

Annual Report

July 2021 | June 2022



**Southwest Nebraska
Public Health Department**

PREVENT • PROMOTE • PROTECT

2021

-

2022

Soar with PUBLIC HEALTH



*Pictures of southwest Nebraska provided by Georgia Baughman

Accreditation

Our vision is to be recognized as a high-performing public health department as we continue to work towards a healthier southwest Nebraska. We have joined many other health departments across the state in committing to demonstrating these high standards by starting the accreditation process through the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB).

According to PHAB, “accreditation provides a framework for health departments to identify performance improvement opportunities, demonstrate credibility, develop leadership, and improve relationships with the community. It serves as both an accountability and transparency mechanism and is a step on a journey to transform public health practice.”

Board of Health

Chase County:

Jacci Brown
Charlotte Wallin

Dundy County:

Scott Olson
Rita Jones

Frontier County:

Kevin Owens
Shelley Veldhuizen

Furnas County:

Mike Sexton
John Kutnink

Hayes County:

Barry Richards
Leon Kolbet

Hitchcock County:

Scott McDonald
Stephanie Malcolm

Keith County:

Joan Ervin
Brian Wilson

Perkins County:

Ron Hagan
Laurie Walrod

Red Willow County:

Earl McNutt
Terri Skolout

Physician:

Shiuvaun Jaeger, MD

Dentist:

Scott Tobias, DDS

Celebrating our 20th

2002
-
2022

ANNIVERSARY

The First Decade

2002

APRIL: Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, and Red Willow Counties form SWNPHD.

MAY: Perkins County joins the health district; Board of Trustees officers first elected.

OCTOBER: First employee hired, SWNPHD office established in Trenton.

2003

FEBRUARY: Smallpox immunization clinic held in McCook for first responders.

MAY: West Nile Virus surveillance begins.

SEPTEMBER: Preventive Health and Human Services Block Grant awarded for walking programs in Wauneta and McCook.

2004

APRIL: Needs assessment performed in health district; Wauneta walking trail developed, and walking program begins with PHHS block grant.

NOVEMBER: Logo developed through school contest with fifth and sixth grades.

2005

APRIL: Mission statement, vision statement, strategic plan developed.

MAY: SWNPHD office moved to McCook.

JULY: Launched Walk to Health program in McCook.

2006

AUGUST: Began collaboration with McCook Public Schools on Nebraska Kids Fitness and Nutrition Day (NKFND) grant; Hired Health Educator – Fitness/Nutrition; Hired Health Educator – Substance Abuse.

DECEMBER: Opened Imperial office with health educator services; conducted first seasonal flu shot clinic.

2007 -- JANUARY: Stepping Away from Chew program developed.

FEBRUARY: Quit Spit/Smoking Kits Developed; Fitness Reaching Older Gen's (FROG) program developed.

AUGUST: Acquired responsibility for Respite grant

NOVEMBER: Began radon test kit distribution through grant from NDHHS.

2008 -- MAY: Walk to Health annual walking program kicked off.

JUNE: Developed Steer Clear of Tobacco program.

AUGUST: Developed surveillance coordinator position.

2009 -- MARCH: Radon measurement and mitigation training obtained.

APRIL: H1N1 planning begins.

MAY: NKFND wins state recognition award.

SEPTEMBER: 1st annual Radon poster contest held.

OCTOBER: remodeling of new building begins.

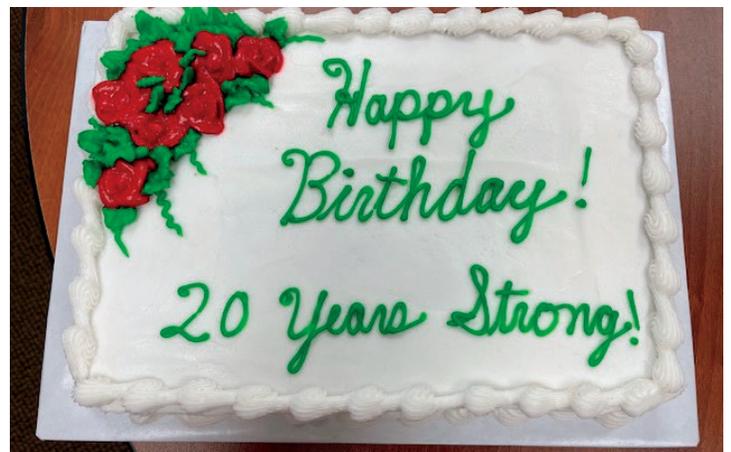
2010 -- MARCH: Moved in to new building.

