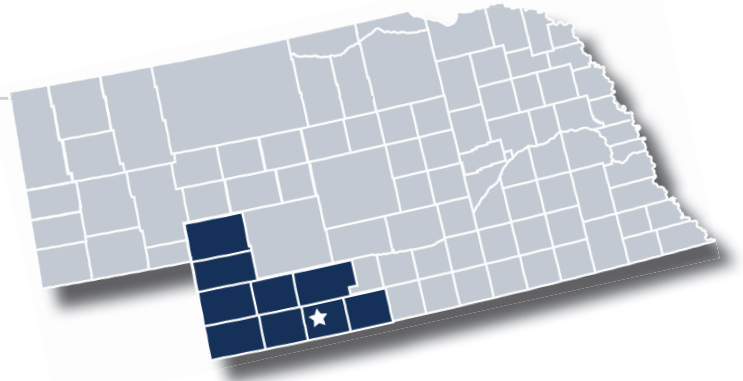


# Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department

*Serving Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes,  
Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow Counties*



## Spotlight: Preventing Tobacco Use



Some examples are:

- Coalition members shared a template that was used to create baby bibs with the message “Tender Lungs at Work. Thank you for not smoking.” SWNPHD shared these bibs with six hospitals to include in gift packages for parents of newborns.
- SWNPHD completed a Tobacco Advertising Audit at selected tobacco outlets within the nine-county health district. Stores were surveyed for location of tobacco advertising, types of products sold, warning signs displayed, prices and promotions, etc. Several stores were found to be out of compliance with advertising regulations, with tobacco products near candy or youth items and advertising displays at child level. These regulations are meant to protect youth and prevent tobacco outlets from recruiting youth as new tobacco users.

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department’s (SWNPHD) Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) identified cancer as a priority concern. Many cancers are related to tobacco use, such as lung, mouth, and pancreatic cancers. SWNPHD has higher rates of tobacco use than the state average: 17.6% of adults smoke and 11.1% use smokeless tobacco. As part of efforts to reduce cancers linked to tobacco use, in 2018 SWNPHD joined the Tobacco Free Lincoln County Coalition sponsored by Community Connections of North Platte. Participation in the coalition provides support for SWNPHD tobacco programs and ideas for outreach and program implementation.

The rates of youth who use e-cigarettes has increased at an alarming rate in the last five years. The developing brains of children and teens are seriously affected by the nicotine in tobacco products, including e-cigarettes and vaping products. SWNPHD sent information about e-cigarettes to all schools in

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the health district to make teachers and administrators aware of what to look for and how these products affect their students, allowing them to create well-informed policies to protect their students.

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As another means of protecting youth from tobacco, SWNPHD has supported legislation to increase the tobacco tax in Nebraska. SWNPHD participates in the review of legislative bills, educates members of the legislature on the dangers of youth tobacco use, and shares the strong evidence that tobacco price increases (of at least \$1.50 per pack) decrease the number of new, youth tobacco users and encourage current smokers to quit.

Looking forward, SWNPHD’s work with the Tobacco Free Coalition will continue to grow and benefit southwest Nebraska.

This report includes examples of efforts of Southwest Nebraska Public 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**:



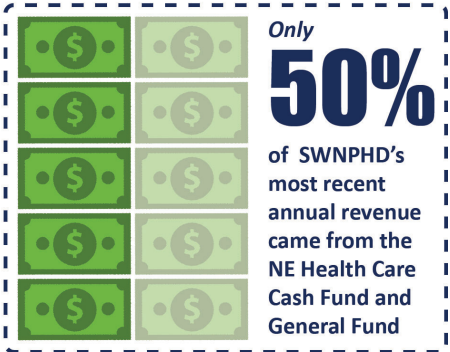
**Assessment:** Collect and analyze information about health problems in Nebraska communities.



