El Paso County Public Health supports healthy communities and serves residents of the county throughout their lifespan. Our staff are engaged in work aimed at keeping residents healthy and safe in the places where they live, work, and play. Collaborations and community partnerships help us to further our resources and find innovative ways to address challenges.

In 2017, we strengthened partnerships and secured funding to continue to enhance programs in southeast Colorado Springs, where we were busy renovating the new southeast WIC (Women, Infants & Children) clinic. We utilized an older building in Harrison School District 2, located in a neighborhood with high numbers of WIC-eligible residents, allowing us to provide convenient access to more mothers and their babies with nutrition counseling and assistance. This project was the effort of many partnerships, including Harrison School District 2, the Colorado Health Foundation, the El Paso County Board of Health, and the RISE (Resilient, Inspired, Strong, Engaged) Coalition.

We remain focused on helping our youth and adults thrive. More than 60 community partners continued their youth suicide prevention work in El Paso County. The Youth Suicide Prevention Workgroup identified gaps in response and mental health services, particularly for residents living outside of Colorado Springs. As a result, the agency secured funding to support a Co-Responder model, which pairs behavioral health services with deputies at the El Paso County Sheriff’s Office.

In the area of technology, we began transitioning our medical records to an electronic health record system. This will streamline work, create efficiencies for staff, and build our capacity to create additional revenue, while better serving our clients and assuring high quality care.

We also prepare for emergencies, such as fires, floods, and disease outbreaks. This year our staff completed a full-scale exercise, in partnership with state and regional partners, to test our capacity to provide medication to the public during a disease outbreak.

All of these efforts highlight our commitment to the safety and well-being of El Paso County’s residents. We look forward to serving the community throughout 2018.

~ Dan Martindale, M.P.A., Public Health Director

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**Mission**

Our mission is to promote and protect public health and environmental quality across El Paso County through people, prevention and partnerships.

**Vision**

Our vision is for all El Paso County residents to live in thriving communities where every person has the opportunity to achieve optimal health.
The El Paso County Board of Health governs El Paso County Public Health through the establishment of policy, approval of budgets, and appointment of the Public Health Director. The nine members of the Board of Health serve as volunteers and are appointed by the El Paso County Board of County Commissioners. Members are an essential link between public health services and a healthy community. Board of Health members are engaged in the community, and dedicate hours of volunteer time in their role on the board.

Our Public Health agency serves all residents and visitors of El Paso County, which includes the cities of Colorado Springs, Manitou Springs, and the towns of Calhan, Fountain, Monument, Palmer Lake, and Ramah. Public Health is defined by the Institute of Medicine as “fulfilling society’s interest in assuring conditions in which people can be healthy.” Programs are targeted toward the general population and specific populations with higher health risks or poorer health outcomes to aid in making healthy choices, and provide interventions to prevent spread of disease.
Public Health partners with the Department of Human Services to support families

El Paso County Public Health works closely with the Department of Human Services (DHS) to improve the health, safety, and well-being of children participating in DHS programs. From this partnership, the new Healthy Children and Families (HCF) program was developed. The HCF team connects families with existing community resources, provides health education, and conducts physical and mental health assessments. HCF’s public health nurse and community health educator provide case consultation and home visiting services to families of children with medical or safety needs participating in DHS programs. These needs may include drug exposure education, chronic illness, nutrition, and/or breastfeeding support.

149 FAMILIES SERVED BY HOME VISITS

292 MEDICAL, SOCIAL & COMMUNITY RESOURCES PROVIDED
New Women, Infants & Children (WIC) technology initiatives

In 2017, the Women, Infants & Children (WIC) Program introduced several new innovative technology projects. These new initiatives help make WIC an even easier, efficient, and effective experience for clients and staff alike.

The first, WICHealth.org, is an online option that offers customizable and highly tailored information, tips, and education on a wide variety of topics. Clients can find healthy recipes, get help with meal planning, and view developmental information specific to their child’s age.

The second is a phone follow-up option. Clients can choose to get a call from their educator for nutrition education and remote issuance of benefits. This helps clients who may not have access to a computer and cannot use WICHealth.org.

The third is the WIC shopper application, an easy-to-use application that allows clients to see their current food benefits, scan products to identify WIC-allowable foods, find WIC-approved stores, view recipes on their smart phone, and more.

And finally, the El Paso County WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program introduced a texting platform. When clients enroll, they can text a WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor who will answer questions, share breastfeeding information, and connect the client to a breastfeeding expert, if needed. Breastfeeding counselors are available after hours, weekends, and holidays.

