

Public Health Director's Report

Prepared by: Jennifer Ludwig

Date Prepared: September 11, 2025

Dates Covered: August 20, 2025 - September 11, 2025

A. Mission Moments

Family Connects

After nearly two years of planning and preparation, we are thrilled to announce the successful launch of Family Connects at Arapahoe County Public Health! Our very first home visit took place on September 4, followed by a second visit on September 5, marking the beginning of this important program. This evidence-based program will provide free nurse home visits to families with newborns, connecting them to community resources and ensuring a strong start for children and families across our county. **This initiative aligns with the ACPH Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) goal of increasing economic security and mobility by improving access to affordable physical and behavioral care.**



Family Connects first home visit!

B. Program Updates

Partnerships, Planning and Community Health Promotion

1) Community Engagement and Event Participation

Recent events: City of Englewood Neighborhood Nights, Housing Fair at Littleton Main Street Apartments, Aurora Pride

Upcoming events: Aurora Public Schools Behavioral Health Event, Older Adult Safety Symposium, Longer Tables Littleton, Englewood Homeless Connect Event, Food Justice Festival, Sheridan Celebrates

Please reach out to [Grace Soulen](#) or visit our [Community Engagement Event Request Form](#) to suggest upcoming outreach opportunities. **This initiative aligns with the ACPH Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) cross-cutting objective to advance community engagement.**

2) Arapahoe Food Security Coalition

The Arapahoe Food Security Coalition is in the process of completing a new strategic plan and identification of priority activities. Several emergency food provider partners in the coalition are experiencing significant strains on capacity as funding and resources dwindle and the need for services increases, demonstrating the critical nature of the coalitions work and the resources ACPH has dedicated to the group to help increase collaboration among providers in western Arapahoe County. ACPH staff are preparing a job posting for the community engagement specialist who will lead the coalition and prepare the coalition to charter as a 501C3 with the State of Colorado. This new position, supported through braided funding, will be key to increasing efficiency and availability of emergency food resources. **This initiative aligns with the ACPH Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) goal to increase access to healthy, affordable food.**

3) Aurora Partners for Thriving Youth Supporting City Ordinance Limiting Youth Access to Tobacco and Other Age Restricted Substances

ACPH staff, along with partners from Aurora Public Schools and Adams County Health Department, are working with staff from the City of Aurora to put forward a new retail sales licensing program for the sale of nicotine, tobacco, and other age restricted products. A local retail sales license for tobacco is an evidence-based strategy that limits youth access to age restricted products by empowering oversight by local authorities. The APTY coalition has secured support for the ordinance from the majority of Aurora City Council members and key community partners, such as the Aurora Chamber of Commerce. **This initiative aligns with the ACPH Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) goal to increase community safety.**

4) Harm Reduction Learning Event

The Community Health Promotion Team hosted an overdose prevention learning opportunity August 26 for partners from metro local public health agencies and members of ACPH's Harm Reduction Participant Advisory Leadership Initiative, comprised of persons with lived and living experience. Caitlin Molina, Project Director for the CDC-funded Drug Checking Los Angeles Program at UCLA's David Geffen School of Medicine, presented on her team's experience employing Fourier transformation infrared (FTIR)

spectrometry as an evidence-based, public health surveillance tool for analyzing and responding to the local, unregulated drug supply. A representative of the City and County of Denver's Harm Reduction Program shared updates on their plans to launch drug checking using FTIR as a strategy within their overall harm reduction program in fall of 2025.

5) Community Health Promotion Teams Presenting at Public Health in the Rockies Conference

Two teams from the ACPH Community Health Promotion program will be presenting their work at Public Health in the Rockies to share successes, lessons learned, and ability to replicate in other areas:

- a. The ACPH **Tobacco Control and Prevention** team will join partners from Aurora Partners for Thriving Youth and Adams County to present on collaborative work with the APTY Coalition and their work on preventing youth tobacco and substance use through partnership and addressing SDOH and Shared Risk and Protective Factors.
- b. Melissa Smith will present on ACPH's **Age-Friendly Public Health System** designation – the first in Colorado – and activities around increasing partnership and collaboration that align and advance the ACPH Community Health Improvement Plan.