MAY: Pool Cool begins at Palisade, Beaver City and McCook.

JULY: SNS deployment exercise with State of Nebraska.

SEPTEMBER: Distribution of preparedness buckets for schools, Handwashing with area preschool and elementary schools.

DECEMBER: Facebook page up and running.



Gift from the Nebraska Association of Local Health Directors

PREVENTION

PREVENTING ILLNESS, DISEASE, INJURY AND DEATH



WEST NILE VIRUS

West Nile Virus is a mosquito-borne disease that affects humans and animals. Nebraska remains one of the states of the highest rates of West Nile Virus illnesses in the US. Symptoms can range from mild to severe, from asymptomatic to paralysis or death. SWNPHD participates in Nebraska's West Nile Virus Program which tests mosquitoes for West Nile Virus throughout the state. Mosquito trapping is done every other week from Memorial Day until the end of September. The mosquitoes are sent to the state laboratory for testing to see if they carry West Nile Virus or other diseases. The 2021-2022 season resulted in no West Nile positive mosquito pools in the health district and 3 positive human cases reported. Although no reported pools were noted here, other tested areas which border the SWNPHD district were noted to have had mosquitoes that tested positive for West Nile Virus.

LEAD POISONING PREVENTION

The 2022 year saw new guidelines from CDC for lead levels that indicate lead poisoning in children, which dropped from 5ug/dl to 3.5 ug/dl. With this new change education was provide to local providers about the updates.

After a child has tested with lead levels 3.5 ug/dl or higher, information is sent to families to help them identify possible sources of lead within the child's environment such as lead paint in the home. We work with providers to ensure children are retested for lead in a timely manner based on the lab results. If a child has a lead level greater than 10ug/dl, SWNPHD works with Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services to schedule a follow up and then assist with testing for in-home lead sources.

A total of 159 children were tested for lead this year. Four of those children were identified as having a lead level that required follow up.

HEALTH HUB

Health Hub is a collaborative program working with community-level partners and DHHS to assess the needs of the community and priority populations around preventive screening with emphasis on breast, cervical, and colon cancer, cardiovascular risk reduction, and obesity. Through community partnership and engagement, SWNPHD helps to develop pathways to care with the implementation of evidence-based interventions.

Outcomes are meant to improve access to high-quality preventive screening services, enhance community linkages and strengthen data collection and utilization that impact the quality of life and health outcomes for Nebraska residents.

Health Hub and Target Your Health was created to get people health screenings that include blood pressure checks, cholesterol, and glucose checks, as well as weight and BMI measurements. Health Hub helps women aged 40-64 and men 50-74 to get their cancer screenings completed.

16 out of 29 women have completed the program with positive results. Moving forward post-pandemic, HUB/TYH will reach out to local communities to provide health screenings and offer educational opportunities that promote preventive services.

Women who qualify also receive free health coaching to assist them in reaching their weight, fitness, and nutrition goals. Making lifestyle changes can help control conditions such as high blood pressure and elevated cholesterol and improves overall fitness.

Staff is currently collaborating with local businesses to increase the number of men and women receiving preventive cancer screenings. This program serves 15 counties which include the 9 counties in our health district (Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, Red Willow) and 6 counties in West Central District Health Department (Arthur, Hooker, Lincoln, Logan, McPherson, Thomas).

TARGET YOUR HEALTH

COLON CANCER SCREENING KITS

Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of death for cancers affecting both men and women. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention your risk of getting colorectal cancer increases as you get older, with more than 90% of cases occurring in people aged 50 or older.