$8,354,145.34
WIC FOOD VOUCHERS USED IN COMMUNITY

WICHealth.org
El Paso County Public Health works with community members and organizations across the county to advocate for youth. Additional capacity in 2017 increased our ability to support youth advocacy efforts.

This investment in youth by community leadership has resulted in innovative programs and efforts that support the health and wellness of youth in our community.

Youth Substance Use Prevention

Residents of Fountain Valley are part of a statewide effort to implement Communities that Care (CTC), a public health model program designed to address youth substance use and abuse. CTC has been proven to reduce alcohol and tobacco use, crime, and violence among youth.

The Fountain Valley CTC Board and workgroups are developing a profile of existing resources and policies in the community. This work will inform the selection of strategies and programs that promote healthy youth development and prevent youth health and behavior problems before they start.
Youth Suicide Prevention

In recent years there has been a sharp increase in youth suicides in El Paso County. To address this concern, a community collaborative called the Youth Suicide Prevention Workgroup was created to facilitate a community discussion on youth mental health and suicide prevention.

The workgroup, convened by El Paso County Public Health, has grown to involve more than 60 multidisciplinary partner agencies in identifying community needs and assets, improving community networking and partnerships, and creating an action plan for countywide activities.

In 2017, the workgroup supported many activities that will further suicide prevention efforts in El Paso County, including:

- Partnered with Pikes Peak Suicide Prevention to engage youth in the topic of suicide prevention through Teen Think Tanks. One hundred and fifty youth provided input on topics such as causes of stress, social media, bullying, and barriers on how to encourage help-seeking behavior.
- Trained local public information officers and news media professionals on safe and ethical messaging related to suicide.
- Collaborated with the El Paso County Sheriff’s Office to secure funding for a countywide co-responder program. When this model is implemented, co-responders, or behavioral health clinicians, will ride with law enforcement officers when they respond to calls where mental health expertise is needed.

Public Health is also partnering with elementary schools and youth-serving organizations to strengthen mental health and social emotional well-being among elementary school youth in El Paso County. Public Health developed the “El Paso County Community Assets for Youth Development” guide to connect community members and youth-serving organizations to existing community resources.
Healthy Environment

Rabies on the rise in El Paso County

El Paso County had a record number of skunk rabies cases in 2017, with 21 skunks testing positive for the disease. As the number of confirmed rabies cases increased, so did the number of people and pets who were potentially exposed to the fatal disease, underscoring the importance of rabies vaccination for pets. Last year, three people and 40 pets were exposed to rabid animals.

El Paso County Public Health investigates reports of animal bites and determines if the situation involves risk for rabies. Rabies is a viral disease that infects the brain and other parts of the central nervous system, ultimately causing death. Rabies is spread primarily through the bite of rabid animals, but it can also be spread from infected saliva to open wounds, cuts, eyes, nose, or mouth. Preventive vaccination is available for people known or suspected to have been bitten by a rabid animal.

NUMBER OF RABIES CASES SINCE 2010, BY YEAR:

In 2017, Public Health notified the public of several instances of skunk rabies to prevent people and pets from being exposed. Cases were confirmed throughout El Paso County, including Monument, Black Forest, Ellicott, and southwest Colorado Springs.

TOTAL NUMBER OF RABIES CASES SINCE 2010, BY ANIMAL:
Open burning is the burning of any material or substance in the open air, on any open premises. A burn permit is required and necessary to protect public health, air quality, and the environment. El Paso County Public Health, along with the Sheriff’s Office and El Paso County Fire Districts, plays an important role in ensuring healthy air quality through the approval of open burn permits.

In 2017, the Environmental Health Division released a new, streamlined version of the online application to apply for an open burn permit. The new version of the application now feeds directly into the database used by Environmental Health staff. This eliminates duplicate data entry, helps increase efficiency by creating quicker turnaround times, and ultimately enhances customer service.

The Environmental Health Division also began accepting secure online license, permit, and inspection payments to save customers time by paying their environmental health invoice online using a credit card.

Public Health’s ongoing response to perfluorinated compounds (PFCs) in Fountain Valley

El Paso County Public Health participated in a community open house in 2017 to provide information to residents about the ongoing efforts surrounding two perfluorinated compounds (PFCs) in drinking water sources in the Security, Widefield, and Fountain areas.

Perfluorinated compounds are human-made substances that do not occur naturally in the environment. They have been used for decades as an ingredient to make products that resist heat, oil, and grease, and are also used in various products including firefighting foams and surface protection products for carpets and clothing.

