best individual and community prevention measure to avoid serious illness, hospitalization and death - the COVID-19 vaccine. With the support of the Vaccine Consortium, we have developed strategies and have committed resources to help provide easy and widespread access to the vaccine for individuals in our County who wish to receive it. Among the resources we have deployed is a new mobile vaccination van for convenient access to both COVID-19 vaccines and flu shots. The van can be requested for worksites, schools, or community events, and [a form](#) has been developed to facilitate the request process.

Vaccine Data

Vaccine data through Monday, October 18, including federal estimates:

- **Total doses administered: 724,475**
 - 832,200 with federal estimates
- **People vaccinated: 370,868 (60.9%)**
 - 428,500 (70.3%) with federal estimates
- **People fully vaccinated: 340,276 (55.8%)**
 - 390,400 (64.1%) with federal estimates

As of Monday, October 18, **45.9 percent of 12–17-year-olds** in El Paso County have been vaccinated (received at least one dose).

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

Case Monitoring

COVID-19 data trends through Monday, October 18:

- **Seven-day incidence:** 291.9
- **Seven-day positivity:** 9.95%
- **Hospital admissions and deaths in the last seven days (October 11 – 18):** 62 and 8

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

Children and Youth COVID-19 Data Brief

As of October 13, the 0-17 age group accounts for:

- 2,107 of 9,267 total cases in the last 30 days
- 25 of 451 total hospitalizations in the last 30 days
- 0 of 77 total deaths in the last 30 days.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee is meeting on October. 26 to discuss Pfizer authorization for ages 5-11. If the FDA moves forward with the authorization, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) will make clinical recommendations. Finally, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) will issue final guidance and recommendations for local providers. This pending authorization will mark another important step in our efforts to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our local communities. Getting 5-11-year-olds vaccinated will not only help protect this age group, but it will also help support the goal of maintaining in-person learning. As we continue planning efforts for the authorization of Pfizer for this age group, it's important to note that parental consent is required for vaccination of minors.

There are approximately 67,000 children and youth between the ages of 5 and 11 in El Paso County.

- El Paso County Public Health projects that between 10 and 30 percent of this age group will be vaccinated (with at least one dose) in the first eight weeks after authorization based on similar trends in the 12-17 age group.
- It's critical to note that this is an estimate, based on a few assumptions:
 - Trends among this age group will look similar to those of the 12-17 age group in terms of vaccination rates and parental choice to vaccinate their children
 - Uptake will be quicker because of the presence of the Delta variant (which was not yet the dominant strain in the early stages of vaccinations) and because school is in session
- Given this projection and El Paso County's existing infrastructure, we anticipate that providers from the Colorado Springs and El Paso County Vaccine Consortium will be able to meet the needs of this demand.

Ongoing COVID-19 Response Activities

Communications

- The Office of Communication managed television media inquiries pertaining to emerging issues including COVID-19 incidence, test positivity, trends, hospitalizations and vaccination efforts, as well as school-related outbreaks and trends. The total estimated viewership for these television interviews is more than 58,000 and the estimated earned media value is more than \$10,000.
- The Office of Communication also managed several print media inquiries on similar topics.
- As part of continuous efforts to keep the community informed on emerging topics and provide credible information to the public, the Office of Communication coordinated efforts with the medical director and agency leadership to partner with the Southeast Express to sponsor and present a panel on COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy on September 29, 2021. The panel, which was live-streamed on multiple digital platforms including EPCPH, Southeast Express, KOAA, and My Black Colorado, featured in-depth questions and discussion by medical experts on the topic of concerns about the COVID-19 vaccines. As part of the paid sponsorship, the Southeast Express is also running ads promoting COVID-19 vaccines. The panelists included:
 - Dr. Robin Johnson, EPCPH Medical Director
 - Dr. Richard Vu, Matthews-Vu Medical Group and El Paso County Board of Health member
 - Dr. Elizabeth Vanse, Peak Vista Community Health Centers
- The Office of Communication worked in partnership with agency leadership, public health planner and El Paso County Coroner to provide a follow-up presentation to the El Paso County Board of Commissioners (BoCC) on September 14 on local youth suicide prevention efforts as part of National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. This presentation was a follow up to the BoCC proclamation on August 31 recognizing September as El Paso County Suicide Prevention Awareness Month.
- The Office of Communication worked with *Communities That Care* (CTC) on a brief campaign to highlight services available at the El Paso County Public Health South location, including Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and CTC. The campaign featured paid ads on social media, which reached 64,643 people, with 228,901 impressions and 353 link clicks. Paid ads are also scheduled for Spanish radio with a local radio station (Tigre Radio 94.7FM) to highlight WIC, and planning efforts are under way to feature ads on both WIC and CTC in local military newspapers.
- The agency's website www.elpasocountyhealth.org had 52,982 new visitors in September, with 181,210 unique pageviews.

