



Annual Report

July 2020 | June 2021



Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department

PREVENT



PROMOTE



PROTECT

JULY 2020 | JUNE 2021



Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department

Annual Report of Program Activities

Public Health is for Everyone

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) works to prevent disease and injury, promote wellness, and protect the health of the public across the nine-county health district. Our programs focus on Disease Prevention, Environmental Health, Immunizations, Healthy Lifestyles, and Emergency Preparedness.

SWNPHD and the other local health departments across the state developed a strategic plan for the Nebraska Legislature to strengthen public health infrastructure. LB1008 was passed in August of 2020 and contained a plan for funding to be paid out annually to boost resources for local health departments, along with other priorities including flood relief and career scholarships.

Many dedicated individuals and organizations work hard to protect the communities in southwest Nebraska, and SWNPHD is proud to work alongside them to make sure our area is a healthy, safe place to live.

BOARD OF HEALTH

Chase County:

Jacci Brown

Jordan Hammerlun

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

Patsy Kroeker

Red Willow County:

Earl McNutt

Terri Skolout

Physician:

Shiuvau Jaeger, MD

Dentist:

Open

COVID-19 Spotlight

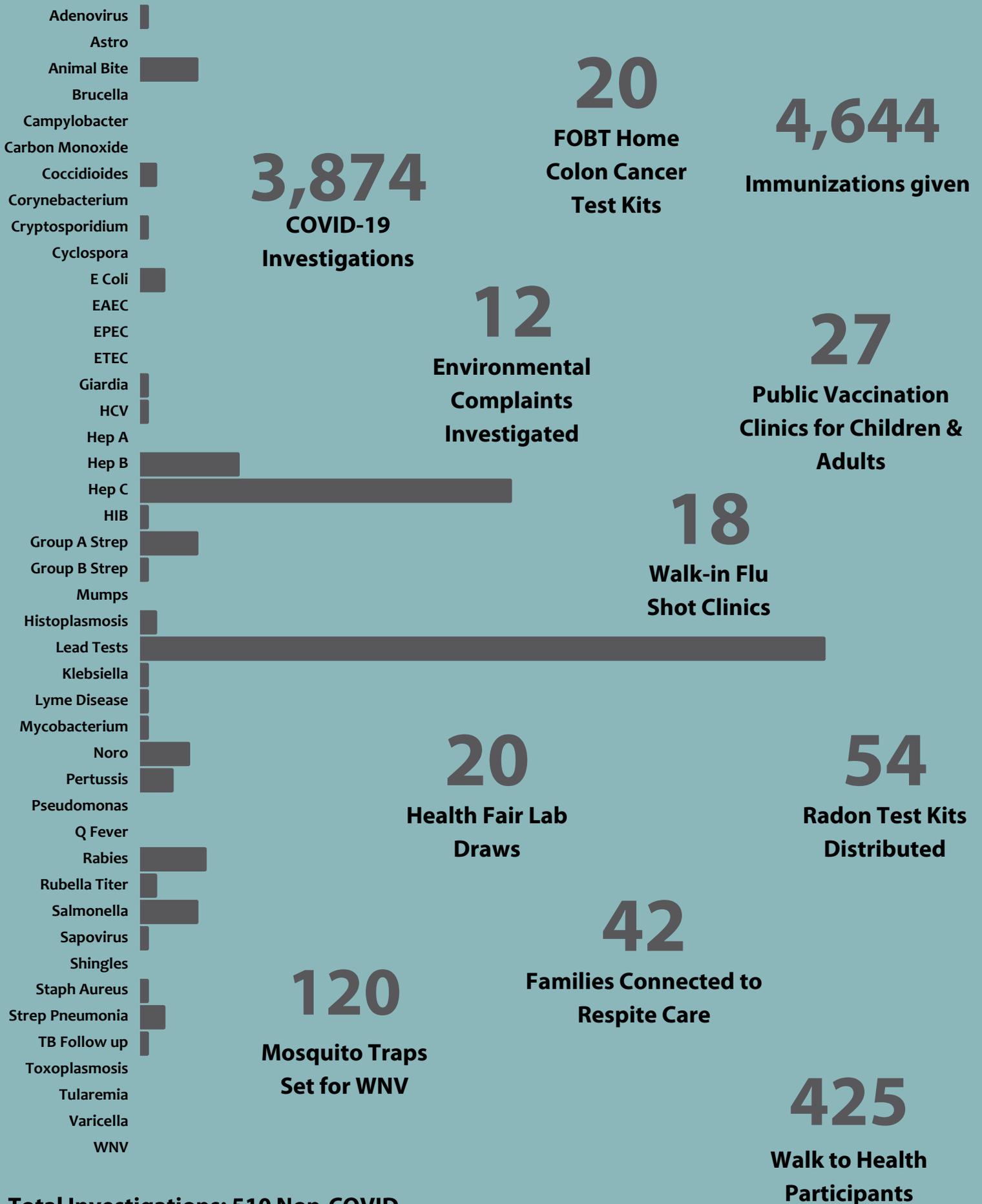
Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) provided regular updates on each Directed Health Measure to City/Village Clerks and Attorneys, County Clerks and Attorneys, Emergency Managers and the Board of Health. In addition, guidance documents were sent to churches, restaurants, beauty salons and barbers, livestock barns, dentists, and medical providers.

