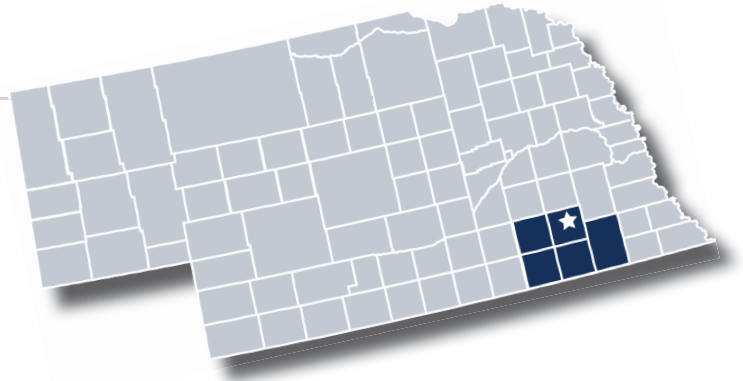


Public Health Solutions

District Health Department

*Serving Fillmore, Gage, Jefferson, Saline,
and Thayer Counties*



Spotlight: Preventing Suicide



Suicide is a leading cause of death for individuals aged 15-34. The suicide rate among our veterans is higher than their non-veteran counterparts. Suicide rates are also higher in rural areas. Overall, the rate of suicide deaths in Nebraska is higher than the national average. PHS is involved in several projects to address suicide risk across the district.

PHS and partner organizations are working to increase awareness of suicide and assist communities in developing needed resources. QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) is an evidence-based training that teaches people to recognize suicide warning signs and to persuade an individual in crisis to accept professional help. PHS held trainings throughout the district this year, resulting in 502 QPR 'Gatekeepers' trained to intervene when needed.

PHS is part of a unique collaboration to address the disparity in veteran suicide rates. Four local health

departments, in collaboration with the Nebraska Association of Local Health Directors (NALHD) and the Behavioral Health Education Center of Nebraska (BHECN), are implementing the Mental Health Awareness and Training program. This program provides QPR with specific emphasis on the unique challenges veterans face.

PHS also supports local Hope Squads, a school-based peer program. Hope Squad members are trustworthy peers that are trained to watch for at-risk students. Through evidence-based training modules, Hope Squad members are empowered to seek help and save a life. Hope Squad members are not taught to act as counselors. They are educated on how to recognize signs of suicide contemplation and on how to properly report this to an adult. To date, Hope Squads have been implemented in three (3) school districts within the PHS district.

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In response higher-than-average suicide rates in Gage County and spurred by tragic events in 2017 and 2018, PHS, Region V, and Blue Valley Behavioral Health partnered to organize and activate the Blue River LOSS Team. The LOSS (Local Outreach

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to Suicide Survivors) Team works closely with law enforcement, clergy members, funeral home personnel, and other community service providers to identify individuals who have experienced the loss of a friend or family member due to suicide. A peer counselor with experience in this type of loss and a mental health professional visit the home of the survivor to offer support, resources, and referrals as needed. Since activation, the Blue River LOSS Team has visited three suicide loss survivor families. The group provides community presentations to build awareness about the devastating effects that suicide can have on survivors and the entire community along with the resources available.

This report includes examples of efforts of Public Health Solutions District Health Department to make the “Good Life” a healthy one in their jurisdiction. The following examples reflect work supported through multiple sources of funding, including monies from the Nebraska Health Care Funding Act (HCFA).

Local health departments act as communities’ Chief Health Strategists by assuring that the health and wellbeing of Nebraskans are protected and improved. Local health departments do this by working in each of the **Three Core Function Areas of Public Health**:



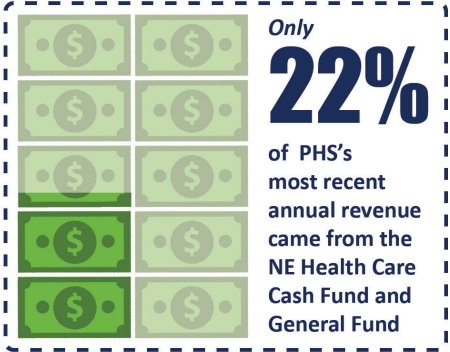
Assessment: Collect and analyze information about health problems in Nebraska communities.



Policy Development: Work with partners to apply data, educate the public, and develop programs and policies—all to address and prevent illness, disease and disability.



Assurance: Promote effective coordination and use of community resources to protect the health and wellbeing of Nebraskans.



Community Health Assessment (CHA) Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)

Every 3-6 years, Nebraska’s local health departments (LHDs) engage local partners (including hospitals, clinics, schools, law enforcement, military and veteran organizations, economic development agencies, businesses, foundations, other community organizations, and individual community members) to identify key, local health needs and issues through systematic, comprehensive data collection and analysis. This process is known as the Community Health Assessment (CHA). LHDs take the lead in coordinating this complicated process, synthesizing the outcome data, and prioritizing identified issues. The resulting formal assessment is used to create a community-wide plan aimed at strategically improving health – the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP).

With CHIPs in place, LHDs take a lead driving the work toward meeting CHIP goals and monitoring progress. Much of this work is done collaboratively through partnerships and workgroups that include the diverse sectors mentioned above.

The CHA/CHIP process ensures that local communities are able to work together toward a Good, Healthy Life for all Nebraskans.

CURRENT CHIP PRIORITIES:



Access to Mental Health Services (including mental and emotional wellbeing and substance abuse)



Chronic Disease (specifically obesity, hypertension, high cholesterol, and high blood pressure)



Access to Resources and Opportunities for Everyone (health equity)



Environmental Health (focused on safe and thriving community environments)

ACCESS TO AND LINKAGE TO CLINICAL CARE

Access to and Linkage to Clinical Care includes (but is not limited to) coordination of services between medical providers and providers of health-related social needs, oral health/dental services, and behavioral/mental health.



