

# Panhandle Public Health District Annual Report



Escanea el código QR  
para ver en español.

**Panhandle**  
Public Health District

Photo credit: Eric Grunwald, Scotts Bluff National Monument

# Letter from the Board President



On behalf of the Panhandle Public Health District Board of Directors, I extend heartfelt gratitude to all who support and engage in our vision – We are a healthier and safer Panhandle Community. Together, we have achieved significant milestones, reflecting the dedication and resilience of our region.

This year marks a moment of transition for the district as we bid a fond farewell to our Health Director, Kim Engel, who is retiring after 21 years of visionary leadership and service. Under her guidance, we have strengthened our initiatives, expanded partnerships, and made strides in addressing needs specific to our rural area. We wish Kim all the best in retirement and thank her and the PPHD team for building a foundation of excellence.

As we look to the future, we are thrilled to welcome Jessica Davies, as the new Health Director. With a proven track record of innovative leadership and a deep passion for public health, Jessica is poised to lead our district into an exciting new chapter. Jessica has been with PPHD for 21 years and most recently as the Assistant Health Director. We are confident she will build on our successes while bringing fresh perspectives and new energy to our mission.

Thank you for your continued partnership in shaping a healthier Panhandle region. Together, we will ensure that our communities remain strong, resilient, and thriving for years to come.



Warm regards,  
Dan Kling

## Board of Health Members

### **Banner County**

Don Lease, County Commissioner  
Bob Gifford, Community-Spirited Citizen

### **Box Butte County**

Michael Sautter, County Commissioner  
Joni Jespersen, Community-Spirited Citizen

### **Cheyenne County**

Randy Miller, County Commissioner  
Mandi Raffelson, Community-Spirited Citizen

### **Dawes County**

Vic Rivera, County Commissioner  
Diana Lecher, Community-Spirited Citizen

### **Deuel County**

Jim Reichman, County Commissioner  
TBD, Community-Spirited Citizen

### **Garden County**

Dixann Krajewski, County Commissioner  
Mary Gentry-Randall, Community-Spirited Citizen

### **Grant County**

Brian Brennemann, County Commissioner  
Jon Werth, Community-Spirited Citizen

### **Kimball County**

Carl Stander, County Commissioner  
Randy Bohac, Community-Spirited Citizen

### **Morrill County**

Susanna Batterman, County Commissioner  
Kay Anderson, Community-Spirited Citizen

### **Scotts Bluff County**

Mark Harris, County Commissioner  
Kristin Wiebe, Community-Spirited Citizen

### **Sheridan County**

Dan Kling, County Commissioner  
Pat Wellnitz, Community-Spirited Citizen

### **Sioux County**

Hal Downer, County Commissioner  
Jackie Delatour, Community-Spirited Citizen

### **At Large**

Dr. David Cornutt, MD, Medical Doctor  
TBD, DDS, Dentist  
Jon Werth, DVM, Veterinarian

# Letter from the Director

PPHD continued its steadfast commitment to the wellbeing of the communities we serve, embracing innovation and collaboration to meet the evolving needs of the Panhandle. Through efforts to expand maternal and child health, environmental health, brain health, and immunization services, increased suicide prevention and mental health resources for all ages, and strengthened injury prevention initiatives, we upheld our vision to create a healthier and safer Panhandle community.

The year also marked a significant leadership transition, honoring the legacy of Kim Engel as she retired after decades of transformative leadership. It was an honor to see her receive the Panhandle Business & Professional Women (BPW) Woman of the Year, NACCHO Inaugural National Champion of Local Governmental Public Health, and Leading Light awards. Kim is the "Betty White of Public Health," as she earned admiration not only in the Panhandle but across Nebraska and the nation for her wisdom, humor, and unwavering dedication. Her ability to connect with people, inspire change, and lead with grace has left an indelible mark on the region. As Kim passes the torch, we are reminded of the quote, "We have the power to pay forward the love, sweat, and sacrifice of our mothers and fathers and all those who came before us."

We promise to build on this legacy, ensuring that PPHD remains a trusted partner in improving the health of our communities. To Kim, thank you for your extraordinary service, leadership, and heart. We look forward to this new chapter. Together, as a region, we will continue to honor the values that make the Panhandle strong: resilience, compassion, and community. Here's to a future of health and hope for all.



PPHD Board of Health with retiring Director, Kim Engel at her final board meeting in November.



Jessica Davies, MPH  
Director  
308-760-6492  
jdavies@pphd.ne.gov

Thank you to Carolyn Jones, Box Butte County Community-Spirited Citizen, for 22 years of service since the inception of PPHD, and to Marie Parker, Banner County Community-Spirited Citizen, for 20 years of unwavering dedication. Both were instrumental in shaping the Board of Health, providing invaluable expertise and passion to advance PPHD's mission. Their contributions extended to key executive committee roles, where they offered strategic leadership and played a vital part in the organization's success and growth.

