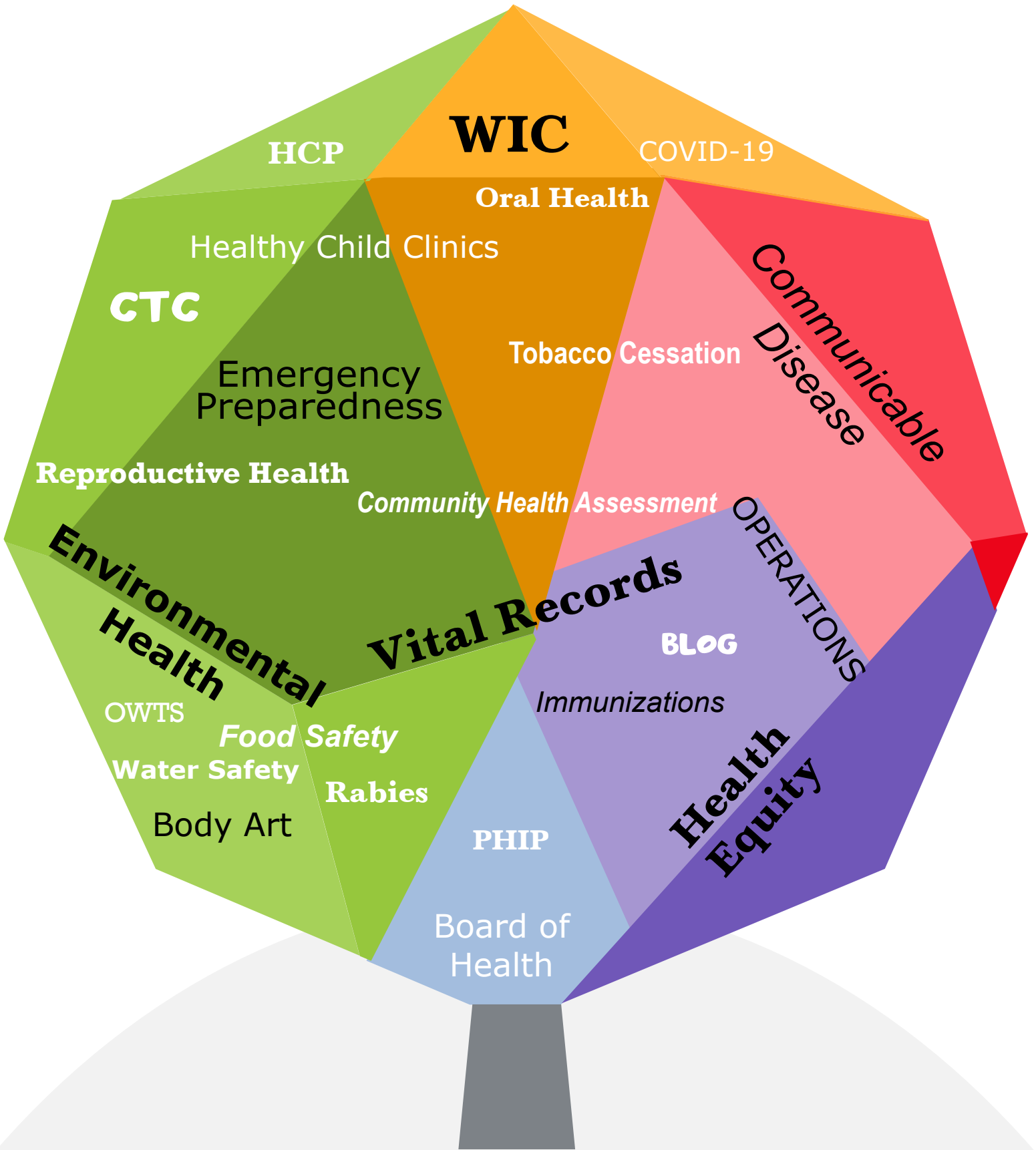


# Northeast Colorado Health Department Annual Report 2023



## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Merriam-Webster defines community as "a group of people with a common characteristic or interest living together within a larger society." All of us belong to some type of community; often we belong to several such as our work/professional community, our social/friendship community, our religious community, our family/extended family/chosen family community. A common characteristic or interest is what forms and holds our communities together. In 2023, the Northeast Colorado Health Department (NCHD) set out to connect with as many communities as possible to explore and assess what health means to the individuals in our region and how we can help people to achieve and sustain better health outcomes.

We met with communities at the county level, at the town level and also with communities that spoke English, Spanish, Somali, French, and Kinyarwanda. We asked questions and had great discussions. We did our best to listen actively and hear what our many communities were telling us. A highlight of all of these meetings was the connections that were made and the realization that though we may live in different areas of the region, we may have different jobs, different obligations, different languages and different customs, we all want healthier lives for ourselves and our loved ones.



As you look through our 2023 Annual Report, I hope you can appreciate the work that NCHD has done to support health in our communities. And if you would like more information on how we plan to support and promote health over the next 5 years, check out our Public Health Improvement Plan on our website: <https://www.nchd.org/news>

Thank you for being part of our community.