Continuity of Operations

Environmental Health (EH)

- Multiple Environmental Health (EH) staff members including EH Specialists and EH Program Managers attended the Colorado Environmental Health Association (CEHA) Annual Education Conference on September 15, 16 and 17, 2021. Seminar topics included Retail Food, Water Quality, Wastewater, Air Quality, COVID-19 Impact,

Leadership and Sustainability. In addition, the Retail Food Program Manager attended the Colorado Environmental Health Directors Meeting on September 14. This allowed for collaboration among EH departments across the State to discuss challenges and hear updates from State partners.

- The Retail Food Program Assistant and Program Manager attended the Colorado Springs for Small Business Advancement (COSSBA) meeting on September 21. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the City of Colorado Springs implementation of OpenCounter. [OpenCounter](#) is the online permitting software that will help improve the business development experience while saving government staff hours answering repetitive permit discovery questions. The meeting included representation from all local partners involved in the licensing and permitting process of new businesses. As this large project progresses, the EH team will collaborate with partners to outline the licensing process for businesses regulated by EH.
- The Retail Food Program Manager collaborated with the Pikes Peak Workforce Development Center to reduce barriers the retail food establishment (RFE) industry faces in completing the Certified Food Protection Manager (CFPM) certification. The Workforce Development Center has added the CFPM certification to its Ready To Rise program and will be coordinating with EH for advertising the opportunity for food safety workers to obtain the training for free. The retail food industry has suffered a staff shortage from the effects of COVID-19 and free training will assist in building back the RFE workforce while also reducing enforcement closures by Environmental Health due to high-risk food safety violations.
- The Retail Food Program gained an additional Standardization Officer through a Lead EHS completing the certification with CDPHE. This will increase EH's ability to standardize the 20 EHS staff that conduct retail food inspections. Standardization creates consistency in inspections to ensure enforcement of food safety requirements is fairly implemented across all licensed establishments.
- The Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (OWTS) Program provided a course to Pikes Peak Area Realtors (PPAR). This class is one of many offered to the PPAR to gain continuing education credits. During this class, EH highlighted public health issues specific to real estate transactions, specifically those surrounding the Transfer of Title program, OWTS Permitting, and Operation and Maintenance. EH also discussed drinking and well water testing, radon, hazardous material clean-up, and other issues affecting the sale of the property. The main focus was on the OWTS program requirements which directly impact realtors. This class is offered twice a year.

Emerging Topics/Questions from the Community

Environmental Health has seen a slight shift from inquiries regarding healthcare back to the majority coming in from retail food establishments.

- Top 3 industries include:
 - RFE 22.22%
 - Personal Services 14.81%
 - Schools/Childcare 14.81%

School inquiries are mainly from administrators and families who have questions and concerns regarding the current school year and upcoming holidays, as well as questions regarding vaccine mandates and current mask guidelines.

Category Analysis:

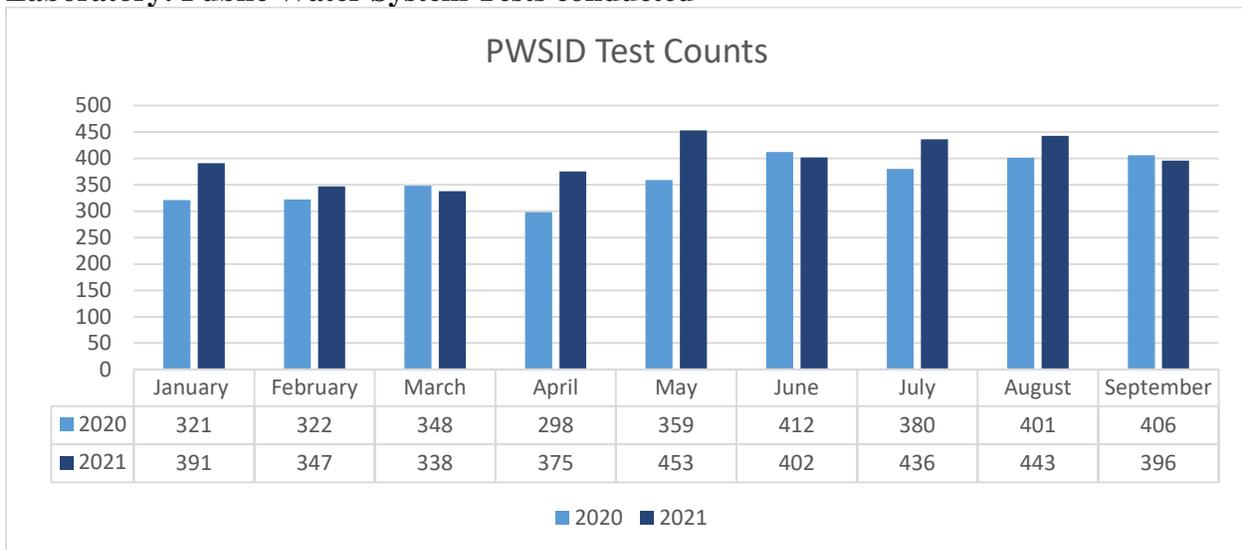
- Top 3 categories of inquiries reflect community concerns as well as an increase in positive COVID-19 case reports. Top 3 categories include:
 - Positive Cases/Outbreaks 40.74%
 - Other & Public Health Order (PHO) Guidance 33.33%
 - Masks 7.41%
- EH continues to see many complaints pertaining to facilities as well as requests for guidance.
 - Majority of complaints are regarding exposures.
 - Guidance inquiries pertain to safe operation.