Nutrition Division

- 1) **Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program Expanding Services to Boulder WIC Clients**
Starting October 1, 2025 the ACPH Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program (BFPC) will begin providing peer to peer breastfeeding support services to the Boulder County WIC Program. ACPH WIC received \$37,000 from CDPHE to expand BFPC hours to support pregnant and breastfeeding dyads.
- 2) **WIC Co-location at Children's Health Clinic Resource Connects to begin in September**
ACPH WIC has provided support to the Children's Health Clinic Resource Connects program by following up on referrals from providers at their pediatric clinic. With a new two year MOU and funding of \$110,000, ACPH WIC was able to hire a WIC Coordinator to provide in person services now two days a week to better serve their patient population and referrals to increase access to WIC and food.

Community Health Nursing Division

- 1) **Maternal and Child Health & RHC Programs**
 - a. In August, ACPH's MCH team hosted the first ever county sponsored community doula training. Eight organizations nominated 22 participants for a four-day, bilingual training taught by Elephant Circle. The program strengthens perinatal support for families, especially those covered by Colorado's new Medicaid doula benefit, while also creating accessible pathways into the workforce for community members who can provide culturally and linguistically relevant care. Trainees described the experience as both personal and professional growth. One shared, "This training opened my eyes to how important it is to support and empower people so they can take an active role in their birth." Another reflected, "During my pregnancies and after giving birth I was always alone. Now I understand how valuable it is to have someone by your side." With about 44% of the county's 7,500 annual births covered by Medicaid, roughly 178 doulas would be needed to meet demand. This first cohort is being mentored as they work toward doula certification,

Medicaid enrollment, and launching their practices. Twenty more people are already on the waitlist for the next training opportunity. **This initiative aligns with the ACPH Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) goal of increasing economic security and mobility by improving access to affordable physical and behavioral care.**

- b. Beginning in September 2025, Wendy Nading and Laura Don will be serving as voting members of the Colorado Access Performance Improvement Advisory Council (PIAC) to provide guidance and recommendations to help improve health, access, cost and satisfaction of Medicaid members and providers. Wendy will serve on the child-focused PIAC and Laura Don will serve on the adult focused PIAC. **This initiative aligns with the ACPH Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) goal of increasing economic security and mobility by improving access to affordable physical and behavioral care.**

2) Immunizations

- a. In August the Immunization Program provided 1373 vaccines, an increase of 50% from the average of the past two years. This was accomplished with improved processes, not additional staffing.
- b. Immunizations piloted rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) for privately insured individuals (those with Medicaid and uninsured were already seen) in partnership with Communicable Disease Epidemiology over the summer due to reported access challenges. The pilot will become a permanent service offering with some process improvements. For uninsured individuals or those whose insurance will not cover the vaccine who income qualify, the Immunization Program works directly with the manufacturer to obtain no cost doses. Rabies PEP is life-saving medication that often comes with significant financial cost. **This initiative aligns with the ACPH Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) goal of increasing economic security and mobility by improving access to affordable physical and behavioral care.**
- c. Immunizations supported measles post-exposure prophylaxis related to the most recent measles case associated with Children's Hospital Colorado. This included the provision of immune globulin to four infants under six months of age not able to receive the vaccine.

3) Sexual Health

- a. Sexual Health received a \$25,000 award from the Caring for Colorado foundation to increase access to contraception through their "Choose When" initiative. This funding will be used to purchase long-acting reversible contraceptives such as contraceptive implants and intrauterine devices. Contraceptive implants cost \$650 each, so this grant will provide long-acting contraception at no cost to 30-40 people in our community. Last year, the Sexual Health clinic provided 254 contraceptive implants to our patients, >75% at no cost. **This initiative aligns with the ACPH Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) goal of increasing economic security and mobility by improving access to affordable physical and behavioral care.**
- b. The Sexual Health team continues to be recognized for its innovative collaboration in providing STI testing and treatment to clients accessing Harm Reduction services in the community. Renee Lenthe and Kara Lenhoff from Sexual health are presenting their work on Syphilis FDT with Harm Reduction Supervisor Elicia Chacon at Public Health in the Rockies in September. They have also been invited by NACCHO to be featured on their website and

newsletter as a case study for innovative STI treatment. Sexual Health and Harm Reduction staff are also invited to present as subject matter experts on STI treatment at the upcoming Syringe Access Program Summit sponsored by CDPHE for all syringe access programs in Colorado.

