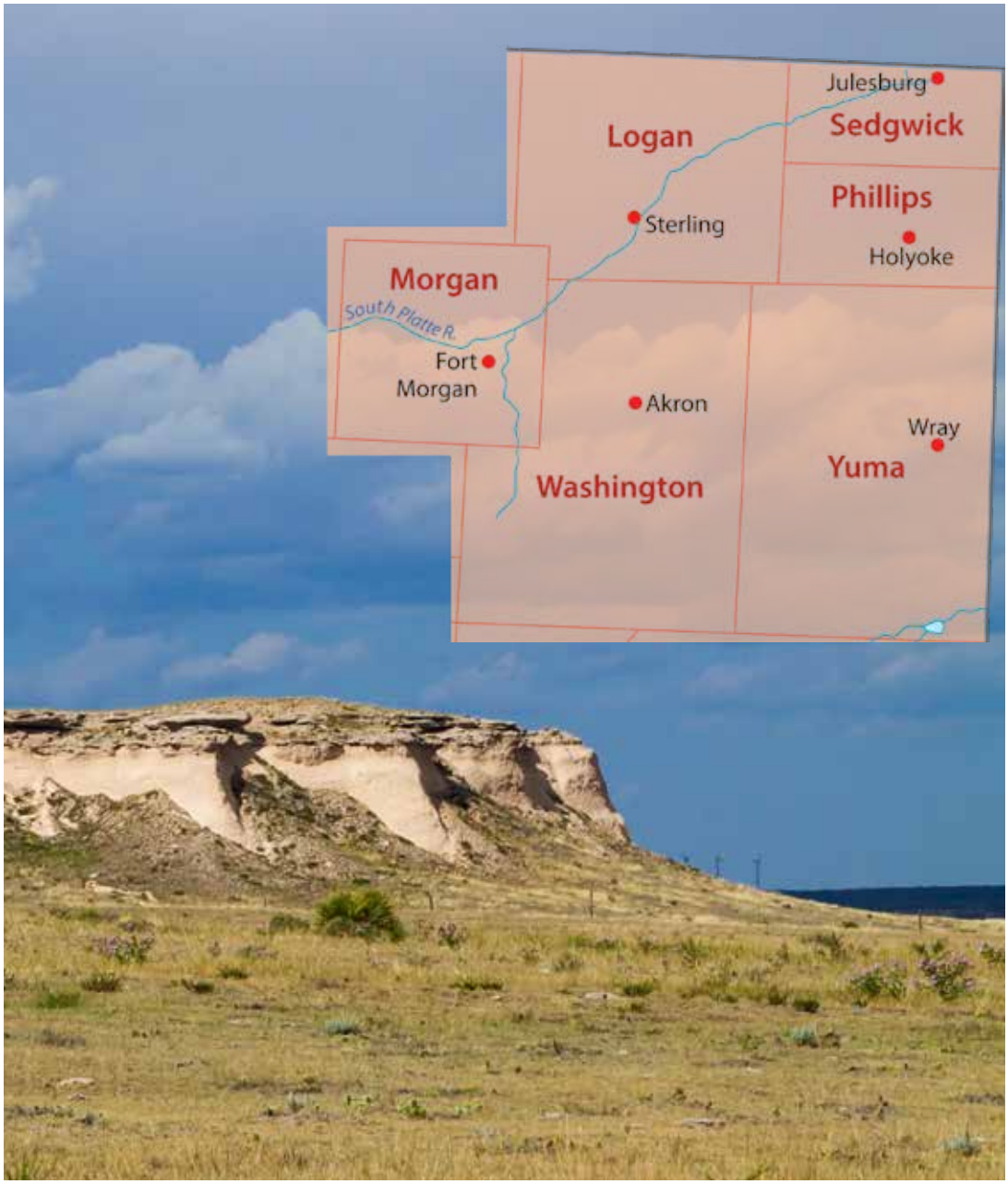
# Northeast Colorado Health Department

# 2024

**Annual Report**



NCHD staffing in 2024 remained steady with 45 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.