*Trish McClain*

Trish McClain, BSN, RN  
Public Health Director

### **2022-2023 Community Health Assessment (CHA) 2024-2028 Public Health Improvement Plan (PHIP)**

All local public health agencies are charged with developing a local public health improvement plan based on a community health assessment and capacity assessment as a requirement of the 2008 Public Health Act. In 2022-2023, NCHD conducted a Community Health Assessment (CHA) of our six-county health district. We compiled quantitative and statistical data on the My Sidewalk Dashboard [Our Story | Northeast Colorado Health Department Community Health Assessment \(\[mysidewalk.com\]\(https://mysidewalk.com\)\)](#). We also collected information from the general public of the six counties through our community health survey and nine (9) community health meetings across the region. Our next step was a prioritization of the top 3 to 5 issues to be addressed in our next Public Health Improvement Plan (PHIP). Chronic Disease Prevention,

Emotional Wellness & Mental Health, and Environmental Health were the top three issues identified. Finally, NCHD conducted a Capacity Assessment to determine our ability to address the identified challenges of the communities we serve.

Through this assessment process we learned that while each county faces unique challenges, there are similar issues that arise across our rural communities. We recognize that in order to positively improve access, services, and infrastructure, it will require all of us working together. No one entity can remedy these key issues in isolation. In addition to public health, it will require non-profit organizations, healthcare organizations, government agencies, as well as individual community members to move the needle forward.

The Northeast Colorado Health Department (NCHD) will be launching our third five-year Public Health Improvement Plan (PHIP) in 2024. There are two overarching goals:

1. To build more resilient communities, NCHD will focus on a Healthy Northeast by developing and implementing equitable strategies to improve the physical, behavioral, and environmental health of northeast Colorado.

2. To expand organizational capacity, NCHD will work to strengthen public health communication, data/surveillance, partnerships, planning, workforce development, and public health evaluation.

To view the full Community Health Assessment and Public Health Improvement Plan, go to Community Assessment | Northeast Colorado Health Department ([nchd.org](https://nchd.org))



## 2019-2023 Public Health Improvement Plan

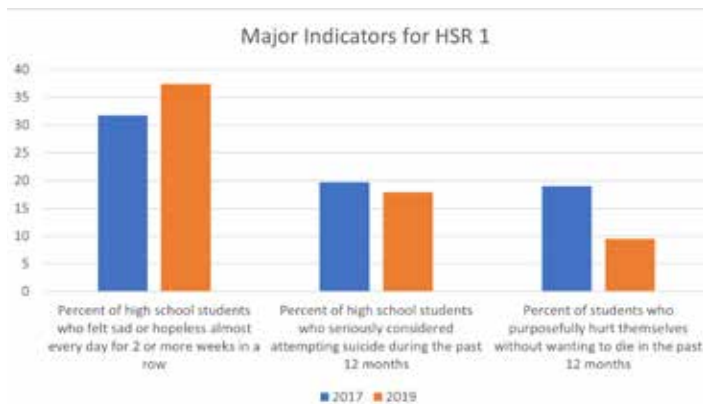
2023 was the last year of the previous Public Health Improvement Plan during which we focused on two primary goals that were seen to be major factors influencing healthy outcomes for the Northeast Colorado Health Department health district. The goals were 1) to plan and implement evidence-based strategies to address identified needs in Behavioral Health and, 2) to increase evidence-based program and policy development promoting chronic disease prevention in the six-county region.

Goal #1 – Plan and implement evidence-based strategies to address identified needs in behavioral health within the six-county region.

The Northeast Colorado Health Department created a webpage specifically devoted to depression and suicide prevention resources on the NCHD website ([Behavioral and Mental Health- Northeast Colorado Health Department](https://nchd.org/behavioral-and-mental-health-northeast-colorado-health-department)). During this five-year cycle 2019-2023, NCHD partnered with Centennial Mental Health Center (CMHC) and KPMX Radio to host community events to increase awareness of mental health and take steps to reduce the stigma of asking for help. We also partnered with CMHC to host evidence-based Suicide Prevention Trainings across the region. NCHD recruited local hospitals, healthcare providers, and schools to create a Telehealth Workgroup. This workgroup implemented telemedicine at two hospitals, one Board of Educational Cooperative Services (BOCES), and a few smaller school districts. NCHD received funding to purchase equipment so that behavioral health services could be provided via telehealth at schools

and hospitals in the region. In 2020, we contracted with the Omni Institute (omni.org) to conduct a Substance Use Assessment for northeast Colorado and in 2022 NCHD's Epidemiologist Manager and data analysts conducted a Drug Overdose Assessment. A webpage devoted to substance use resources was created on the NCHD website (Substance Use - Northeast Colorado Health Department (nchd.org)).

In 2017 NCHD received funding to implement the Communities That Care (CTC) program in Yuma/Otis and Sterling. We wrapped up the program with those communities in June 2021. Then in July 2021, we initiated Communities That Care in Sedgwick County and in the community of Wray. CTC is a community-driven prevention process that is proven to reduce youth health and behavior issues. A coalition of community members made up of youth, parents, educators, and other interested parties work together to develop and implement a prevention plan based on their community's level of risk and protective factors.



Goal #2 – Increase evidence-based program and policy development to promote chronic disease prevention in the six-county region.