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment is proposing a site-specific groundwater standard for two perfluorinated compounds (PFCs) - perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) - in drinking water sources in the Security, Widefield, and Fountain areas. A water quality standard is created to protect existing and potential beneficial uses of water. In this case, the groundwater standard will address a geographic area of concern in El Paso County.
Healthy Communities

Exercise tests El Paso County’s response to a health crisis

El Paso County Public Health conducted a full-scale exercise in June 2017 to test the community’s response procedures during a public health crisis. The purpose of the exercise was to test state, regional, and local response to a “novel respiratory illness.”

El Paso County was one of 18 locations across Colorado to take part in the Public Health Emergency Dispensing Exercise hosted by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. Local public health agencies, emergency management agencies, behavioral health partners, and others from across the state joined together to coordinate response efforts during the exercise.

During the mock clinic held Friday, June 16 at Rampart High School in Colorado Springs, 117 volunteers arrived to receive “medicine” as part of the exercise. Volunteers were critical to the success of the exercise because they helped simulate conditions for a real emergency, and allowed people to learn more about what they, their family, or organization would do during a public health emergency.

This exercise tested the response to a hypothetical disease outbreak, including:
- Resource distribution, medical countermeasures dispensing and distribution
- Information sharing
- The ability to coordinate among multiple emergency operations centers and southcentral region partners (Chaffee, El Paso, Lake, Park, and Teller Counties)
The Citizens Service Center and Centennial Hall go tobacco-free in 2017

Centennial Hall and the Citizens Service Center (CSC) in Colorado Springs became the first El Paso County campuses to become tobacco-free on January 1, 2017.

Leadership from county agencies at the CSC and Centennial Hall developed and implemented the policy with support from El Paso County Public Health’s Tobacco Education and Prevention Partnership. The policy seeks to protect the health and safety of guests and employees of the CSC and Centennial Hall by reducing secondhand smoke exposure and encouraging current tobacco users to quit.

Under the new policy, smoking, the use of smokeless tobacco products, and the use of e-cigarettes are prohibited in indoor and outdoor spaces, such as walkways and parking lots, on both campuses.

Using video technology for tuberculosis treatment

Tuberculosis (TB) disease is treatable with antibiotics, and in certain cases, the patient treatments must be directly observed. If the medication is stopped too soon, or is taken incorrectly, the TB bacteria that are still alive may become resistant to the medications. TB treatments can last between three and six months depending on the type of TB, and medications may need to be taken daily. The requirements of traditional, in-person directly observed therapy (DOT) require a trained nurse to observe the patient taking the medication. DOT is cumbersome, costly, and can extend the time of treatment because DOT can only take place on business days.

The Communicable Disease and Tuberculosis (TB) program implemented a new approach that saves time, reduces costs, and improves patient care. This innovation was the use of video recorded directly observed therapy (VrDOT) for TB patients. VrDOT utilizes a smart phone application to view live or recorded sessions where a patient is shown to be taking TB medication according to the treatment plan. The average VrDOT home visit costs Public Health $1.10 while the average in-person home visit costs $36.80.

BETWEEN SEPTEMBER 2016 AND JULY 2017:

16 ENROLLED IN VRDOT
100% COMPLETED TREATMENT
681 VRDOT VISITS
$35.70 SAVED PER VRDOT HOME VISIT
3000% INCREASE IN EFFICIENCY

COLORADO QUITLINE (1-800-QUIT-NOW) CALLS FROM EL PASO COUNTY
Public Health responds to nationwide outbreak of hepatitis A

In the early months of 2017, Public Health responded to a nationwide outbreak of hepatitis A, a vaccine-preventable disease that affects the liver. Infected individuals have the virus in their stool and it spreads when others come in contact with the virus through food, drink, or sexual activity.

There were 62 cases in Colorado, more than double the number of cases typically seen per year, with 12 of those cases occurring in El Paso County. One death was reported in Colorado while other states such as California, Utah, and Michigan experienced a significant death toll and hundreds of hospitalizations.

In response to the rising number of cases in El Paso County, programs within Public Health including Emergency Preparedness and Response, Communicable Disease, Environmental Health, Immunizations, Family Planning, Nurse-Family Partnership, and Office of Communication collaborated to prevent further spread of hepatitis A through the following efforts:

- Public Health epidemiologists conducted disease and contact investigations on reported hepatitis A cases in El Paso County.
- An educational campaign encouraging vaccination was implemented and included direct outreach to businesses and organizations serving high-risk individuals, social media messaging, health alerts to medical providers, and communication with the news media.
- Environmental health specialists visited retail food establishments where potentially ill food workers prepared food, and provided education to food workers on handwashing and sick worker exclusion.
- With the support of external community partners, staff from Public Health’s Immunization, Tuberculosis, and Family Planning clinics conducted ten vaccine clinics for high-risk groups.