- c. The Sexual Health Program conducted a patient satisfaction survey in July, and the results are in! We received 98 responses, with an average score of 4.7/5 in all categories. Our highest ratings (4.9/5) were in the courtesy of our front desk, feeling listened to by the provider, and the explanation and time patients received from our medical assistants. Ease and convenience of hours, the explanation of charges that patients received for services and time spent in the waiting room received the lowest scores, but still an overall high score of 4.7/5. 71% of patients reported hearing about our services from a family member or friend who recommended our services, which speaks to the high quality, compassionate care patients receive in our clinic. 14% learned about our services online, 6% were referred by another provider. Positive comments included appreciation for services provided in Spanish, convenient locations, kindness and respect from staff members. There were no negative comments.

4) Harm Reduction

- a. Harm Reduction Program (HRP) staff attended Aurora Pride on 8/30 at the Fletcher Plaza on Colfax. The event brought together dozens of organizations, service providers, and other vendors to offer information, resources, goodies and more to the local Aurora community. HRP staff offered testing services via Prevention Point and were joined by Sexual Health and Immunization staff. Staff engaged with roughly 100 people on harm reduction, sexual health and other education. Additionally, 5 people were tested, and 3 people were identified as needing STI treatment, and were immediately connected with sexual health. **This initiative aligns with the ACPH Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) goal of increasing economic security and mobility by improving access to affordable physical and behavioral care.**
- b. HRP continues to see major increases in participants accessing services; preliminary data shows a total of 443 program encounters in August alone! This includes syringe access participant encounters only.
- c. In collaboration with Communications, HRP worked on creating signage for our fixed sites to promote and encourage conversations around testing services (HIV, syphilis, Hep C) and substance use treatment options (methadone, contingency management, etc.). This project is currently in the works.

Health Protection and Response Division (*Environmental Health, Communicable Disease Epidemiology and Emergency Preparedness and Response Programs*)

1) Environmental Health Programs

- a. On May 22, 2025, the Colorado General Assembly signed [Senate Bill 285](#) into law with bipartisan support and strong backing from the Colorado Restaurant Association. S.B. 285 will incrementally increase Retail Food Establishment fees over the next three years, beginning with a 25% increase in 2026. On August 6, 2025 “Categorical Fees”, which include the Plan Review Application Fee and the Site Evaluation fee, increased from \$100.00 to

\$155.00 and on September 1, 2025, Retail Food License fees increased by 25%. All Retail Food invoices, which will be mailed towards late October, will reflect this increase. For more information and a chart outlining the license fee increases, please click [here](#).

- b. The Water Quality program staff successfully completed their 2025 routine inspections of all operating seasonal public and semi-public recreational water facilities in Arapahoe County. The Water Quality program staff also successfully completed a round of second inspections for water chemistry at the same seasonal recreational water facilities. Program staff completed a total of 55 routine inspections and 55 chemical checks for seasonal facilities. Work is now well underway to complete second inspections of all non-seasonal facilities by the end of 2025.

2) Emergency Preparedness and Response

- a. Annually in September, FEMA sponsors National Preparedness Month. The campaign is used to encourage individuals and families to develop an emergency plan, build a disaster kit, and learn vital skills to help them stay safe and recover quickly when disaster strikes. The year, the theme for the campaign highlights that preparedness starts at home. For more details, visit [Ready.gov](#). The ACPH Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR) Program organized a variety of engaging activities to share information with all staff to include:
 - Hosting a Ready 2 Card Game at each ACPH location.
 - Training Needs Assessment to inform the department's multi-year training and exercise plan,
 - Psychological First Aid Training,
 - EPR 101 Training, and
 - EPR hosting a table at the Annual Public Health Potluck, where we are giving out a new preparedness item to all employees.
- b. The EPR Program participated in the Federal Workshop for Bioterrorism on September 9, 2025, which is an important step in the Colorado North Central Region Bioterrorism Exercise Series. The workshop provided an all-day opportunity for local and state emergency preparedness and response staff from public health, law enforcement, fire, hazmat, emergency management, EMS, and other key sectors to meet with representatives from federal response agencies. During the workshop, federal partners provided detail and information about their roles, responsibilities, capabilities, and planning assumptions and provided opportunities for questions from state and local partners. The exercise served to enhance local response efforts leading into the October full scale exercise.