Access to health care resources and opportunities for everyone was identified as a priority in Public Health Solutions' (PHS) 2018 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) and continues to be a focus for PHS and district-wide community partners. PHS convened pharmacists and health care providers in Gage County to formalize referral procedures between providers and pharmacies, streamlining education and support for patients who are self-monitoring blood pressure. PHS assisted over 300 individuals with resources for services such as Medicaid, economic assistance, and medication assistance programs. Our monthly, on-site Healthy Community Alliance Clinic provides chronic care management to patients with limited access to a primary care physician, serving over 30 patients last year.



CHRONIC DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

Chronic Disease Control and Prevention includes (but is not limited to) asthma, cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity, tobacco control, and worksite wellness.



PHS convened health care providers and community leaders to identify gaps in resources available to district residents and to leverage existing resources. PHS worked with a local clinic to develop and implement a screening process to identify patients with prediabetes and refer to the National Diabetes Prevention Program (NDPP). PHS partners with a physician to provide the Healthy Community Alliance Clinic—a monthly, on-site chronic care management clinic. This year, of those who participated in this clinic: 80% of patients showed improvement in their blood pressure, 50% of diabetic patients reduced their A1c levels.



COMMUNICABLE DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

Communicable Disease Control and Prevention includes (but is not limited to) communicable disease epidemiology (disease outbreak management/response), tuberculosis (TB), immunizations, sexually transmitted infections, and surveillance (tracking and following up on reports and provider/school reports).



During the nation's 2018-2019 flu season, Nebraska had the highest number of confirmed influenza cases. In the PHS district, there were seven influenza outbreaks in long-term care facilities and a pediatric death attributed to influenza. Working with local hospitals and long-term care providers, PHS provided technical assistance and resources on best practices, including policy and procedure changes, to prevent disease outbreaks. District-wide, PHS provided nearly 2,800 immunizations to children and adults in 119 immunization clinics. PHS collaborated with schools to provide flu shots to over 3,000 school-aged children and with worksites to offer 27 flu clinics.



ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Environmental Health includes (but is not limited to) radon, lead, emergency response, hazardous substances and sites, and Complete Streets initiatives.



This year, the PHS Radon Program targeted education and resources to childcare providers to increase the health and safety of child environments. PHS collaborated with the city of Crete and Nebraska DHHS to offer financial resources to three childcare providers who tested their home/center and found they had higher than the minimum safe threshold for radon. Funds were used to offset the cost of radon mitigation, providing a safer environment for nearly 100 children in their care. PHS offers radon test kits and education to all district residents, distributing more than 200 at-home kits over the past year.



INJURY PREVENTION

Injury Prevention includes (but is not limited to) motor vehicle injuries, occupational injuries, senior fall prevention, substance abuse, car seat safety, binge drinking, and distracted driving.



Tai Chi: Moving for Better Balance is an evidence-based program to improve strength and balance, especially in older adults. PHS has formed partnerships with groups throughout the district to offer this program. PHS coordinates Tai Chi: Moving for Better Balance classes in every county within the district. As a result, 99 individuals have benefited from the program.



MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH

Maternal and Child Health includes (but is not limited to) Women, Infant, and Children (WIC), family planning, newborn screening, evidence-based home visitation, Early Preventative Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT).



PHS identified access to early childhood interventions as a critical need in the district. PHS's Healthy Families Gage & Jefferson program screens all participating children for developmental delays and parents for depression and related issues. PHS conducted over 900 home visits in which families received support, education and referrals to services. Through Rooted in Relationships, PHS implemented the Pyramid Model, an evidence-based framework and systems change to increase healthy social and emotional development in children, in over 35 childcare centers. PHS collaborated with the Nebraska Mental Health Centers to increase access to Parent-Child Interaction Therapy in Gage County, an evidence-based model for children ages 2-7 with challenging behaviors.



Additional public health activities that Public Health Solutions District Health Department performs to assure that the health and wellbeing of Nebraskans are protected and improved.

In the fall of 2018, over 30 community leaders and partners came together to conduct a Community Health Assessment (CHA) and develop the district-wide Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). This plan serves as a guide to forming new and innovative partnerships resulting in the most effective use of time and resources. As a result of this plan, PHS staff and Board of Health members have fine-tuned the focus and vision of the department. Public health touches every aspect of a community and the varied and far-reaching programs offered by PHS are a great example of this. PHS hosts the Southeast Area Healthcare Education Center (AHEC) and provides programs and services to new and future health care professionals across a 17-county region with the goal of increasing the number of health care professionals that choose to work in rural areas of the state. Americorps Members serve the PHS district with educational programs focused on eliminating food insecurity and encouraging good nutrition. Population protection services at PHS include immunization, CPR training, environmental health programs, and disease surveillance. The Safe & Thriving Communities division of PHS provides expertise and resources to communities to increase healthy opportunities for all residents. Examples of this work can be seen in the Walkable Communities projects, accident and fall prevention programs such as Tai Chi and the Safe Kids Coalition, as well as health promotion activities. Focusing on family and individual health services, PHS provides an evidence-based home visitation program for new parents, early childhood social-emotional development programs, education programs for parents and childcare providers, and clinical services in the areas of dental health, immunizations, and chronic disease management. PHS staff members are invested in their communities and are committed to achieving the department's mission of, "Healthy opportunities for everyone where we live, learn, work, and play".