Other EH Activities

Environment Health Activity	2021 Total As of 9.30.21	2020 Total
Air Quality Construction Permits	114	109
Air Quality Open Burn Permits	15	16
Air Quality Complaints	43	29
Animal Bites Reported	1109	1397
Body Art Inspections	58	74
Body Art Follow-up Inspections	5	0
Body Art Complaints	15	13
Child Care Regular Inspections	168	91
Child Care Follow-up Inspections	0	0
Child Care Complaints	4	1
Land-Use Planning Review	121	166
OWTS Pumper Truck Inspections	50	88
OWTS Final Inspections	391	512
OWTS Partial Inspections	92	71
OWTS Application Design Reviews	635	687
OWTS Design Revision Requests	193	132
OWTS New Permit Applications	264	330
OWTS Repair Permit Applications	217	267
OWTS Modification Permit Applications	6	19
OWTS Acceptance Doc for Title Transfer	745	1009

Environment Health Activity	2021 Total As of 9.30.21	2020 Total
OWTS Soil and Site Evaluations	317	464
OWTS Complaints	24	31
OWTS O&M Systems	120	131
Recreational Water Safety Inspections	230	230
Recreational Water Follow-up Inspections	23	5
Recreational Water Complaints	10	3
RFE Regular Inspections	1901	846
RFE Re-Inspections	76	28
RFE Complaint Investigations	259	226
RFE Plan Reviews	118	142
School Safety Regular Inspections	0	5
School Safety Complaints	5	4
Waste Tires Facilities Regular Inspections	106	30
Waste Tires Follow-up Inspections	3	0

Laboratory: Public Water System Tests conducted



Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program

The Women, Infants and Children (WIC) caseload for September 2021 was 12,284. Despite staffing shortages including four WIC educator vacancies, WIC staff continues to provide exceptional customer service to clients. To continue services while maintaining necessary social distancing, WIC educators continued phone appointments. The clinic remained open and

available to clients for new benefit cards and breast pump issuance and returns. WIC continues follow-up calls for new certifications with the goal of increasing customer service and satisfaction. Through the feedback survey, multiple clients commented on their educators' kindness, understanding, and the quality of information provided.

WIC works with pregnant and post-partum women to identify depression, refer for behavioral health treatment, and reduce the stigma of seeking behavioral health services. Throughout the month of September 2021, WIC staff completed 395 PHQ2 screenings. Staff completed 11 referrals to Diversus Health and 8 referrals to Colorado Community Health Alliance (CCHA) for further evaluation and connection to meet clients' specific behavioral health needs.

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

All WIC staff participated in a two-day training to refresh on policies and procedures, including those that would be necessary for in-person services. 10 WIC Supervisors attended the virtual University of Minnesota National Maternal Nutrition Intensive Course. This course updated staff on current research and practices to better serve the WIC population. The WIC Program Manager participated in the El Paso County Leadership Program during August and September.

Immunization Program

The Immunization Program is currently working to resume pre-COVID clinic operations. The clinic decreased days it opened to the public to 4 days per week in September to allow staff to focus on COVID-related activities and to hire multiple vacant positions. When open to the public, the clinic is focusing on the vaccination of clients who may be behind or missed routine vaccines during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly as we try to meet the "Back to School" community need for childhood vaccinations. The Immunizations program has started administering flu vaccine to staff and the public. The program is also supporting the Operation House Call team and local long-term care facilities by providing COVID-19 vaccine to individuals who are homebound and those who reside or work in nursing homes.

Family Planning

Family Planning attended the quarterly Community Access to Coordinated Health (CATCH) meeting and updated the group on clinic information, referral processes and contacts. CATCH includes Mission Medical, Open Bible, Dream Centers and Westside Cares. Family Planning also met with Penrose Cancer Center, to exchange referral information and coordinate referrals between its Women's Wellness Connection (WWC) program and EPCPH Family Planning services.

Family Planning is offering services five days per week in-person, as well as conducting telehealth visits. Family Planning has recently implemented a new process to detect and address maternal-child morbidity and mortality due to congenital syphilis. We have requested additional funding from CDPHE to assist with providing services in our Family Planning clinic to help remove barriers to care particularly for people who are under or uninsured.

Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP)

Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) nurses conducted 200 visits during September 2021. Of these, 165 visits were held via telehealth and 35 visits were conducted in-person. The NFP team shifted back to telehealth in September as COVID incidence rates increased. EPCPH NFP graduated 2 clients and enrolled 10 new clients to the program. Meeting clients through telehealth and video conferencing has helped continue client engagement as well as meet the needs of the most vulnerable by helping to remove barriers to healthcare.

Workforce Surveys

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