## Office Locations

Logan County
700 Columbine St.
Sterling, CO 80751
Ph: 970-522-3741

Morgan County
228 W Railroad Ave
Fort Morgan, CO 80701
Ph: 970-867-4918

Phillips County
127 E Denver St., Ste C
Holyoke, CO 80734
Ph: 970-854-2717

Sedgwick County
118 W 3rd St.
Julesburg, CO 80737
Ph: 970-474-2619

Washington County
482 Adams Ave
Akron, CO 80720
Ph: 970-345-6562

Yuma County
529 N Albany St., Ste 1120
Yuma, CO 80759
Ph: 970-848-3811

## Board of Health 2024

Terry Hofmeister, President, Phillips County Commissioner;
Mike Brownell, Vice President, Logan County Commissioner;
Mike Leerar, Secretary, Yuma County Commissioner;
Gisele Jefferson,Washington County Commissioner;
Dr. Ron Berges, Sedgwick County Commissioner;
Mark Arndt, Morgan County Commissioner;
Dr. Kevin Lindell, Morgan County Representative;
Samantha Mahaffey, Logan County Representative Until May 2024;
Bonnie Brownell, Logan County Representative Beginning September 2024

# A Message from Our Director

We launched our third 5-year Public Health Improvement Plan in 2024. Our goals include developing strategies to improve healthy lifestyles, mental health and wellness, and awareness of environmental health issues and resources.

To work toward these goals, we implemented a diabetes prevention program to assist individuals at risk of developing Type 2 diabetes with education and resources to improve their health through lifestyle and nutrition. To address mental health and wellness, NCHD launched a platform called Credible Mind, where anyone in the northeast region can access resources, assessments, articles, podcasts and videos to help their mental health thrive. We've also increased the visibility of some of our environmental health programs, such as food safety, so that the public can find accurate information and resources.

This annual report will give you the highlights of a productive 2024. Not only are the topics mentioned above discussed, but you will get an opportunity to review some of the other programs and services we provide. And I invite you to check out our website as well—we have recently updated it to meet accessibility standards—it's also a great resource for the work we are doing.

Sincerely,

Trish McClain

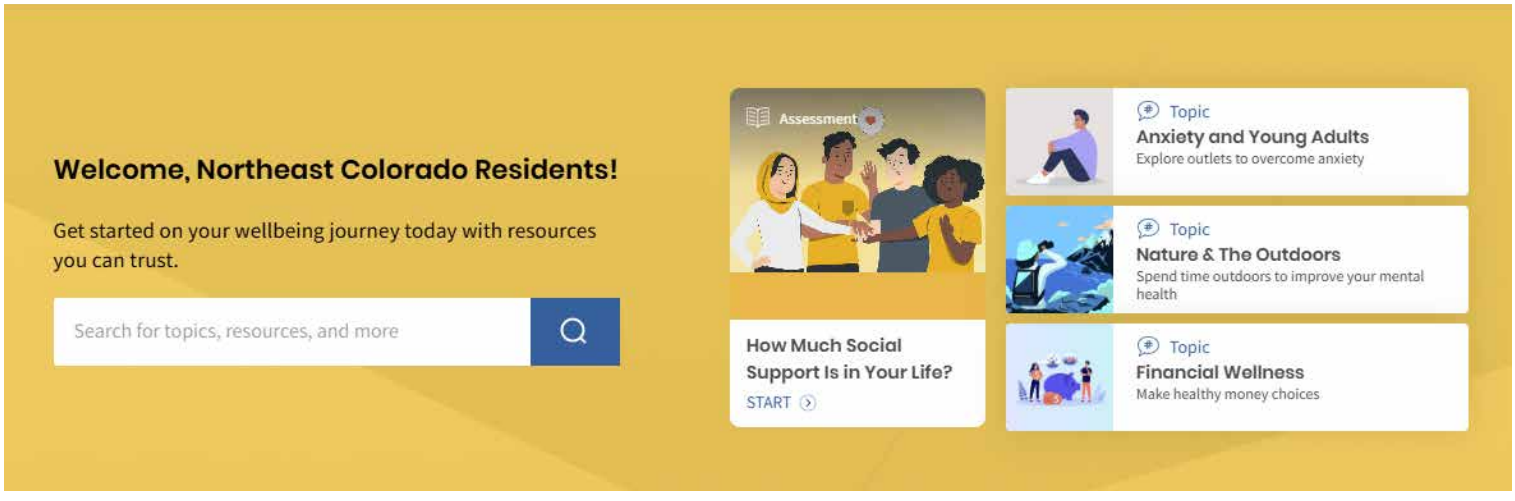
2024 marked the launch of NCHD's current Public Health Improvement Plan (PHIP). The primary goals for this five-year cycle are to build healthier, more resilient communities, and foster greater trust in public health by strengthening relationships within the communities of northeast Colorado. NCHD strives to be a leader and partner in the region to address the emergent issues that our communities face. Focus areas include addressing chronic disease and mental/social wellness. Strategies that NCHD implemented in 2024 that address those needs include the National Diabetes Prevention Program and the launch of the online mental health tool, nchd.CredibleMind.com. Clear and accessible communication is vital to maintaining good relationships. To that end, we also revamped the website and have expanded our content on social media.