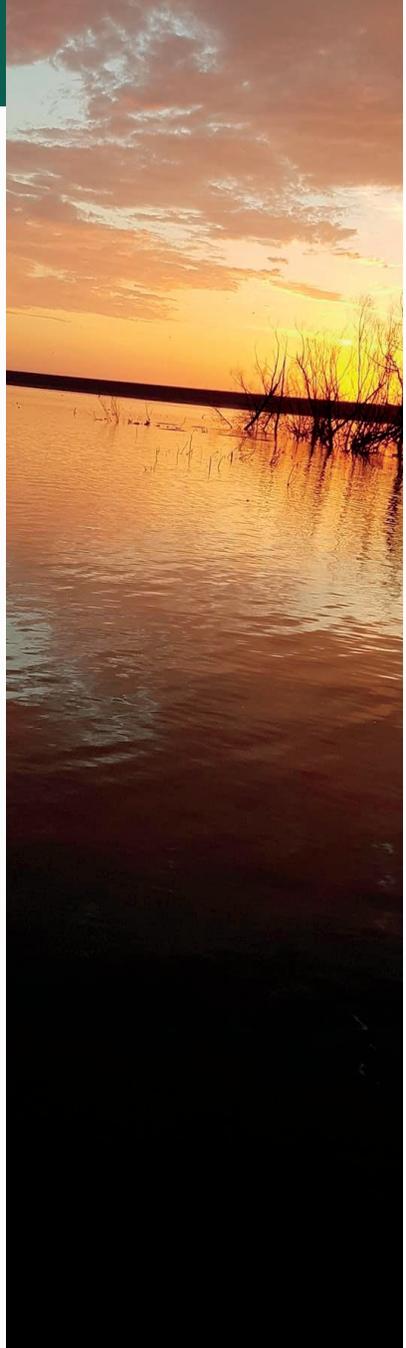
Risk Factors for Colorectal Cancer:

- Inflammatory bowel disease such as Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis.
- A family history of colorectal cancer or colorectal polyps.
- Obesity, alcohol consumption, and tobacco use.

SWNPHD is providing home screening kits through a grant from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. Screening tests are used to look for colorectal cancer when a person doesn't have any symptoms. The best method of screening for colorectal cancer is to have a colonoscopy.

- SWNPHD handed out 55 FREE FOBT (Fecal Occult Blood Test) in 2021- 2022.

The test kits are for anyone ages 45-75. You may pick a kit up at the McCook or Ogallala office. Follow the enclosed directions on the kit and then mail the kit in the enclosed envelope to the lab for testing. Test results will be mailed back to you.

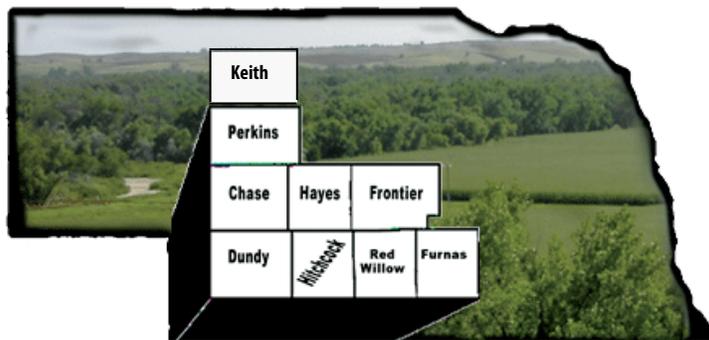


Overdose Data to Action

The illegal use of drugs continues to rise which is leading to increasing deaths, incarceration, and other adverse effects. SWNPHD has been working with partners from across the health district to implement activities that can assist individuals who are facing addiction issues. We partnered with Ambience Counseling Center and Ogallala Community Hospital to train providers in mindfulness therapy who then worked with inmates in the correctional system. We also partnered with the Opioid Response Network and C4 Innovations who facilitated collaboration among individuals and partners.

In addition, SWNPHD worked with pharmacies to increase the availability of naloxone, a medicine that rapidly reverses an opioid overdose and visited senior centers to remind listeners to protect their medications and medicine cabinets from theft.

More information can be found on our website at <https://swhealth.ne.gov/healthylifestyle/overdose>.



W.I.I.N.

Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation

What is it?

WIIN is a voluntary FREE testing program for drinking water in schools and licensed childcare facilities to help identify lead levels in the drinking water to which children have access.