WHO SHOULD GET VACCINATED?

- All children at age 1, as a routine childhood immunization
- People with chronic liver diseases
- Men who have sex with men
- People experiencing homelessness
- Intravenous drug users
- International travelers
Improving health equity in southeast Colorado Springs

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, health equity is when everyone has the opportunity to be as healthy as possible, through increased access to services.

In 2017, El Paso County Public Health led several key projects to help improve health equity in southeast Colorado Springs. Public Health solidified partnerships and secured funding to continue to enhance programs in this community.

OPENING THE SOUTHEAST WOMEN, INFANTS & CHILDREN (WIC) CLINIC

In 2017, Public Health began work on a new satellite office in southeast Colorado Springs that will serve approximately 4,400 Women, Infants & Children (WIC) clients. The new location is situated in an area with a high number of WIC-eligible residents. This office will increase access to services for eligible residents in southeast Colorado Springs.

The office includes a breastfeeding classroom, an exam room, a room to measure, weigh, and examine children, several cubicles for family consultations, and a community room. An onsite outreach coordinator serves as a community resource navigator, helping connect WIC clients to other services and resources in the southeast community. Penrose-St. Francis nurses will also offer weekly health screenings and referrals.

This new office is a collaborative effort between partners who assisted with funding and implementation, including Harrison School District 2, the Colorado Health Foundation, the El Paso County Board of Health, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment WIC program, the Resilient, Inspired, Strong, Engaged (RISE) Coalition, and others.
HEALTHY PLACES GRANT

El Paso County Public Health was recently awarded funding for the first phase of a potential $1 million grant from the Colorado Health Foundation. The funds will be used to activate Healthy Places: Designing an Active Colorado, focused on the southeast Colorado Springs community.

The two-part grant includes an initial investment of $20,000 from the Colorado Health Foundation to create an impactful approach for residents of the area to be active. The community-led process will initially include working with the Urban Land Institute’s Technical Advisory Panel to refine and improve strategies from existing local plans. The second part of the grant involves an investment of up to $1 million from the Colorado Health Foundation to assist with improvements in southeast Colorado Springs.

The Healthy Places funding will expand on previous recommendations to improve health through the built environment, which consists of the spaces where people live, work, and play. This funding will focus on physical and policy improvements to increase physical activity, provide access to healthy food options, and ultimately improve health in the community.

RESILIENT, INSPIRED, STRONG, ENGAGED (RISE) COALITION

The RISE Coalition is a collaboration of more than 50 partner organizations and resident leaders working to enhance southeast Colorado Springs through citizen-led change. RISE continued to gain momentum in 2017, hosting several events including a community picnic and a neighborhood cleanup. There was also the creation of a RISE newsletter containing upcoming community events, resources, and highlights that is sent to residents and community leaders weekly. RISE continues to be a driving force of change in helping to improve the southeast Colorado Springs community.
Public Health by the Numbers

- 51 reported infectious disease outbreaks
- 935 people reported sick from infectious disease outbreaks
- 1,015 infectious disease cases reported
- 5,703 STD tests performed
- 11,641 immunizations provided
- 58 latent tuberculosis cases
- 8 active tuberculosis cases
- 21,700 birth certificates issued
- 36,136 death certificates issued
- 123 retail food establishment plan reviews
- 963 food workers completed food safety education classes
- 5,792 retail food establishment inspections
- 2,502 nurse-family partnership home visits
- 63 school safety inspections
- 198 land-use reviews
- 140 air quality permits issued
- 2,908 private well water tests
- 597 on-site wastewater permits issued
- 4,120 microbiology tests for public water systems
- 3,005 reproductive health clinic visits
- 116 body art establishment inspections
- 255 child care center inspections
- 118 coordinated care for children with special needs
- 431 public pool inspections
2017 TOTAL PROJECTED REVENUE

$15,401,449

- Program Specific Grants: 50.9%
  - $7,841,788
- El Paso County Funding: 21.3%
  - $3,285,804
- Licenses, Fees & Permits: 21.6%
  - $3,320,522
- State of CO Core Public Health Services: 5.9%
  - $922,315
- Miscellaneous Revenue: 0.2%
  - $31,020

Thank you to the City of Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services, David Deitemeyer, and the Deerfield Hills Community Center for many of the photos featured in this report.