# Addressing Population Health Priorities in Our Public Health Improvement Plan

## Mental/Social Wellness

Behavioral and mental health remains one of the major concerns among the communities of northeast Colorado. During 2024, NCHD continued, expanded, and added to the programs that address the issues of mental wellness and suicide prevention. A continuing barrier to mental health care in northeast Colorado is the lack of providers. To help address this issue, NCHD chose to partner with Credible Mind, an online platform that addresses mental health and wellness by providing evidence-based assessments that measure mental wellness in a variety of categories, for example, anxiety, stress, grief, or workplace wellness. Based on the assessment, the platform then makes suggestions of resources in multiple formats including articles, videos, podcasts, book recommendations, and blogs. Because Credible Mind is customized to NCHD, we are able to add local resources to our page to help promote those to our residents as well. Check out this new resource at nchd.crediblemind.com

NCHD continues to work with Centennial Mental Health Center and private therapists to promote mental health and reduce suicide risk. NCHD's Life Source Project provides funding for 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. Eligibility for this program are individuals who are 21 years and younger whose families are uninsured or underinsured and cannot pay for their child/youth to get the help they need. Life Source pays for up to six therapeutic counseling sessions with a mental health professional of their choice. This project has historically been supported through community donations. The Behavioral and Mental Health section of the website has descriptions and links to other crisis, suicide prevention, and mental health resources, including an updated list of mental health providers.



## Chronic Disease

Type 2 diabetes is an identified serious chronic health problem in northeast Colorado communities. To help address that particular issue, the first National Diabetes Prevention Program (NDPP) Prevent T2 cohort started in February 2024 in Logan County. Two staff members became trained Lifestyle Coaches and led the program to help people reduce their risk of developing Type 2 diabetes once they have received a diagnosis of prediabetes. Additional cohorts were planned to begin in 2025 with promotion taking place in the 4th quarter of 2024 by advertising in newspapers, on radio, and through dissemination of flyers to the public and healthcare providers.

## Communications

In 2021, the Colorado legislature passed HB21-1110, Colorado Laws for Persons with Disabilities, which expanded the Colorado Anti-Discrimination Act (CADA) to include digital technology. July 1, 2024, was the initial deadline for government agencies to be able to show active progress toward meeting digital accessibility guidelines based on the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1AA standard.

Under HB24-1454, the deadline was extended to July 1, 2025. NCHD's Media & Marketing team had already been aware of the initial deadline and decided that, since we felt our website needed a refresh anyway, the most efficient way to meet the accessibility guidelines was to build a new website. Digital accessibility standards include using color contrasts that are appropriate for sighted users with varying levels of sight, including types of colorblindness, using readable fonts, having alternative text available to describe images that provide information that an unsighted user would not be able to interpret, and making sure the flow of text on the website and any attached documents are set up to allow screen reading software to read correctly. We added a translation option with more languages available so that users will not have to rely on external web translation resources.