- Our staff worked tirelessly with all our schools to assist them with developing a plan for reopening and continued education. Communication and reporting between the two agencies were important hurdles to work through once school began.
- We were heavily involved on the committee to develop guidance for Nebraska Game and Parks, Sports, Arts, Music and Theater, with recommendations on the DHMs.
- Communication to the public was vital as we progressed through the pandemic. This was accomplished through weekly updates via web-conferencing, news releases, and radio public service announcements. From March to August we answered over 1,500 phone calls from people requesting guidance or expressing concerns about COVID-19.
- Investigations and contact tracing of positive cases took a significant amount of time and resources, as well as the isolation and quarantine of individuals and the subsequent follow-up required.
- SWNPHD launched its COVID-19 Community Risk Dial on July 17th, 2020. The color-coded dial depicted the phase of the pandemic in the health district and provided guidance for residents to protect themselves and prevent the spread of the virus.
- We coordinated Test Nebraska in 3 different communities across our large geographical area, and worked with 2 hospitals and 1 pharmacy to continue the free testing for the state.
- We continue to work with long term care facilities on testing, cases, education, personal protective equipment (PPE), and other ongoing issues. PPE was coordinated weekly for different partners—organizing orders, deliveries and storing of these needed resources.



SWNPHD Celebrated 20 Years of Public Health Service in 2021.

2020-2021 Disease Investigations



Accreditation

10 THE ESSENTIAL PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES

To protect and promote the health of all people in all communities

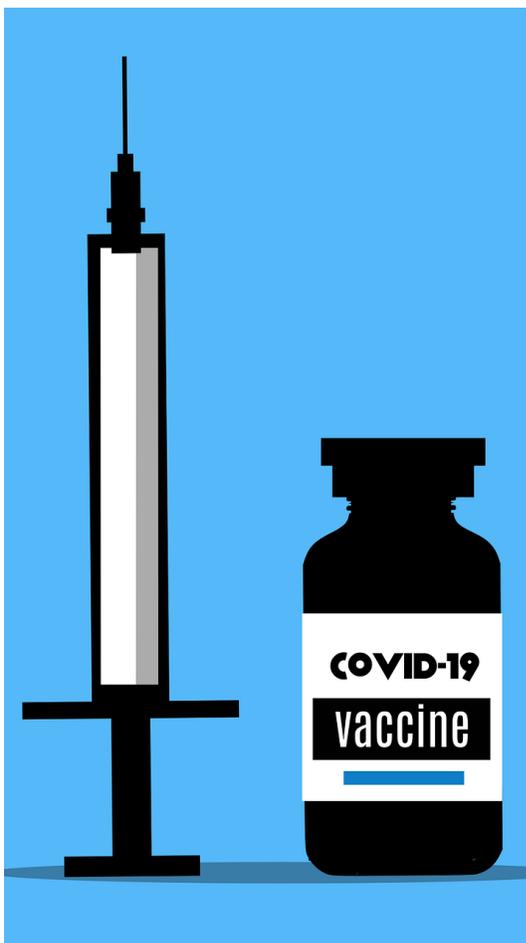


Accreditation for public health departments is a significant, yet important task. Each year, SWNPHD conducts activities outlined by the Public Health Accreditation Board to reach this high standard. This year’s focus was on one domain—Public Health Law. Even throughout the COVID response, SWNPHD staff were able to attend trainings from the Center for Preparedness Education regarding all laws pertaining to the scope and authority of public health. Other activities included providing education to stakeholders and partners, developing a staff training calendar to ensure competency, and posting important laws to the SWNPHD website for easy access by the public.