Why are we participating?

Lead can cause serious health problems if too much enters your body from drinking water or other sources. It can cause damage to the brain and kidneys and can interfere with the production of red blood cells that carry oxygen to all parts of your body. Lead can also affect children's brain development, resulting in reduced intelligence quotient (IQ), hearing loss, behavioral changes such as reduced attention span and increased antisocial behavior, and reduced educational attainment. Infants who drink formula prepared with lead-contaminated water may be at a higher risk because of the large amount of water they drink relative to their body size.

SWNPHD contacted and offered free water-lead testing to 32 schools and licensed daycare centers, 20 facilities accepted the offer and completed participation. The results of the testing can be found here

<https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Lead-Data.aspx>

If your school or licensed daycare center would like FREE water-lead testing, give us a call at (308)345-4223.

RADON

SWNPHD's Radon program encourages residents to test their homes for radon gas, a health hazard that is the second leading cause of lung cancer. Education is shared during January each year for Radon Action Month through radio ads, news releases and social media posts. An annual radon poster contest had participants from 6 local schools in 2021-2022, with winners from 5 different counties.



Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem

5 Action Steps for Helping Someone in Emotional Pain

 ASK "Are you thinking about killing yourself?"	 KEEP THEM SAFE Reduce access to lethal items or places.	 BE THERE Listen carefully and acknowledge their feelings.	 HELP THEM CONNECT Call or text the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline number (988).	 STAY CONNECTED Follow up and stay in touch after a crisis.
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 nimh.nih.gov/suicideprevention

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department has assisted in restricting lethal means of suicide by distributing education materials, 1,000 pocket cards with the suicide crisis text line, 200-gun safety locks, and 50 medication lock boxes. By raising awareness, restricting lethal means, and providing education, we hope to get people who are experiencing a crisis to get the help they need. If you or someone you know is in crisis, call or text the Suicide Crisis lifeline: 988 or 988lifeline.org.

PROMOTE

WELLNESS



2022 Team
Winners Michael
and Barb Long

Walk to Health

Walk to Health is a free walking program designed to encourage residents to increase their activity levels. The Walk to Health Team Challenge had 265 participants and ran 12 weeks with prizes given to the team with the highest daily average steps and the individual with the most steps. Thanks to Community Hospital McCook, walkers can track their steps with an app called MoveSpring.

Kids Fitness & Nutrition Day

Nebraska Kids Fitness and Nutrition Day (NKFND) was held in McCook with around 280 fourth grade students. The event was also hosted at Perkins County Schools in Grant with approximately 160 fourth grade students attending the Mountain Time Zone event. Students came from across the nine counties in Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department's district to participate in this fitness and nutrition event. The Kids Fitness and Nutrition Day would not be possible without the sponsors and the more than 50 volunteers that were teaching and assisting at the fitness and nutrition stations at both events. This one-day event includes six nutrition stations and fifteen fitness stations. Nutrition stations include information about how to read food labels, portion sizes, and how to build good eating habits. Fitness stations show the students how to practice balance and dexterity, coordination, and the benefits of exercise for heart health and chronic disease prevention.



Respite

SWNPHD host the Southwest Service Area of the Nebraska Lifespan Respite program. Covering 18 counties, (Arthur, Chase, Dawson, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Gosper, Grant, Hayes, Hitchcock, Hooker, Keith, Lincoln, Logan, McPherson, Perkins, Red Willow, and Thomas) the southwest Respite Coordinator assists families who are caring for a loved one with a disability or long-term illness. These family caregivers use respite to get a break from full-time caregiving, with many using the time to rest, go to appointments, or other self-care activities that they do not have time to do.

- The Respite Coordinator attends virtual and in-person meetings with area partners to encourage them to refer families to the program and gave presentations including who is eligible, how to complete the applications, and how those who use respite are less likely to need out-of-home placement.
- In 2021-2022 there were 21 new applications submitted for the program and 35 recipients of the respite subsidy funds that received assistance using the program.