Digital accessibility also applies to social media. We continued to actively post on Facebook and Instagram in English and Spanish, on X in English, and we expanded our content on the nextdoor.com platform by posting on a weekly basis in both English and Spanish to the regional neighborhoods. The team worked to create design that is clear and conveys meaning, and wrote alternative text for images on social media platforms. Currently, Facebook and X allow alternative text to be placed in an image; for the other platforms, we make sure the post itself has all necessary information included.

Accessibility on all NCHD's communications channels was the primary focus in 2024 and we will continue to make it a priority.

# Impacting Population Health Through Partnerships

NCHD understands that the best way to serve our residents is to partner with the communities we serve and other organizations that serve the same communities. By cooperating with other entities, we are all able to provide more access to services and support each other when we have the same goals.

## Equity & Outreach

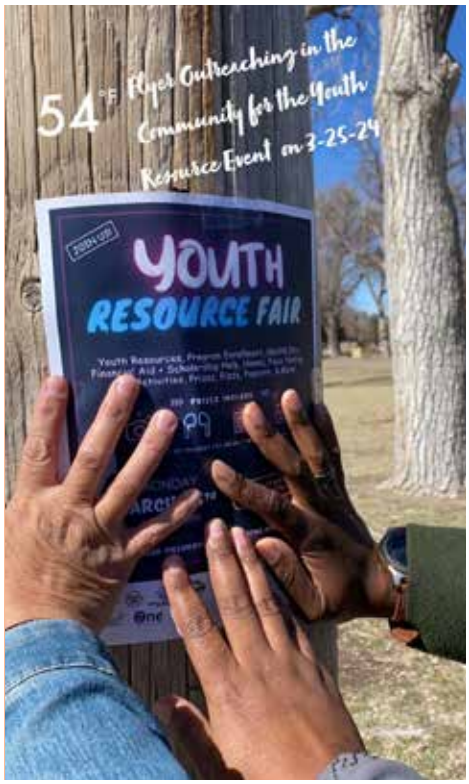
During the summer of 2024, the Equity and Outreach Division was restructured to better utilize the resources available and to ensure sustainability of the program. Our Community Health Workers (CHWs) delivered services and resources at many community events throughout 2024. These continued to be provided in partnership with other community organizations and included COVID-19 and other vaccines, free supplies such as diapers and baby wipes, and food boxes. These events also gave families an opportunity to learn about health topics such as immunizations, diabetes prevention, and tobacco cessation while enjoying food and entertainment. Services have included assistance with a variety of applications such as SB-251 licenses, health insurance, and other referrals. Because our team members are multilingual, representing six languages, the CHWs also provided over **1,500** cultural language services in 2024, and continue to offer ongoing language support to the diverse populations that reside in our health district.

Our CHWs attended and/or hosted **16** community resource events in 6 communities across **3** counties. In addition to the events, our staff also attended **10** training opportunities bringing back their Community Health Worker Fundamentals Certifications along with skills such as child passenger safety checks and health marketplace knowledge to better serve our communities.

**302 referrals to local resources**

**1,528 cultural language services**

**149,850 free diapers provided to 2,600 families across our 6 counties**



## Communities That Care

In the communities of Wray and Sedgwick County (Julesburg, Ovid, and Sedgwick), the Communities that Care program implements the social development strategy to address youth mental health and substance use through community engagement. In 2024, youth gave back to their community by completing **1,541** community service hours, participated in or facilitated **80** events, and gave **8** presentations for civic engagement.

## Tobacco Cessation

The NCHD Tobacco Cessation Program goals are to reduce the use of tobacco in all forms by all ages of people. During 2024, our Community Health Specialists reached **345** students and parents by providing **9** presentations in schools. In addition to school-based events, the team attended community events to hand out cessation resources. They attended **18** events in our catchment area and saw about **2,475** attendees. NCHD's tobacco program also offered their cessation quit kits to medical and dental offices and some pharmacies. **265** kits were distributed containing information and resources for tobacco cessation.