NCHD's Tobacco Program worked with municipalities, counties, schools, and public housing agencies to implement Tobacco Free Policies.

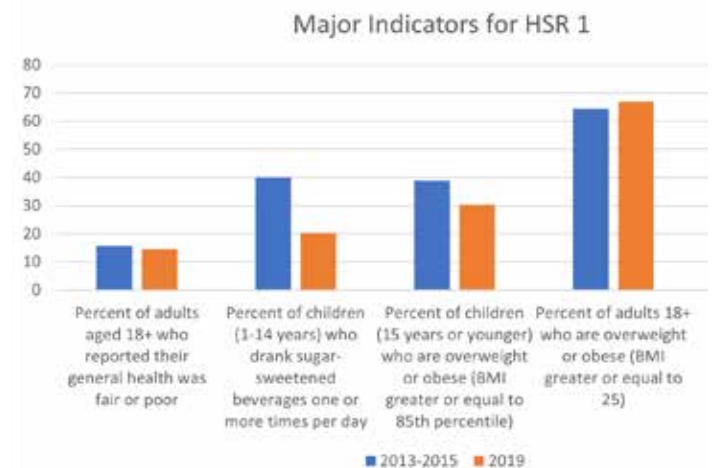
A Chronic Disease grant allowed us to work with healthcare providers to develop resource guides for residents navigating the healthcare system.

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted NCHD's progress on both goals during this five-year cycle. NCHD's response to the pandemic required considerable time and resources. Many of our programs were paused, or sustained with limitations due to the restrictions. Throughout the pandemic, NCHD continued to address mental/behavioral health and wellness as well as promoting overall healthy living.

Chronic Disease Prevention programming has included Healthy Schools, Breastfeeding, Just Check It, HPV Free Colorado Alliance, and Heart Healthy Solutions.

Mental/Behavioral Health programming has included Life Source Project, State Innovation Model (SIM), and Communities that Care.

Funding received for these goals was \$3,813,693.59, with \$273,298.30 for Chronic Disease Prevention programs and \$2,329,298.29 for Mental & Behavioral Health programs.



## HEALTH EQUITY

The creation of a Health Equity team proved critical to the department reaching our historically underserved and migrant populations over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, so in 2023 NCHD created a new division, Equity and Outreach.

Beginning in 2021, NCHD started hiring Community Health Workers (CHWs) to provide education, resources, language support, and other services to our communities. The efforts by our CHWs needed to be formalized to ensure that the foundation built during the last three years would continue.

In 2023, the team traveled to Texas to attend the conference of the National Association of Community Health Workers (NACHW) and learned from others around the United States about best practices and sustainability efforts. As defined by the American Public Health Association "A community health worker is a frontline public health worker who is a trusted member of and/or has an unusually close understanding of the community served. This trusting relationship enables the worker to serve as a liaison/link/intermediary between health/social services and the community to facilitate access to services and improve the quality and cultural competence of service delivery. A community health worker also builds individual and community capacity by increasing health knowledge and self-sufficiency through a range of activities such as outreach, community education, informal counseling, social support and advocacy."

Our CHWs continued to focus on delivering services and resources through community events throughout 2023. These were (and continue to be) provided in partnership with other organizations and can include COVID-19 and other vaccines, free

supplies such as food boxes, diapers and wipes, and services including assistance with SB-251 licenses, vaccine education, as well as food, entertainment, and family activities. Because our team members are multilingual representing six languages, the CHWs also provide ongoing language support to the diverse populations that reside in our health district.

During the 2023 year, the Health Equity efforts included:

- 25** community resource events
- 24** trainings
- 462** referrals to local resources
- 750** cultural language services provided.



## CLIENT SERVICES and PREVENTION PROGRAMS

Northeast Colorado Health Department services and programs aim to improve health outcomes in our communities by providing direct services that help address gaps in care at the local level; provide education, information, and connection to resources that can be utilized to promote healthy behaviors; and protect against environmental hazards. During 2023 we maintained core services such as WIC, immunizations, reproductive health, and healthy child clinics. Preventive programs that address mental health, substance use, and oral health for children also continued, with the addition of a new program aimed to help people reduce their risk for Type 2 Diabetes.

As always, the Emergency Preparedness program engaged in relationship building and training to be as ready as possible in the event of an emergency situation.