C. Communicable Disease Epidemiology Update

Ongoing Activities of Note:

- a. *COVID-19*: Similar to increases being seen nationwide, reports of COVID-19 hospitalizations and outbreaks are increasing both in Colorado and Arapahoe County. Eight confirmed and three suspect outbreaks have been reported in Arapahoe County since the middle of July 2025. The Communicable Disease Epidemiology (CDE) program investigates all reported suspect and confirmed outbreaks to provide disease control guidance, monitoring data trends, and provide recommendations to prevent the spread of illness. A full respiratory

season update, including COVID-19, influenza, and RSV, will be provided in the October Board of Health Directors report.

- b. *Measles:* As of 9/9/2025, Colorado has 27 cases of measles in 2025, with five hospitalizations and no fatalities reported. Five additional cases were reported in Mesa County in early September with known exposure to a confirmed case. Eight of the Colorado cases are related to an out-of-state traveler who was infectious on their flights and had a layover at Denver International Airport. Arapahoe County has had 5 cases of measles thus far in 2025. The CDE program continues to monitor the measles situation in Colorado, the United States, and internationally, as well as conduct interviews with close contacts associated with new cases in Colorado. The CDE program is in the process of scheduling in-person meetings with all the hospitals/hospital systems in Arapahoe County related to strengthening measles preparedness and response coordination.

Additionally, on 8/27/2025, the ACPH CDE program, EPR program, Immunization program, and Chief Medical Officer provided training to staff at the Arapahoe County Detention Facility on measles, vaccinations, and preparedness should there be a measles incident impacting this facility. A measles tabletop exercise is scheduled for November to continue the collaborative efforts between public health and the detention facility to respond to communicable disease incidents.



- c. *West Nile Virus:* As of 9/9/2025, there have been 133 cases of West Nile virus (WNV) in Colorado, including 4 in Arapahoe County. Of the 133 cases statewide, 63 caused neuroinvasive illness, 62 hospitalizations, and 8 deaths. During this current season, our EH

Consumer Protection program submitted 38 mosquito samples to CDPHE and 2 have tested positive for WNV.

- d. *Rabies*: As of 9/9/2025, 52 animals have tested positive for rabies in Colorado, including 4 bats in Arapahoe County. While rabies is reported throughout the year in Colorado, reports of rabies positive animals increase in the summer months. The CDE program continues to receive reports of suspected rabid animals and interactions with people and/or domestic pets this season. We urge residents to keep their pets up to date with their vaccinations and report any interactions with wildlife to public health right away.
- e. *Ebola*: Ebola virus disease (EVD) is a severe and often fatal illness affecting both humans and other primates. The virus is transmitted to people from wild animals (such as fruit bats, porcupines, and on-human primates) and then spreads through direct contact with blood, secretions, organs or other bodily fluids of infected people, and with surfaces and materials contaminated with these fluids. The EVD fatality rate can vary from 25% to 90% with an average around 50%. People with EVD may experience both “dry” and “wet” symptoms. Dry symptoms include fever, aches, pains, and fatigue which commonly occur early in the course of illness. As the illness progresses, “wet” symptoms such as diarrhea, vomiting and unexplained bleeding can occur. Healthcare providers and family members caring for someone with EVD without proper infection control methods have the highest risk of infection. The FDA has approved an EVD vaccination that is recommended for U.S. adults 18 years and older who are at potential risk of exposure to EVD.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has reported an EVD outbreak of 37 cases as of 9/6/2025 in the Bulape Health Zone, Kasai Province. A total of 157 close contacts has been identified. A World Health Organization (WHO) national rapid response team has been deployed to the affected region to strengthen disease surveillance, treatment, and infection prevention and control measures in health facilities. Close contacts and frontline healthcare workers will be provided an EVD vaccine to prevent illness. On 9/8/2025, the CDC issued a Level 1 travel health notice for the DRC. Genomic analyses suggest the outbreak was caused by a new zoonotic spillover event. While traveler monitoring for U.S. residents has not been initiated at this time, the CDE program continues to monitor the situation for awareness should monitoring begin to protect the health and safety of Colorado residents.