A primary goal of public health continues to be the protection of individuals from preventable illness and death. Toward that goal, NCHD offers services and programs that promote healthy environments. The Environmental Health Division focuses on food safety, licensed commercial enterprises, water and air quality, and monitoring animal-borne diseases. Our staff are referred to as generalists, because of their work in every program we offer, performing various inspections, licensing facilities, and providing education. Our Epidemiology team tracks communicable diseases and works with schools and long-term care facilities to limit the spread of disease. Immunizations support individuals in their own journey to stay healthy.

# Preventing the Spread of Disease and Ensuring Healthy Environments

## Communicable Diseases

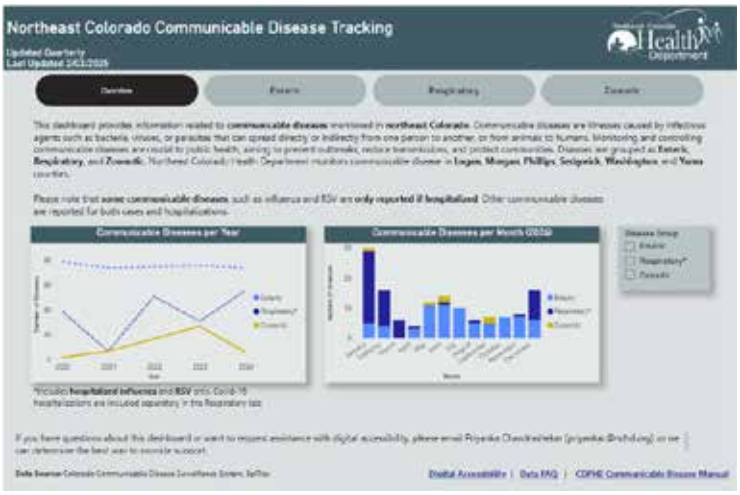
One of the core duties of public health is to track and control communicable diseases. NCHD investigates infectious diseases that can be spread from person-to-person, through contact with animals or insects, or through ingesting contaminated food and water.

All hospitals, physicians' offices, and laboratories are required to report positive communicable disease information to health departments, per state regulations. Public health investigates illnesses and outbreaks to halt further transmission.

Reportable disease numbers are tracked on the NCHD website on the Communicable Disease Tracking Dashboard, which is updated quarterly. Diseases are grouped according to their method of transmission; some diseases are only reported if the patient is hospitalized.

The following numbers represent the combined diagnosis totals of all six of our counties for diseases that were reported during 2024.

| Diagnosis | 2024 |
|---|---|
| Campylobacteriosis | 29 |
| Cryptosporidiosis | 7 |
| Giardiasis | 2 |
| Salmonellosis | 23 |
| Shigellosis | 2 |
| STEC (Shiga Toxin Producing E.coli) | 11 |
| COVID associated Hospitalization | 93 |
| Influenza associated Hospitalization | 27 |
| RSV associated Hospitalization | 29 |
| Pertussis (vaccine preventable) | 8 |
| Total | 231 |




## 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 regular basis. We also provide additional clinics during back to school and flu season.

During 2024, NCHD saw **682** patients, administering **1228** immunizations and **122** TB skin tests.

### 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. Effective March 16, 2024, Colorado Food Regulations were updated to meet the FDA 2022 Food Code. During 2024, **475** retail food establishments were licensed and **431** inspections were conducted.

### 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 2024, **68** ServeSafe Manager certificates, and **50** ServeSafe Handler certificates (in both English and Spanish) were presented.

### Water Testing and Waste Water

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. **857** water samples were tested for bacteria during 2024.

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. **131** septic permits were issued and **10** biosolid inspections were conducted during 2024.

### 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 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. In 2024, **5** inspections were done on **5** facilities.

### 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. During 2024, **57** inspections were conducted among **39** child care facilities.

### 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 2024, **191** 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 annually. In 2024, **8** inspections were conducted.