“

COVID-19 Vaccination is the best way to protect ourselves and reduce the impact of COVID-19 on our communities.

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 administration of these vaccines. As more vaccine became available, SWNPHD worked with local pharmacies in the nine-county health district to help administer these vaccinations to more of the population. Off-site vaccination clinics were offered in several towns to increase access in the 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.



Prevention

Preventing illness, disease, injury and death

West Nile Virus Testing

West Nile Virus is a mosquito-borne disease that affects humans and animals. 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 was done at 3 sites in Chase and Red Willow Counties. The mosquitoes were sent to the state laboratory for testing to see if they carry West Nile Virus or other diseases. The 2020-2021 season resulted in no West Nile positive mosquito pools in the health district and no positive human cases reported. This West Nile season was very low throughout the state with very few positive pools or human cases statewide.

Health Hub

Health Hub and Target Your Health are geared towards getting people free 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. 57% of women reached in 2020-2021 completed their breast and cervical screenings, and 56% of men and women completed FOBT kits to screen for colon cancer. (Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the number of men and women completing their preventive cancer screenings is significantly lower than previous years.) Women who qualify also receive free health coaching to assist clients in reaching their weight, fitness, and nutrition goals. Making lifestyle changes can help control conditions such as high blood pressure, 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 served 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 Dept. (Arthur, Hooker, Lincoln, Logan, McPherson, Thomas)

TARGET YOUR HEALTH



Lead Poisoning Prevention

SWNPHD conducts follow up activities on any child who has a lead level of 5ug/dl or higher, which is considered lead poisoning. Information is sent to families to help identify 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 result. If a child has a lead level greater than 10ug/dl, SWNPHD works with Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services to schedule, follow up, and test for in-home lead sources. A total of 52 children were tested for lead this year, but only 2 children were identified as having a lead level greater than 5ug/dl that required follow up.

Polish Your Pearls

One of the most common chronic diseases in children is tooth decay with approximately 1 in 5 aged 5-11 having at least one decayed tooth untreated. 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. In the last year COVID-19 brought many challenges to our dental program, and we were unable to have any site visits. With restrictions beginning to be lifted, we were able to have a refresher training that took place in June 2021. Dr. Charles Craft, State Dental Director for DHHS of Nebraska, and his assistant Jessica O'Ball visited SWNPHD to give some training, review new guidelines and provide safety techniques with COVID-19. Moving forward we hope to begin reaching children within our health district to provide oral health screenings, through daycares, preschools, and other venues with children aged 0-5.





University of Nebraska[™] Medical Center

Service Award

"When history will be written about this pandemic, the local health directors will be the real heroes." -- Chancellor Jeffrey Gold

COVID Timeline

2020: July - Community Risk Dial launched at yellow. 70 cases.

Aug - Moved to Phase 4 of reopening. 140 cases.

Oct - Risk Dial moved to orange; increased restrictions on gathering; 755 cases.

Nov - Risk Dial moved to red; hospitals seeing capacity limits; 2,037 cases.

Dec - Risk Dial moved to orange; hospital capacity improved; vaccine available to healthcare workers; 2,875 cases.

2021: Jan - Risk Dial moved to yellow; vaccines to age 75+. 3,018 cases.

Feb - State Risk Dial moved to green; vaccine to essential workers; 6,400 doses distributed; 3,720 cases.

Mar - vaccine opened to public 18+; 3,799 cases.

May - vaccine approved for 12+; 13,480 vaccinated; 3,837 cases.

June - Delta variant reported; 37% of district vaccinated; 3,867 cases.

UNMC CHANCELLOR'S DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

The Chancellor's Distinguished Service Award is given to individuals or organizations that have demonstrated outstanding support of the University of Nebraska Medical Center by way of personal service, private contributions or other meritorious advocacy for the campus mission. The Chancellor, with assistance from other UNMC leaders, select the recipients in consultation with the President of the University of Nebraska.