D. Social Media and Communications

Caitlin Silverstein, RN, Immunizations Associate Manager, was quoted in the Littleton Independent in an article on measles vaccination: https://www.littletonindependent.net/news/article_f494974b-9a26-42c9-92b8-fff42b595eed.html

Leslie Levine, Senior Community Health Promotion Specialist, was featured in an article from the Littleton Independent about food security and the Arapahoe Food Security Coalition: [Building a local safety net: Arapahoe Food Security Coalition tackles hunger in tri-cities | News | littletonindependent.net](#)

E. Conference Presentations

National Environmental Health Association

The National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) hosts an Annual Education Conference (AEC), which bring together industry professionals from across the country. The 2025 NEHA AEC took place in Phoenix, Arizona, July 14-17 and Environmental Health Specialist (EHS) III, Michael Roy was selected to present on the work he has done to improve the ACPH mobile food program. Michael's presentation highlighted several steps that he and the mobile team have taken to improve the customer experience and reduce county costs. Michael reported that his presentation was very well attended by both in person and virtual participants.

Public Health in the Rockies

Renee Lenthe, Sexual Health Nurse Supervisor, Elicia Chacon, Harm Reduction Supervisor, and Kara Lenhoff, Sexual Health Senior Registered Nurse, will be presenting ***Field Delivered Treatment for Syphilis in the Community and County Detention Center in Arapahoe County*** as a Program/Research "Showcase" Session.

Becca Miles, Immunizations Senior Registered Nurse, will be conducting the inaugural ***Public Health Nurse Skills Lab*** for the Public Health Nursing Chapter of the Colorado Public Health Association. This year's educational focus is on tuberculosis.

Melissa Smith, Senior Community Health Promotion Specialist, will present ***Becoming an Age-Friendly Public Health System: Integrating aging into core public health practice.***

Devan Lorimer and Sue Howk, Senior Community Health Promotion Specialists, along with Aurora Partners for Thriving Youth and Adams County Health Department, will present ***Protecting Future Generations: Strategic Partnerships in Youth Tobacco Prevention that Enhance Community Resiliency.***

Award from Colorado Public Health Association

Lillian Wald Award

Rebecca "Becca" Miles, BSN, RN Becca's journey in public health nursing began long before she became a Registered Nurse. A kinesiology grad from the University of Colorado Boulder, she found herself working at a school serving teen moms. It was there, watching the school nurse teach prenatal classes while caring for daycare babies, that Becca knew she wanted to work in community-focused preventive care. She earned her BSN from CU Anschutz in 2004, Becca has now dedicated more than two decades to public health in Colorado. She's currently enrolled in CU Nursing's prestigious DNP/MPH dual-degree program, a move that reflects her mission to blend advanced clinical expertise with systemic public health leadership. Becca is a proven leader in Colorado's Public Health Response: 18 years at Tri-County Health, including a pivotal leadership role during the COVID-19 pandemic, training case investigators and launching mass vaccination efforts. Currently, as a Nurse Educator in Arapahoe County's Immunization Program, she designs and delivers training that ensures her team is ready to protect the community, from chickenpox to measles. At heart, Becca is deeply personal in her public health approach. Her belief is simple yet powerful: when a nurse protects one family, they plant a seed of health across generations. As a mother of four, she truly understands the significance of that act, especially for families new to Colorado or the U.S. She champions systemic thinking, influencing policy and programs so that everyone, regardless of insurance status, can access services.