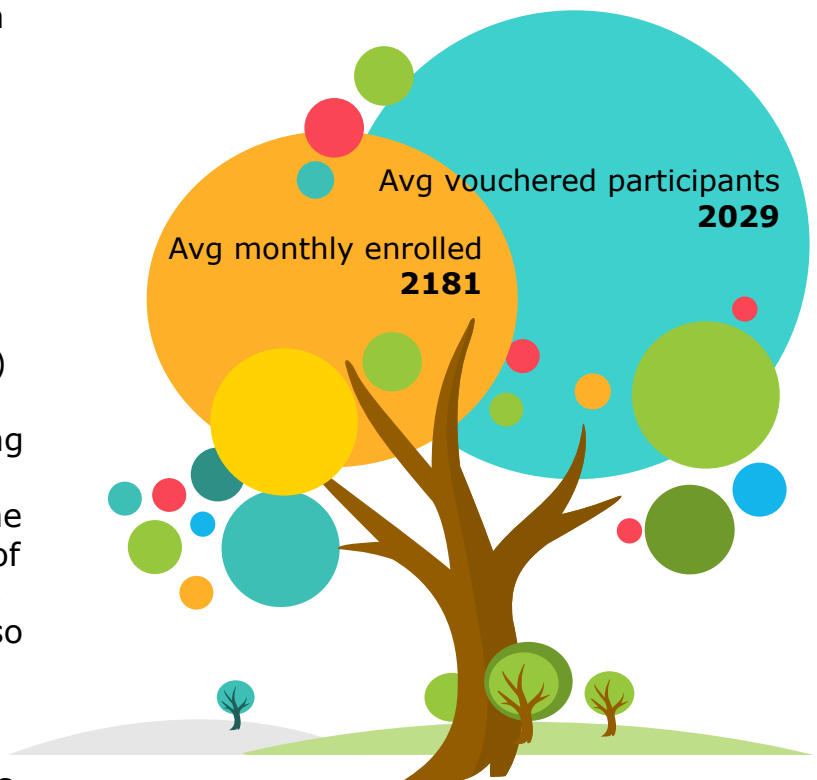
### The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)

WIC is a nutrition program of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) that provides supplemental nutritious foods, nutritional education, breastfeeding support, and referrals to health services and other community resources to income eligible families. Parents and caregivers of children up to age five, including fathers, grandparents, and foster parents, are also welcome!

During 2023, WIC continued to offer all clients the opportunity to receive services remotely to reduce COVID-19 exposure. Suspension of requirements for in-person office visits for enrollment or re-enrollment offered clients the flexibility to postpone physical appointments and in-person pickup of Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards.

Around July of 2023, NCHD experienced an increase in vouchered participants in the WIC program as the government scaled back SNAP benefits to pre-pandemic levels. Since that time, program numbers have continued at this increased level. The average monthly number of families enrolled during the calendar year of 2023 was **2181** and the average number of vouchered participants was **2029**.

While WIC benefits focus on participants who experience the direct effect of improved nutrition, this program directly impacts the local economy since WIC dollars are spent at local vendors. Annual vendor sales for FY23 brought a value of **\$1,524,712** to the local economy.



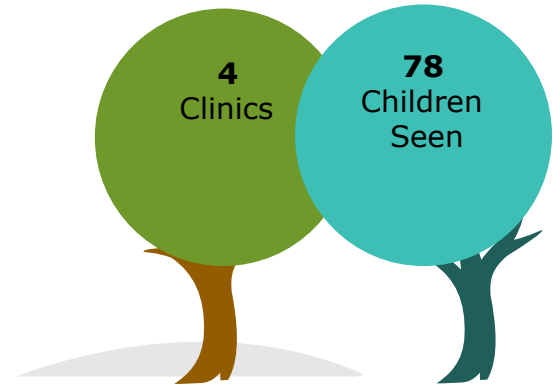
## SPECIALTY CLINICS

By partnering with Children’s Hospital Colorado we are able to help reduce barriers to specialty care such as cost, travel, and lost work or school time for northeast families. Hosting clinics at our main locations reduces the need to travel to the Front Range for specialist appointments. Children’s Hospital Colorado provides the funding and specialist doctors needed to meet the neurological and orthopedic needs of children from birth through the age of 20. **78** children were seen at **10** clinics held throughout 2023.



## HEALTHY CHILD CLINICS

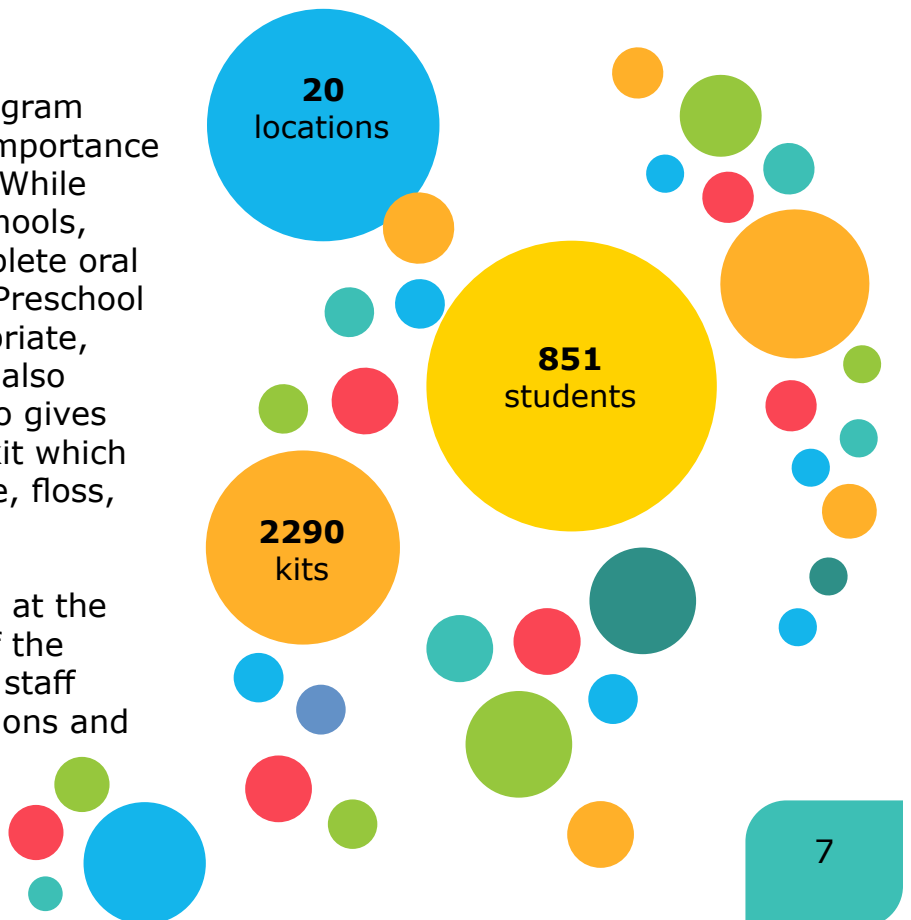
Healthy Child Clinics offer free vision, hearing, speech, social/emotional, developmental, and dental screenings to all children ages six months to five years old. The goal is to identify any developmental issues early and refer to appropriate resources before any problems develop. In 2023, **4** clinics were held and **78** children received screenings.