# Addressing the Needs of Underserved Populations

Northeast Colorado Health Department (NCHD) offers several programs and services aimed to improve health outcomes for underserved populations in our health district. Many northeast Colorado residents face barriers to accessing healthcare services that include minimal public transportation options, lack of insurance or ability to pay for services, language and cultural challenges, as well as the limited availability of local specialty care.

NCHD does accept private insurance for clinic services, including United Healthcare, Cigna, BCBS, and UMR. We continue to expand the private insurance contracts. As always, NCHD also accepts Medicaid and Medicare, and works with other programs to ensure that residents have access to immunization and family planning services regardless of ability to pay.

Also in 2024, in order to help northeast Colorado residents navigate the health insurance marketplace and Medicaid, the Equity & Outreach team became trained assistors for Connect for Health Colorado. This team also manages the diaper resource program that provides free diapers and wipes to regional families, and provides translation services to the community during NCHD clinics and to the public.

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

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is a nutrition program of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) that provides supplemental nutritious foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and referrals to health and other community services to income eligible families. Parents and caregivers of children up to age five, including fathers, grandparents, and foster parents, are welcome.

The average monthly number of families enrolled during the calendar year 2024 was **2,046**, with an average of **1,971** vouchered participants.

While the WIC program focuses on the participants who experience the direct effects of improved nutrition and support, the program also directly impacts the local economy since WIC dollars are spent at approved local retailers. In 2024, annual vendor sales brought **$1,675,794** to the local economy.

Additionally, on October 1, 2024, NCHD began a partnership with Douglas County Health Department (DCHD) that benefits both WIC programs. DCHD employs a dietitian that supports NCHD high-risk WIC participants, and NCHD employs staff that support online DCHD WIC referrals. NCHD also helps verify participant eligibility for the DCHD program.

## Oral Health Program

NCHD's school-based Oral Health Program provides free dental services to school-aged children in our area schools. An important goal of the program is to provide education to children and families about the importance of good oral hygiene for overall and long-term health. Registered Dental Hygienists visit participating schools with NCHD Community Health Specialists to provide oral health screenings for students in preschool through 6th grade; where appropriate, fluoride varnish and sealants are also applied. During 2024, the program was able to serve **830** students in **22** schools/childcare locations and distribute **2,421** oral hygiene kits. The kits include a toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, and educational material. In addition to school events, the program also provided screenings at Healthy Child Clinics and health fairs in our coverage area.

## Healthy Child Clinics

Healthy Child Clinics for children ages six months to five years are held twice a year in Sterling and Fort Morgan. These clinics offer free vision, hearing, speech, social/emotional, developmental, and dental screenings. The goal is to identify any developmental issues early and refer to appropriate resources to prevent problems from developing or worsening. In 2024, **4** clinics were held and **97** children received screenings.

## Children with Special Healthcare Needs

The Healthcare Program for Children & Youth with Special Needs (HCP) supports children with special health care needs, from birth to age 21, and their families. NCHD partners with Children's Hospital Colorado to help reduce barriers to neurological and orthopedic/rehab services such as cost, travel to the Front Range for specialist appointments, and lost work or school time for northeast families. During 2024, NCHD hosted **7** clinics at our Sterling and Fort Morgan offices for Children's Hospital providers to see patients.

## Reproductive Health

The Reproductive Health Program helps meet sexual and reproductive health needs in our communities. In 2024, NCHD transitioned from utilizing a contracted Nurse Practitioner to staffing a full time Nurse Practitioner. This transition will allow NCHD to provide more availability across our six counties for low cost comprehensive sexual and reproductive health service including access to a variety of contraception methods, physical exams, cervical cancer screening, breast exams and STI testing. Our goal is to help our clients make informed decisions, allowing them to take charge of their reproductive health, while addressing the financial barriers to care people may experience.

| County | Clients | Visits |
|---|---|---|
| Logan | 51 | 106 |
| Morgan | 200 | 369 |
| Phillips | 15 | 39 |
| Sedgwick | 2 | 5 |
| Washington | 7 | 8 |
| Yuma | 59 | 118 |
| Total | 334 | 645 |