Nebraska's public health directors have partnered with their individual communities to engage in providing expert COVID-19 public health guidance that meets the needs of their jurisdictions during the long months since March 2020. During this pandemic, they have worked tirelessly to overcome obstacles, to identify key data elements to create robust dashboards, create partnerships to establish testing sites, conduct contact tracing, review business and event plans, distribute personal protective equipment to the front lines, and more, in addition to their everyday duties.

These professionals have stood firm to support their jurisdictions and the state, providing direct service and leadership through the pandemic. Their commitment and unending passion and drive to keep Nebraska safe has been nothing short of extraordinary.

UNMC is proud to present the Chancellor's Distinguished Service Award to Nebraska's public health directors.

- Teresa Anderson, MSN, APRN-CNS, BC**, Central District Health Department, Grand Island
- Michele Bever, PhD, MPH**, South Heartland District Health Department, Hastings
- Grant Brueggemann, MPH**, Southeast District Health Department, Auburn
- Chuck Cone**, Loup Basin Public Health Department, Burwell
- Kim Engel**, Panhandle Public Health District, Hemingford
- Jeremy Eschliman**, Two Rivers Public Health Department, Kearney
- Pat Lopez, RN, MSN**, Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department, Lincoln
- Laura McDougall**, Four Corners Health Department, York
- Adi Pour, PhD**, Douglas County Health Department, Omaha
- Natasha Ritchison**, Dakota County Health Department, Dakota City
- Julie Rother, BSN, RN, CPH**, Northeast Nebraska Public Health Department, Wayne
- Sarah Schram**, Sarpy/Cass Health Department, Papillion
- Chuck Sepers, PhD, MPH**, East Central District Health Department, Columbus
- Kim Showalter, RN, BSN**, Public Health Solutions District Health Department, Crete
- Myra Stoney**, Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department, McCook
- Gina Uhing**, Elkhorn Logan Valley Public Health Department, Wisner
- Terra Uhing**, Three Rivers Public Health Department, Fremont
- Shannon Vanderheiden, MPH**, West Central District Health Department, North Platte
- Roger Wiese**, North Central District Health Department, O'Neill



SWNPHD Health Director Myra Stoney, holding a COVID-19 piñata sent by the Nebraska Association of Local Health Directors.

Clinic Services and Vaccines for Children

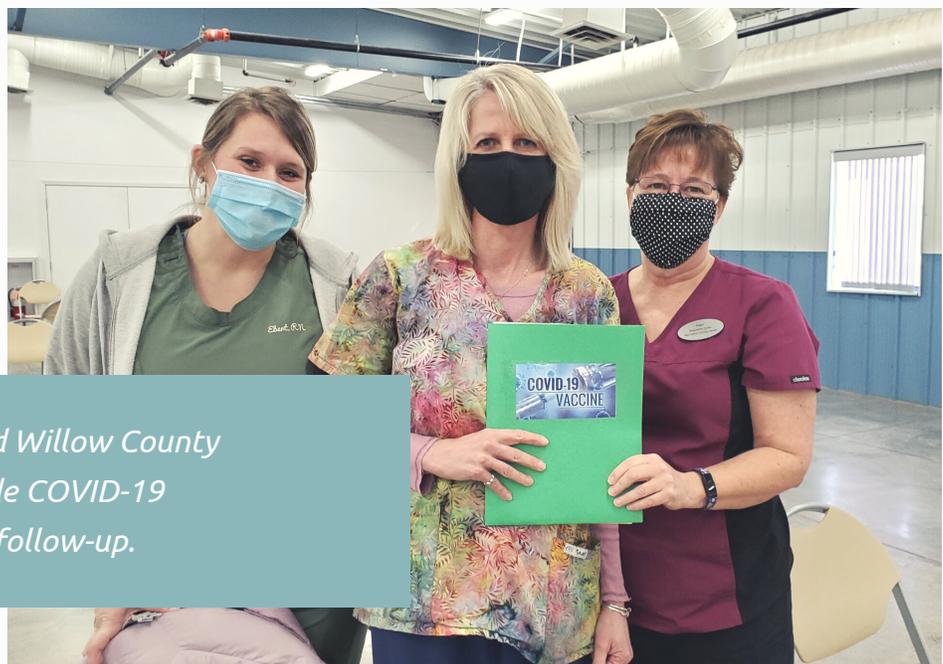
Clinic Services: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in April 2020 we opted to put our lab and vaccine services on hold so that we would be able to focus our efforts on keeping our community safe and healthy. Red Willow County Health Department agreed to partner with us and with their assistance, we were able to send our clients to them for lab draws and vaccinations in an effort to keep our clients' health on track.