## ORAL HEALTH

Our school-based Oral Health Program focuses on education about the importance of oral hygiene to overall health. While visiting child-care centers and schools, registered dental hygienists complete oral health screenings for children in Preschool through 6th grade; where appropriate, fluoride varnish and sealants are also applied. The oral health team also gives students an oral health hygiene kit which contains a toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, and educational materials.

Oral screenings are also provided at the Healthy Child Clinics and some of the community health fairs. Program staff distributed **2290** kits at **20** locations and **851** students were screened.



## IMMUNIZATIONS

The immunization program strives to protect our communities against vaccine preventable diseases by increasing immunization coverage in the northeast region, as well as providing immunization education and resources for local families, schools, childcare centers and community partners.

We provide routine vaccination services for infants, children, teens and adults in all six counties on a weekly basis. We also provide walk-in clinics during back to school and flu season.

County	Vaccine Administered	TB Skin Tests	Patients
Logan	220	50	147
Morgan	860	78	343
Phillips	76	0	51
Sedgwick	18	0	18
Wash.	9	0	7
Yuma	366	0	299
Total	1421	128	865

Vaccines for Children Program (VFC) Compliance Site Visits - 6 (one completed in each county)



## COVID-19

The NCHD response to COVID-19 shifted direction in 2023 by incorporating COVID-19 more intentionally into our communicable disease prevention efforts. While we continued to provide COVID-19 resources and education regarding testing and vaccination, we did this more and more in conjunction with our Communicable Disease and Immunization programs. We continue to provide current CDC recommendations on our website and update that as needed.

The numbers in our six-county region related only to COVID-19 for the year 2023 were as follows:

Cases Reported	1706
Priority Cases Contacted by NCHD	25
Outbreaks in Healthcare Settings	5
Hospitalizations	109
Deaths	9

## Behavioral & Mental Health

Behavioral and Mental Health is a top priority of NCHD's current Public Health Improvement Plan (PHIP). Over the past decade, NCHD has implemented several mental health and suicide prevention efforts including working with local healthcare providers to increase screening for pregnancy-related depression.

We partnered with Centennial Mental Health Center and private therapists to promote evidence-based suicide prevention trainings in communities across northeast Colorado. We have also implemented community/youth engagement programs to address youth mental health and substance use such



as the Communities that Care program. To support these efforts, NCHD has a page on our website (<https://www.nchd.org/behavioralhealth>) providing links to available resources for depression and suicide prevention.

Suicide is a leading cause of death among Colorado youth ages 10-24. Suicide is complex and rarely the result of only one cause. There are often a variety of circumstances and there may or may not be an underlying mental health diagnosis as well. Our culture is often uncomfortable talking about mental health and/or suicide. In rural northeast Colorado there is often stigma associated with asking for help.

NCHD's Life Source Project provides professional mental health therapy for youth at risk of suicide in northeast Colorado. The goal of this project is to reduce youth suicide by removing the financial and social barriers to treatment. This project pays for up to six therapeutic counseling sessions with a mental health professional of their choice.

Eligibility for this program are individuals who are 19 years and younger whose families are uninsured or underinsured and cannot pay for their child/youth to get the help they need. This project has been supported through donations. During 2023 there were **13** referrals of youth needing treatment and **52** counseling sessions provided.



## Tobacco Cessation

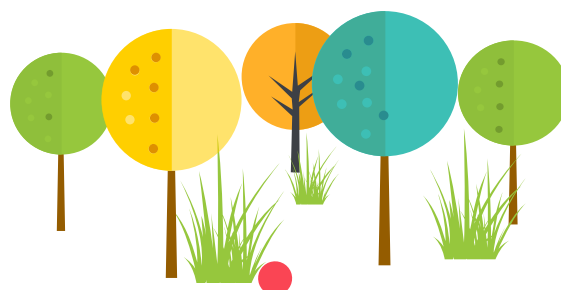
In 2023, the Tobacco Program provided 10 presentations to schools and parents reaching 838 people.