Polish your Pearls

Oral health is important because it can impact a person's overall health throughout their life. Dental disease is one of the most preventable diseases, and early prevention and intervention is key. Our dental program, Polish your Pearls, targets children ages 0-5 and provides oral health screenings, fluoride varnish treatments, and education on the importance of cleaning teeth and regular dental visits. After our refresher training in June 2021, we took the program back into schools, preschools, and daycare. In the last year we have conducted 31 onsite dental clinics. Our dental hygienist has looked in the mouth of 34 children aged 0-1-year-old, 91 children aged 2-3 years old, 288 children aged 4-5 years, and 114 children 6-7 years old. We have done a total of 476 fluoride varnish treatments.

What is SNAP?

SNAP stands for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. This program helps households with limited income and resources receive funds to purchase groceries for their themselves and their families. SWNPHD assisted with raising awareness of this program and the temporary income limit increase by doing a mass mailing of 3,146 postcards, sharing the information and postcards with our partners, advertising on social media, and having Families First Partnership create a video on social media.



Georgia pampering a family caregiver at a Caregiver Retreat

Handwashing

SWNPHD does free handwashing lessons for children in daycare, K-3rd grade. Good handwashing skills can reduce the spread of illness and lower school absentee rates. Our handwashing presentation is a 30- 40 minute class depending on the size of the class.

The class participates by:

- Learning about germs and how they make us sick.
- Putting a powder on their hands to represent germs.
- Rubbing their hands together while they sing the ABCs, or happy birthday twice.
- Next, they put their hands under the black light and see the glowing "germs."

Once everyone has looked at their hands, we teach them how to effectively wash their hands.

- They go wash their hands and practice the skills they learned.
- When they are done, they come back and look at how well they washed their hands by seeing if there are any germs (powder residue) still showing under the blacklight.

Lastly we demonstrate how many germs grow on our hands over time, emphasizing the need to wash hands often.

Household Size	New 165% FPL Monthly Gross Income Limit
1	\$1,770
2	\$2,395
3	\$3,020
4	\$3,643
Each Add'l Member	+\$626

*The income limits above represent 2021 FPL which are active for SNAP on October 1, 2021. Limits are around \$15 per person lower than those noted above until then.

YOU MAY NOW QUALIFY FOR FOOD BENEFITS!

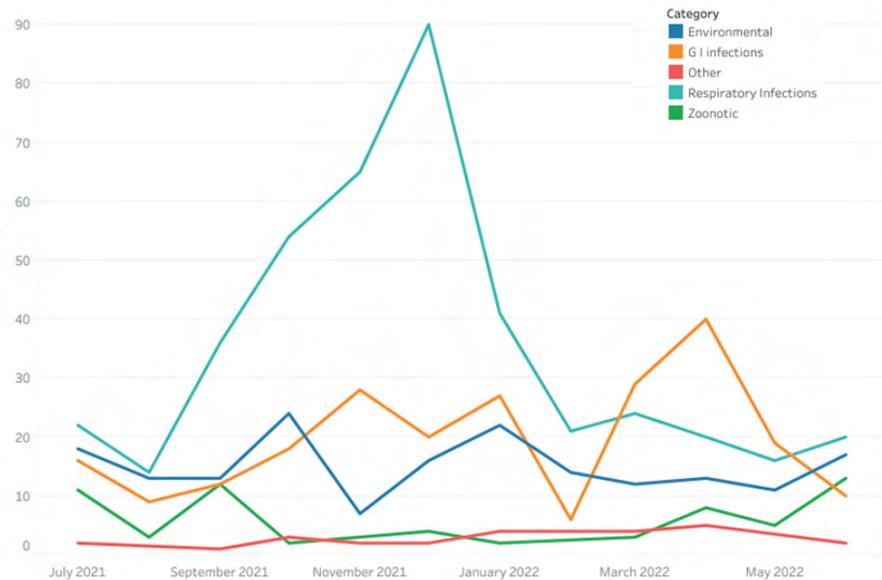
PROTECT

PROTECT THE HEALTH OF ALL PEOPLE

DISEASE SURVEILLANCE

Contagious and infectious disease continue to be a major public health activity. As COVID-19 continued to make its rounds throughout the health district, our team worked hard to get the most up to date information about this disease out to the public. While SWNPHD continued to focus on COVID-19, other disease investigations continued, such as hepatitis, food-borne illness and West Nile Virus, with the assistance of the epidemiology department of Nebraska Health and Human Services.