When schools reopened in July of 2020, Vaccines for Children public shot clinics were resumed in Hayes Center, Curtis, Trenton, and Ogallala. Regular vaccinations were restarted at the office in July as well, with lab services resuming at SWNPHD in February of 2021. A big thank you to all the partners who have walked along side us this year to help deliver vaccinations to the residents in our counties, including 6 area hospitals, 8 pharmacies, and Red Willow County Health.

- Vaccines for Children is funded in whole with federal and DHHS funds. Children with no insurance, under-insured, Medicaid, Native American or Native Alaskan qualify for the state-funded vaccine. Adults who are uninsured or under-insured may also qualify for state funded vaccine.

Surveillance: The primary focus of 2020-2021 was spent on the COVID-19 Pandemic response. As part of our contract with NDHHS, SWNPHD was notified of all persons in the health district who tested positive for COVID-19. As part of the response effort, SWNPHD contacted each positive case in an attempt to discover where the exposure happened, who may have been exposed, and to give guidance on isolation and quarantine. This vital part of identifying and controlling infectious and contagious diseases continues at this time although we have seen a significant decrease to cases since late January.

- With most of our time devoted to the COVID Pandemic, State of Nebraska's Epidemiology department assisted in identifying and contacting positive cases of all other reportable diseases. Some of the diseases that NDHHS assisted with were Salmonella, Shiga-Toxin-producing E Coli, and new Hepatitis C cases. In May 2021, SWNPHD was able to resume follow up of all contagious and infectious diseases including COVID-19.



SWNPHD Partnered with Red Willow County Health Department to provide COVID-19 Vaccination Clinics and case follow-up.

Overdose Data to Action

The OD2A Grant addresses the opioid crisis in the southwest Nebraska area. Opioids are the number one contributor to drug overdose, whether it is alone or in conjunction with other medications and/or drugs. OD2A activities were severely limited by the Covid-19 pandemic response for the first half of the fiscal year. By the end of December, the first planning session was scheduled for January 28th.

Effective April 2021, a new OD2A Coordinator took over the grant. Activities have included Interagency meetings in April, May, and June 2021. Various opioid training sessions were attended from April 2021 through June 2021, to learn more about the opioid crisis and available resources. Strategic Planning meetings were held in Grant and McCook to determine the concerns and needs of our district and what activities will be conducted to address them. Approximately 25 new partnerships were established with these meetings. To raise awareness, fight stigma, and strengthen prevention, the RXAwareness campaign ads are continuously placed on social media and ran on 6 radio stations across the health district. We continue to work and grow in knowledge and action to fight the opioid crisis in southwest Nebraska.



Prescription opioids can be **addictive and **dangerous**.**

It only takes a little to lose a lot.

cdc.gov/RxAwareness

www.cdc.gov

Tobacco Prevention

As part of Tobacco Free Nebraska, SWNPHD continued to promote the Nebraska Tobacco Quitline through events, social media and website. In October of 2020, the legal age to purchase tobacco products changed from 19 to 21. Tobacco products include cigarettes, electronic nicotine delivery systems, and other tobacco products.



Walk to Health

*Team Winners 2021:
Darcy and Betty Rouse*

Walk to Health is a free walking program designed to help residents increase their activity level to prevent and manage chronic diseases. The Walk to Health Team Challenge 2021 had 425 participants and ran for 12 weeks, with prizes given to the individual with the most steps and the team with the highest daily average steps.

- Thanks to a partnership with Community Hospital McCook, walkers track their steps with an app called MoveSpring. They can connect a device for tracking, recognition and encouragement. MoveSpring also lets walkers create their own mini-challenges with friends to stay active all year.
- The summer and winter Walk to Health challenges were not held during 2020-2021 due to staff time dedicated to responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. For current challenges, sign up for Walk to Health at app.movespring.com or download the MoveSpring app and use Organization Code Walk2H.