In addition to school and parent presentations, the tobacco team also attended health fairs, youth resource fairs, and events hosted by local law enforcement and other community agencies.

NCHD's tobacco program still offers tobacco quit kits to medical and dental offices, and some pharmacies. 140 quit kits were distributed containing information and resources for tobacco cessation efforts. Quit kits can be a vital resource for people interested in ending nicotine addiction.



**TODAY**  
**I QUIT**  
TOBACCO



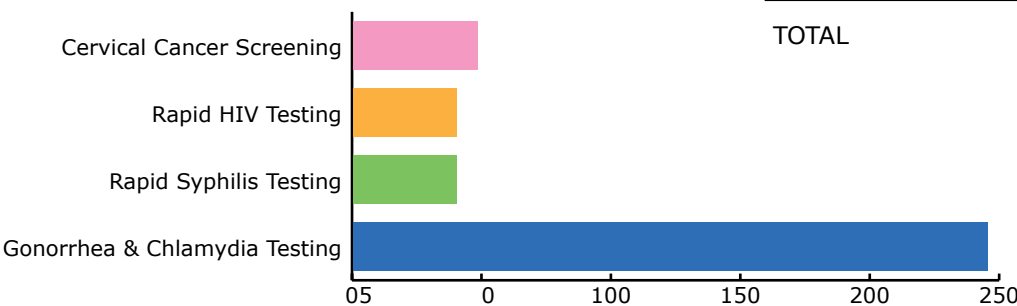
## Reproductive Health

The Family Planning Program provides quality services, helping to meet the reproductive health and contraceptive needs of the community of Northeast Colorado. Services provided include contraception options and counseling, pregnancy tests, emergency contraception, STI testing and treatment, abstinence counseling, adolescent healthy relationship counseling, and substance use screening. Physical exams include pelvic exams, clinical breast exams, and cervical cancer screening.

Our goal is to help our clients make informed decisions, allowing them to take charge of their reproductive health. In-person clinic visits continued throughout 2023 in all of our offices.

During the year, we continued to provide point of care syphilis and HIV testing. Point of care HIV testing kits were provided by CDPHE. Although STIs are statistically measured as Communicable Diseases, the testing was implemented by the Family Planning team.

County	Individual Patients	Number of Office Visits
Logan	80	137
Morgan	200	465
Phillips	19	35
Sedgwick	1	1
Washington	4	8
Yuma	68	143
<b>Total</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>789</b>



## Communicable Diseases

A core duty of public health is the tracking and control of communicable diseases. Communicable diseases are spread by physical contact with an infected person, contact with a contaminated surface or object, bites from infectious insects or animals, and airborne transmission. All hospitals, physician offices and laboratories in our health region are required to report positive communicable disease information to NCHD, per state regulations. Public health investigates illnesses and outbreaks to halt further transmission. The numbers included on this page represent the combined diagnosis totals of all six of our counties for diseases that were reported during 2023.



DIAGNOSIS	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Campylobacteriosis	44	31	36	31	38
Cryptosporidiosis	2	1	6	6	4
Giardiasis	1	4	2	2	1
Influenza - Hospitalized	62	42	7	50	16
Pertussis	9	0	0	0	1
Salmonellosis	21	35	13	23	21
Shigellosis	4	2	5	2	3
STEC (Shiga Toxin Producing E.coli)	15	9	15	13	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>91</b>

## ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

The Environmental Health Division (EH) protects our communities from environmental hazards through focused efforts on food safety, water and air quality, and zoonotic disease. Our staff are referred to as generalists, because of their work in every program we offer, performing various inspections, licensing facilities, and providing education about a variety of topics.

### Retail Food Safety

The Retail Food Safety Program at NCHD is the Environmental Health Division's largest program. Within our six-county health district, staff visit and inspect each restaurant, grocery store, school, and any other facility that stores and/or serves food. Frequency of inspections is determined based on risk and are conducted at least annually; more frequently if a facility has had a history of critical violations or is the subject of complaints.

### Food Safety Training

NCHD helps keep Northeast Colorado consumers safe by encouraging all food service employees to take food safety training. With the cooperation of CSU Extension, NCHD offers two courses for facilities to choose from, one for food handlers and one for managers using the ServSafe curriculum developed by the National Restaurant association. In 2023, **57** ServeSafe Manager certificates (in English), and **42** ServeSafe Handler certificates (in both English and Spanish) were presented.

### Water Testing

NCHD tests public and private drinking water for bacterial contamination. It is recommended that private wells be tested annually for bacteria or more often if there are known problems with well water in that area. This is especially important if problems such as flooding or land

disturbances have been experienced and when replacing or repairing any part of a good system.

Onsite wastewater treatment system permits are required for any building creating wastewater flow that is not connected to a city sewer. Any new system or repair of an existing system requires a permit from the health department. Systems are inspected to ensure compliance with the regulations approved by the NCHD Board of Health.

### Swimming Pools

The Swimming Pool and Spa Safety Program is the only one of our environmental health programs that is voluntary. Licensed facilities are inspected twice each year for things such as assuring the main drains are meeting safety codes, which helps prevent chances of entrapment drowning of young children, and ensuring the water is safe to be in, lowering the incidence of water-borne disease outbreaks.