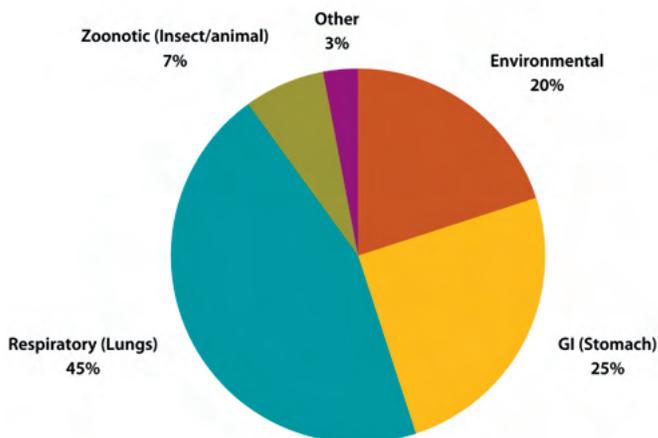
The timeline of disease investigations shows that in our area the respiratory infections like flu, RSV and COVID spike in the winter months. Gastrointestinal infections (aka stomach bugs) spiked in the springtime.



Clinic Services

Several big and exciting changes happened during the 2021-2022 year in clinic services. All previous McCook office services have been restored to pre-pandemic levels. A third SWNPHD office was opened in Ogallala to provide a more consistent level of services to the Mountain Time Zone area. These services include the Vaccines for Children Program, Adult Immunization Program, and preventive lab services. With this addition, those clients who use to have to wait for us to visit quarterly or would have to drive long distances to get vaccines and other services are now able to schedule appointments weekly and have been able to dramatically cut down on drive times as well as possibly missing school to get their vaccinations. SWNPHD has also moved to an EHR (electronic health records) system. With the new implementation of this software, we have been able to reduce the amount of paper used for charting, clients can onboard prior to coming in for appointments which saves them time after they arrive, and the new software can bill insurance which has decreased the amount of staff time that was previously being used to manually input claims into the billing software.

Reported Diseases by Category



COVID-19 Testing

As the pandemic continued clinics and hospitals had to limit how many COVID-19 tests they could offer without being seen by a provider. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department teamed up with Total Wellness to jointly administer Covid-19 testing for travel and treatment.

Total Wellness is a national health and wellness provider based in Nebraska that is partnering with public health entities within its home state to assist as needed to provide covid-19 testing. With this service, SWNPHD provided testing with same-day results. We offered two tests: first, the QuickVue SARS Antigen test, which is for individuals who are suspected COVID-19 by their healthcare providers. Results take approximately 20 minutes. Second, the Accula test is a PCR test for individuals that have symptoms and may be in the acute phase of their infection. This test takes approximately 30 to 40 minutes. SWNPHD also provided home tests available for the public at each office. These home tests are popular for those who believe they have been exposed to COVID-19. These tests come with instructions to ensure they get the correct results. SWNPHD performed 40 COVID-19 tests between the McCook and Ogallala offices from March to June 2022. SWNPHD has handed out over 1000 home test kits to individuals and organizations upon their request.



COVID-19 Vaccination

In December 2020 SWNPHD began to give the first COVID vaccinations to healthcare workers and vulnerable populations. Efforts were coordinated with all six of the area hospitals to assist in the administration of these vaccines. As more vaccines became available, SWNPHD worked with local pharmacies in the nine-county health district to help administer these vaccinations to more of the population. Public vaccination clinics were offered in several towns to increase access in rural communities. SWNPHD shared frequent press releases with information about the COVID vaccines and their safety and effectiveness to build confidence and raise vaccination rates.

43% of all SWNPHD residents received the minimum vaccination dose (1 or 2 shots). About 52% of these persons received at least one booster dose, including 71% of those aged 60 years and over. The bivalent boosters that protect against 2 strains of COVID-19 were also provided at many locations throughout southwest Nebraska. SWNPHD recommends having a booster dose within at least the last 6 months to reduce the risk of hospitalization or severe illness from COVID-19.