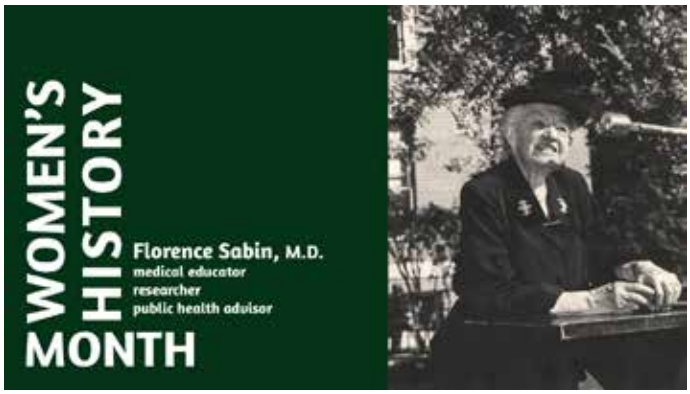
Although STIs are statistically measured as Communicable Diseases, the testing was implemented by the Reproductive Health team.

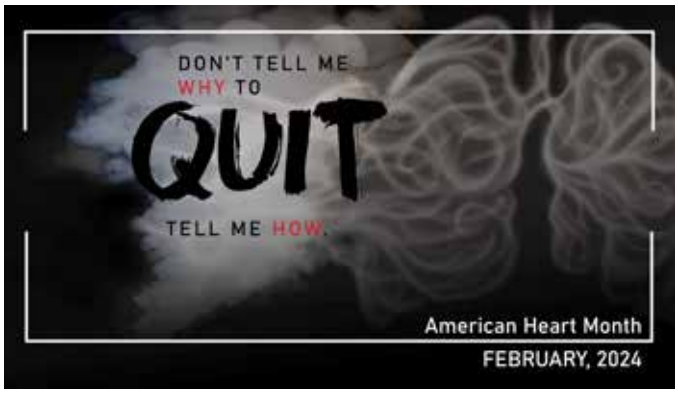
During 2024, **43** cervical cancer screenings, **34** Rapid HIV tests, **35** Rapid Syphilis tests, and **213** Gonorrhea & Chlamydia tests were conducted.

## 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 2024.

| County | Birth | Death | VA (free copy) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Logan | 819 | 1676 | 33 |
| Morgan | 1355 | 2511 | 25 |
| Phillips | 99 | 218 | 9 |
| Washington | 9 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 2282 | 4405 | 67 |





## Financials

| 2024 Revenues | $ | % |
|---|---|---|
| Miscellaneous | 102,804.04 | 2.14 |
| State Per Capita | 283,653.00 | 5.91 |
| County Per Capita | 697,956.00 | 14.54 |
| Contracts & Grants | 3,270,914.20 | 68.15 |
| Fees & Donations | 394,357.87 | 8.22 |
| Medical Billing | 49,559.75 | 1.04 |
| Total Revenues | 4,799,244.86 | 100.00 |

| 2024 Expenditures | $ | % |
|---|---|---|
| Salary/Related | 3,068,557.41 | 61.59 |
| Travel | 119,930.06 | 2.40 |
| Operating | 1,793,935.67 | 36.01 |
| Total Expenditures | 4,982,423.14 | 100.00 |

| Revenues by Department | $ | % |
|---|---|---|
| Client Health Services | 2,161,283.18 | 45.03 |
| Health Equity & Outreach | 526,491.69 | 10.97 |
| Environmental Health | 628,338.12 | 13.09 |
| Administration | 1,483,131.87 | 30.91 |
| Total Revenues | 4,799,244.86 | 100.00 |

| Expenditures by Department | $ | % |
|---|---|---|
| Client Health Services | 2,142,258.21 | 43.00 |
| Health Equity & Outreach | 536,694.60 | 10.77 |
| Environmental Health | 632,681.32 | 12.70 |
| Administration | 1,670,789.01 | 33.53 |
| Total Expenditures | 4,982,423.14 | 100.00 |

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.

Northeast Colorado Health Department
nchd.org