Respite

SWNPHD hosts the Southwest Service Area of the Nebraska Lifespan Respite program. Covering 17 counties, 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.

- In 2020-2021 there were 42 recipients of the respite subsidy funds that received assistance using the program.
- The Respite Coordinator attended virtual 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. This means more families staying together in southwest Nebraska.



Radon Poster Contest

SWNPHD's annual Radon Poster Contest was held in January 2021, due to the high COVID-19 case numbers in the fall of 2020. There were 62 entries received from 2 elementary schools in Dundy and Hitchcock Counties. Ten winners were presented with prizes by mail. SWNPHD and their teachers congratulated students on helping to educate their community about the dangers of radon and how to reduce their risk of lung cancer.

Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States. It is a colorless, odorless and tasteless gas that enters homes and buildings and cannot be detected unless it is tested. In Nebraska, 1 out of 2 homes test high for radon. Do-it-yourself test kits are available at local hardware stores or online at radon.com.

*2021 Age 9-10 Winners from Hitchcock County Elementary:
(left to right) Violet Schwartz, Scotlyn McClain, Cort Nieben*



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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.

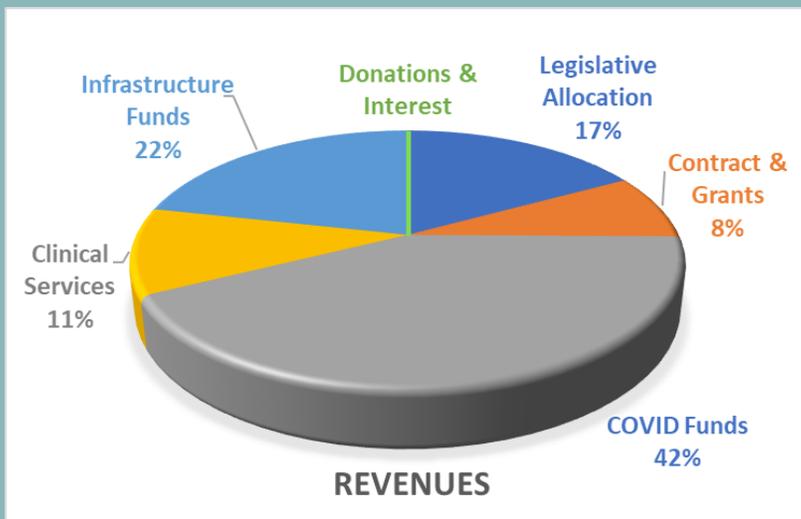
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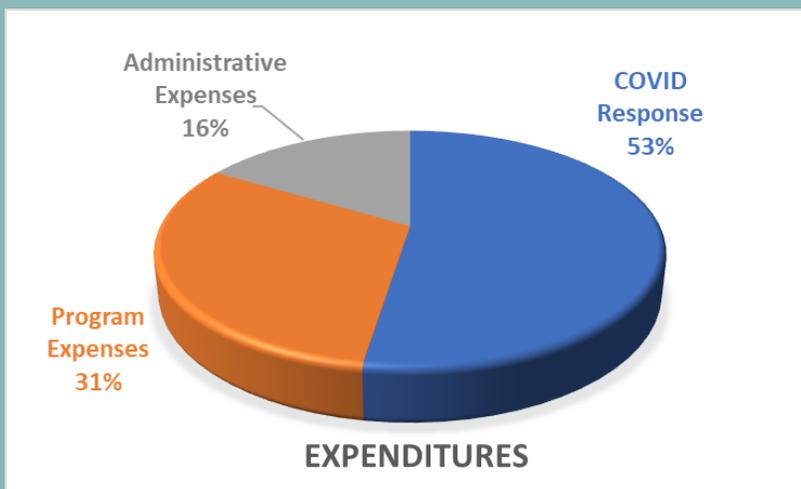
Financial Report

JULY 2020 | JUNE 2021

Audited 12/28/2021



TOTAL REVENUES \$1,238,261



TOTAL EXPENDITURES \$1,186,850

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