Protecting Teens from Nicotine

The nicotine in e-cigarettes and regular cigarettes is addictive, and harmful to the developing brains of children and teens. Now a new generation is getting hooked on nicotine.

- E-cigarettes have been the most commonly used tobacco product among youth since 2014.
- In 2022, about 1 out of every 30 middle school students (3.3%) reported that they had used electronic cigarettes in the past 30 days.
- In 2022, about 1 of every 7 high school students (14.1%) reported that they had used electronic cigarettes in the past 30 days.

Nicotine hardwires the brain for addiction. SWNPHD worked to share information about the dangers of tobacco and nicotine with social media posts and online links to resources like the Nebraska Quitline.

For assistance in quitting any kind of tobacco, please contact:

Nebraska Tobacco Quitline

Phone: 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669)

Spanish Line: 1-855-DÉJELO-YA (1-855-335-3569)

Online Services: www.QuitNow.ne.gov

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

SWNPHD assisted with 8 environmental concerns from July 1, 2021, to June 30, 2022, addressing resident's concerns regarding water quality, insects, food safety, animal complaints, nuisance properties, drugs, and mold.

While SWNPHD does not have jurisdiction or resources to correct these issues, we are able to refer individuals to the proper agencies to address and resolve their concerns.



Public Health Partnerships



Public Health Emergency Preparedness

The Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) program at SWNPHD was very active during the pandemic, and one of the main tasks was working with our partners to share and receive accurate and up-to-date information. SWNPHD's Emergency Response Coordinator (ERC) held a weekly briefing zoom call that anyone could attend. Specific invitations went out to law enforcement, offices of Emergency Management, emergency services, pharmacies, clinics, hospitals, and schools.

The ERC also initiated a district-wide Joint Information System (JIS) to enhance collaboration and unity in emergency preparedness communications. The weekly JIS calls included hospital media coordinators, emergency services, and public health department representatives from our neighboring states of Colorado and Kansas.

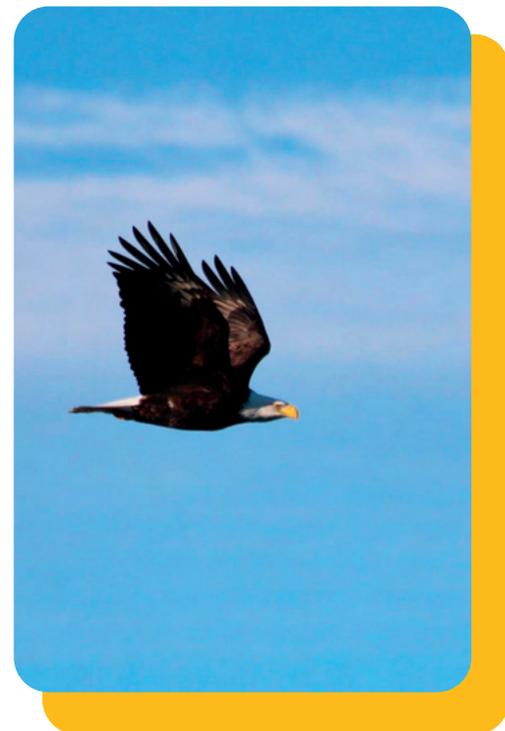
SWNPHD staff attended as many informational meetings as possible to review data and understand the impact of COVID-19 on our health district. These included the Daily Community Briefing calls hosted by UNMC, the Fusion Cell 2.0 calls with DHHS, and webinars for all the local health departments by Nebraska Infection Control and Prevention (ICAP). SWNPHD also worked with ICAP on calls for our healthcare partners with more specific needs, such as acute care, outpatient settings, and long-term care facilities.

PHEP staff continued responding to surging cases of COVID-19 as waves of new variants moved through. In March we began the process of cleaning up and closing covid cases to improve the quality of data and reports. In December 2021 we worked with Chase County Community Hospital and Nebraska Plains Healthcare Coalition to hold a functional joint access and functional needs surge exercise. This exercise provided good practice and preparation for the next public health emergency.