**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:



Cancer



Heart Disease

## 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.



Three Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) counties are categorized as frontier counties with no primary care available and the remaining six are designated as rural. One county has zero health care services available, requiring residents to travel outside the county for all health care. All nine counties have shortages of one or more types of medical provider. There is no dental provider that will accept Medicaid in the health district. There is also an increasing population of foreign-born and minority residents. SWNPHD contracts a community health worker (CHW) who works with clients with limited English proficiency to make appointments and schedule screenings at clinics and hospitals.

## 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.



The highest rates of death from chronic disease in southwest Nebraska are from cancer and heart disease, similar to the state. SWNPHD consistently sends out education regarding the prevention of chronic disease through regular health screenings and healthy lifestyle choices. This year staff were trained to teach “Living Well with Chronic Diseases.” Health fair lab draw prices and free blood pressure screenings are available daily at SWNPHD. Health coaching staff assist clients to make goals and lifestyle changes around nutrition, physical activity and monitoring blood pressure. SWNPHD conducts screening events in rural communities and workplaces to identify individuals at risk for heart disease.

## 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).



The SWNPHD public health nurse monitors child and adult vaccination rates. Based on the low flu vaccination rates in the district, SWNPHD worked to educate the public with news releases, radio interviews and letters to churches and schools about getting a yearly flu shot to prevent the spread of flu and protect vulnerable community members. SWNPHD provides immunizations throughout the health district with free and discounted services. SWNPHD provided 56 flu clinics. Of these, 35 were planned outreach clinics in communities with limited medical services. Twenty-one (21) clinics were added in response to flu season, to increase the percentage of residents getting an annual flu shot.

## ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

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



SWNPHD supports healthy home environments by educating about and checking for lead and radon. Health educators provide materials and home testing kits at health fairs and sponsor a class through the local college where realtors can earn CEUs by learning about radon. One out of two homes test high for radon in Nebraska. SWNPHD provides low-cost test kits to the public and conducts a campaign every January for Radon Action Month to encourage testing. Last year SWNPHD distributed free radon test kits in Keith, Perkins, Chase and Dundy counties. All of these counties were targeted because of previous, low testing rates.

## 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.



SWNPHD previously developed and shared an injury prevention program for seniors called FROG: Fitness Reaching Older Generations. Now FROG classes are held in several area senior centers and churches where participants build strength, improve coordination and learn skills to prevent falls. To increase mental health capacity at the local level, SWNPHD offered five Question, Persuade, and Refer (QPR) trainings in the communities of Ogallala, Trenton and Cambridge, Nebraska. QPR teaches community members how to recognize and intervene to keep a suicidal person safe and how to question, persuade, and refer someone to help before they injure themselves.

## 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).



SWNPHD houses the southwest service area of the Nebraska Lifespan Respite Network, which assists families caring for a loved one with an illness or disability. The Respite Coordinator participates in Planning Region Team meetings with early childhood educators and the Early Development Network and makes and receives referrals from these partners. SWNPHD regularly makes referrals to local WIC and family planning clinics.

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

Lack of physical activity is a major contributor to many physical and mental health problems. SWNPHD administers two programs to encourage community members to increase their level of physical activity—Walk to Health and Nebraska Kids Fitness & Nutrition Day. Walk to Health is a free walking program in which residents track their daily steps during walking challenges to receive a prize such as a free t-shirt. Challenges last from four to 12 weeks and can be done individually or as teams. SWNPHD partners with McCook Community Hospital’s Wellness for Life Program to provide a mobile app for tracking steps and sharing healthy living tips and motivation. Several area businesses participate with competitions within their own teams.

Nebraska Kids Fitness & Nutrition Day (NKFND) was created by University of Nebraska Kearney and the Nebraska Beef Council to address obesity in children. The curriculum involves targeted concepts using My Plate guidelines and creative fitness activities that reinforce new knowledge. SWNPHD co-chairs this event with McCook Public Schools, Perkins County Schools and several local business partners. Over 600 students, teachers, and volunteers participated in the most recent event.