#### Retail Food

**408** Establishments  
**549** Inspections

Water samples  
tested for bacteria  
**889**

#### Pools

**5** Facilities  
**5** Inspections



### Child Care Centers

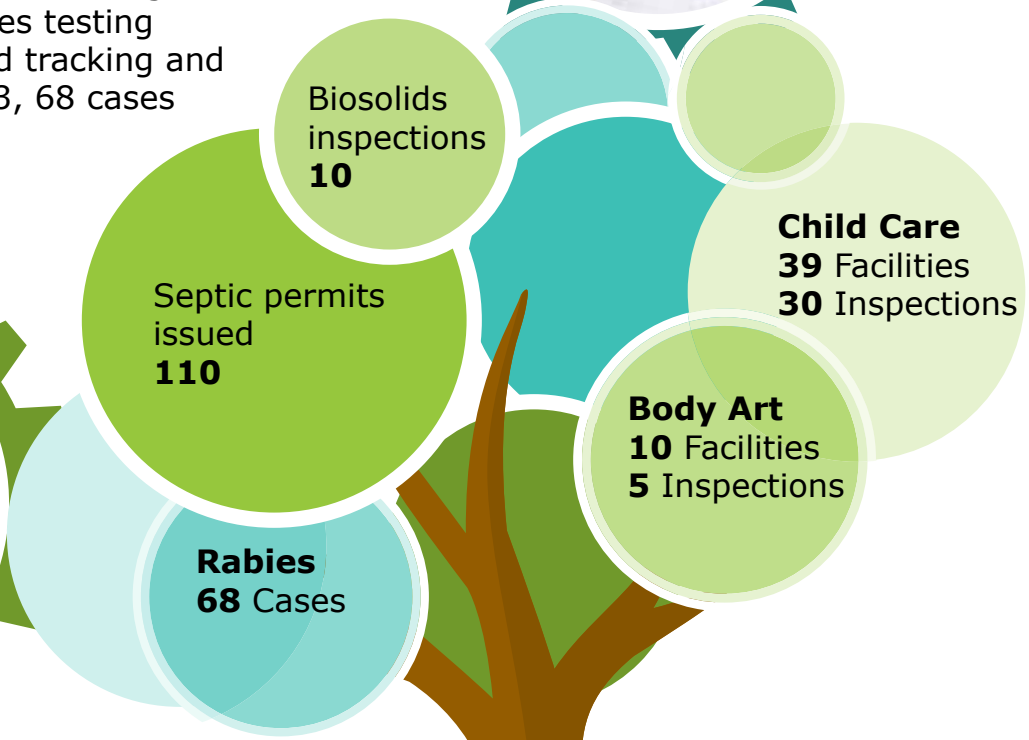
Child Care Centers within our health district are inspected a minimum of once per year. The rules and regulations governing child care centers, along with the environmental health inspections performed, assure and maintain minimum health and sanitation requirements. Our Environmental Health division does not license child care facilities, but does license and inspect areas that impact environmental health safety.

### Rabies

The Environmental Health Division also participates in prevention and control measures associated with zoonotic diseases, including rabies. NCHD handles cases of potential rabies contacts among humans and pets and wildlife by coordinating with animal control agencies and medical practitioners in receiving bite reports, monitoring quarantine and signs of illness, assisting with rabies testing protocols when required, and tracking and reporting cases. During 2023, 68 cases were investigated.

### Body Art

The rules and regulations governing body art in Colorado address general sanitation and disease control and apply to every body artist in Colorado that offers services such as tattooing, branding, sculpting, scarification, and body piercings. Due to the health risks associated with exposure to blood-borne pathogens such as hepatitis or HIV, body art facilities that are licensed by NCHD are inspected at least once a year.



## COMMUNICATIONS

During 2023, nchd.org received over 30K new visitors, with the most time spent on the community assessment and rabies pages, and the home page and body art page seeing the greatest number of views and unique visitors. Our blog page received 17% more views than the previous year with tobacco cessation and children's dental health being the most popular topics. Food safety and children's and men's health also received attention. Slightly more than half of users are still accessing the website by desktop, and we continue efforts to make the mobile version as user-friendly as the desktop site. We began planning and design for the development of a new website that will improve user experience and also be compliant with Colorado law regarding digital accessibility for all users, including those who use assistive devices. This will result in a fairly comprehensive revamp when it comes to navigation, color schemes, and include access in more languages. We look forward to this coming to fruition in summer 2024.



FLU VACCINE CLINIC	
<b>Fort Morgan</b> 228 W. Railroad Ave. Fort Morgan, CO 80701 October 4th 9:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M. Physical Phone: 970-807-4918 for an appointment para una cita	<b>Sterling</b> 700 Columbine, Sterling, CO 80751 October 13th 10:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M. Physical Phone: 970-822-3741 for an appointment para una cita

Our social media presence continues on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter/X in English and Facebook and Instagram in Spanish. We also ramped up the frequency and variety of posts to the Nextdoor platform in order to become a regular presence for the neighbors who access information there. When messages were posted to the entire service area, we saw impressions in the range of 1000-2600 and favorable comments. Instagram and Twitter/X continue to lag behind Facebook for both English and Spanish interactions, but Facebook in English saw an increase in content interactions. We celebrated some additional awareness days, weeks, and months in 2023 than we have before with posts that specifically acknowledged Teen Self Esteem, Rural Road Safety, Dog Bite Prevention, Rural Health, Native American Heritage, Hispanic Heritage, Rural Women and others added to our regular posts about disease prevention and our programs and services.