Nebraska Plains Healthcare Coalition

Starting July 1st, 2022, SWNPHD handed over the fiscal agent duties of the Nebraska Plains Health Care Coalition (NPHCC) to Community Hospital (CH) in McCook. Long-term Readiness and Response Coordinator, Heidi Wheeler, worked with CH to find a replacement and supported the new coordinator through the initial onboarding. NPHCC is supported by a steering committee that includes members from nearly every county in the region.

Heidi started leading the Coalition in 2014 which was instrumental in many aspects of regional emergency preparedness, leading several major projects. Partners donated and shipped supplies to hospitals and EMS during the flooding in eastern Nebraska, and NPHCC bought mass casualty triage equipment for every EMS service in the 15-county region. NPHCC led and collaborated with partners (hospitals, EMS, long-term care facilities, emergency management, etc.) to conduct countless trainings and exercises. During COVID, health care coalitions were invaluable in collecting hospital capacity data (e.g. bed and ventilator availability), sharing that with other local, regional, and state partners to assist with critical planning needs, as well as acquiring and distributing vital personal protective equipment to facilities. A big thank you to Community Hospital (CH) for being willing to pick up the fiscal-agent baton, allowing NPHCC to carry on into the next year. Heidi continues to work for SWNPHD.





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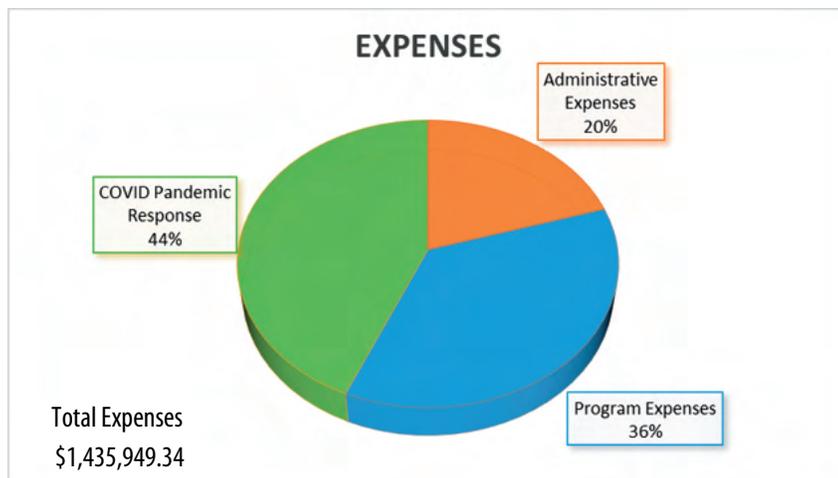
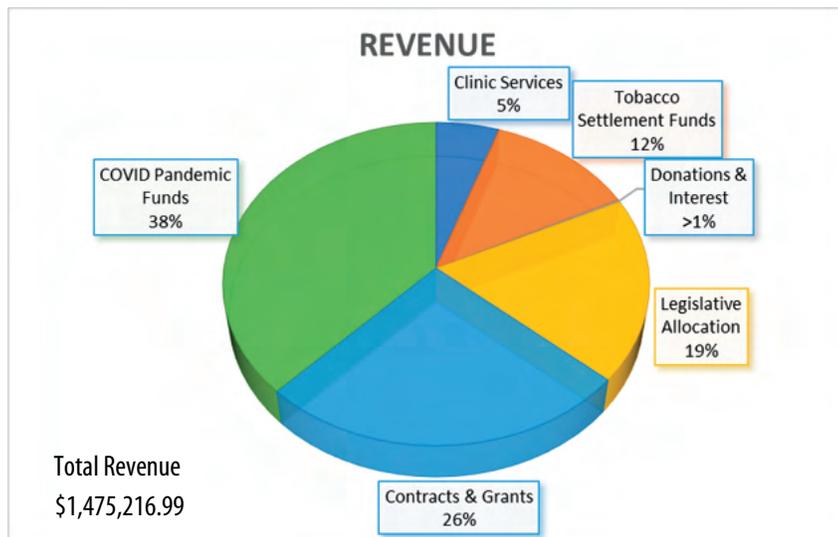
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The mission of Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department, in partnership with other entities, is to promote a healthy and secure quality of life for our communities.

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Financial Report

July 2021 to June 2022
Audited December 2022



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