## OPERATIONS

NCHD staffing continued to average around 50 employees, 40% of whom have been with NCHD for over 5 years. Staff are divided among the divisional teams and dispersed among all 6 offices. The offices in Sterling, Fort Morgan, Holyoke, Julesburg, and Yuma are staffed daily; the Akron office is open regularly on Wednesdays and by appointment.

NCHD now accepts United Healthcare insurance in addition to Cigna, Aetna, Blue Cross Blue Shield, and UMR private insurances. We also continue to work to expand our private insurance contracts. As always, NCHD accepts Medicaid and Medicare.



## Vital Records Distributions

NCHD serves as the Vital Records registrar for Logan, Morgan, Phillips and Washington Counties. We provide certificates if the individual was born or died in Colorado. Birth certificates are available for Colorado births dating back to 1906. Certain death records may require a waiting period. The following are numbers of certificates requested in each serviced county during 2023.

County	Birth	Death	Free Veteran Copy
Logan	950	1948	51
Morgan	1127	1746	19
Phillips	73	361	10
Washington	15	11	0

## BOARD OF HEALTH

Terry Hofmeister, President  
Phillips County Commissioner

Mike Brownell, Vice President  
Logan County Commissioner

Dr. Kevin Lindell, Secretary  
Morgan County Representative

Mike Leerar  
Yuma County Commissioner

Gisele Jefferson  
Washington County Commissioner

Dr. Ron Berges  
Sedgwick County Commissioner

Mark Arndt  
Morgan County Commissioner

Samantha Mahaffey  
Logan County Representative



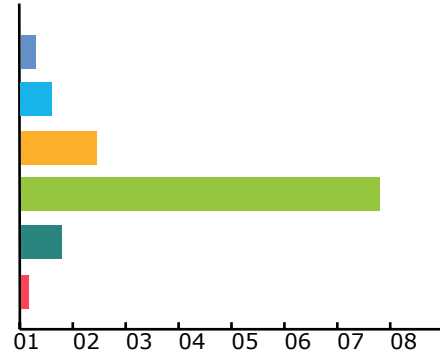
# FINANCIALS

Due to our contracts having different ending dates and payment schedules, this year's revenue and expenditures show a deficit, but NCHD is operating in good standing.



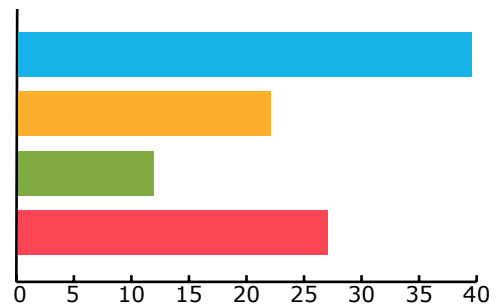
## Revenues

Miscellaneous	137,963.39	2.8%
State Per Capita	284,448.50	5.9%
County Per Capita	697,956.00	14.3%
Contracts & Grants	3,297,889.34	67.8%
Fees/Donations	374,133.19	7.7%
Medical Billing	72,054.07	1.5%
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>4,864,444.49</b>	<b>100%</b>



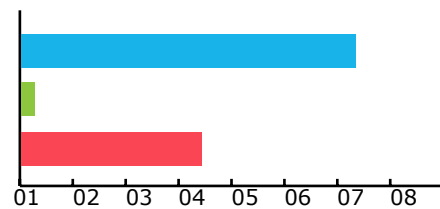
## Revenues by Department

Nursing	1,919,367.50	39.4%
COVID-19	1,064,154.07	21.9%
Environmental Health	571,371.20	11.8%
Admin & EPR	1,309,551.72	26.9%
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>4,864,444.49</b>	<b>100%</b>



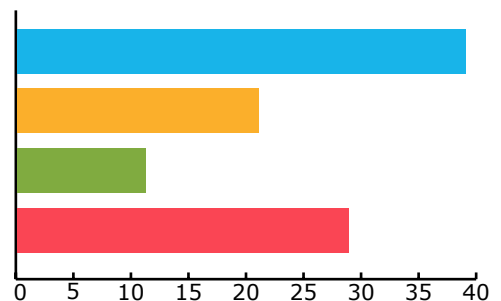
## Expenditures

Salaries /Related	3,222,208.44	63.3%
Travel	129,885.27	2.6%
Operating	1,734,856.42	34.1%
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>5,086,950.13</b>	<b>100%</b>



## Expenditures by Department

Nursing	1,988,395.19	39%
COVID-19	1,065,135.67	21%
Environmental Health	569,912.86	11.2%
Admin & EPR	1,463,506.41	28.8%
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>5,086,950.13</b>	<b>100%</b>





**COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT** 2022-2023  
NORTHEAST COLORADO HEALTH DEPARTMENT



**PUBLIC HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN** 2024-2028