In December, we celebrated Kim's retirement, recognizing her 21 years of servant leadership. Her dedication, achievements, and lasting contributions have left an indelible mark on the Panhandle, inspiring all who had the privilege to work alongside her.





# FREE CAR SEAT PROGRAM

PPHD provides free car seats and installation assistance for qualifying families to improve child safety in vehicles.



Please call us at 308-633-2866 to confirm eligibility and to book an appointment for your car seat installation.

## CAR SEAT INSTALLATION LOCATIONS:

18 W 16th Street, Scottsbluff, NE 69361 &

808 Box Butte Ave, Hemingford, NE 69348

## CredibleMind in Action

This year, CredibleMind helped empower over 2,600 individuals across the Nebraska Panhandle to take charge of their mental health. With 3,320 sessions and 174 registered users, the platform continues to provide trusted, evidence-based tools and expert guidance to support emotional and mental wellbeing.

Explore CredibleMind today to discover helpful tools, resources, and strategies designed to support you and your kiddos on their journey to better mental health and overall wellbeing!

**Scan the QR code today!**



## Training and Event Calendar

Register for upcoming trainings and take advantage of professional development opportunities. From 8 to Great to Healthy for Life, we offer a variety of programs designed to support your growth and success.



## Customized Professional Development Opportunities

Need training that fits your schedule or tailored sessions for your team? We've got you covered! Our Professional Development programs offer over 25 customizable training options led by experienced facilitators. Enhance your team's skills and career growth with learning experiences designed to meet your specific needs.

**Scan the QR code to explore our diverse array of professional development opportunities.**



## Partnering with Schools for Impact

We're grateful to the ten schools partnering with us to implement Base Education, an evidence-based program that fosters positive youth development and substance misuse prevention. Together, we're equipping students with essential life skills and supporting their success.

# Opioid Response

## Panhandle Situation Table



The Panhandle Situation Table continues to be successful in meeting acutely elevated-risk individuals and families where they are.

Meeting weekly via Zoom, the Panhandle Situation Table is comprised of professionals across several service sectors committed to ensuring individuals and families receive the support and services needed in an urgent manner.

PPHD coordinates and facilitates the weekly meetings, as well as annual refresher training. In 2024, the Panhandle Situation Table received a NACCHO (National Association of City and County Health Officials) Model Practice Award. Model Practices are awarded to local health departments across the country for implementing programs that demonstrate exemplary and replicable outcomes in response to an identified public health need.



Emily Timm, LPN  
Preparedness & Community  
Health Educator  
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etimm@pphd.ne.gov

## Situation Table Numbers at a Glance

(Data from 8/31/22-12/31/24)

110 Situations Presented to Table

75 Connected to Services (75%)

20 Informed of Services

6 Refused Services

2 Not Deemed in  
Acutely Elevated Risk

6 Unable to Locate

2 Open

### Top Risk Factors; percentage of situations impacted:

Mental Health - 75%

Housing - 73%

Substance misuse - 65%

Basic Needs - 57%

Parenting - 42%

## DECREASING STIGMA AND HARM

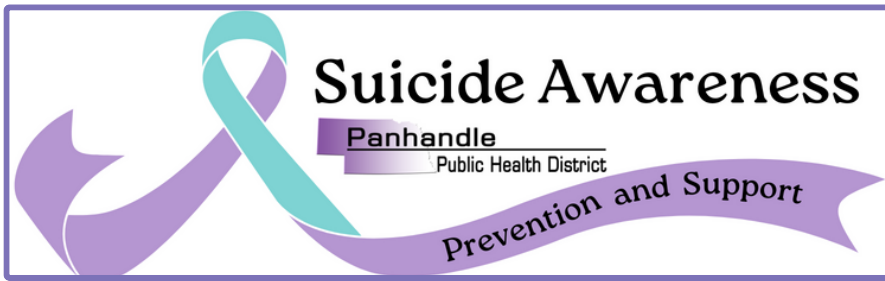


**ARE YOU PREPARED**

if someone has an opioid overdose  
or fentanyl poisoning?

[WWW.STOPODNE.COM](http://WWW.STOPODNE.COM)

Opioid and Narcan education is available to all Panhandle residents. PPHD partners with the Nebraska Pharmacy Association to provide free Narcan to all first responders. Nebraska residents have access to free Narcan and can find a participating pharmacy by visiting [stopodne.com](http://stopodne.com). PPHD continues to provide safe medication disposal with Detera Pouches, as well as medication lockboxes.



## PPHD Suicide Prevention & Support

With over 49,000 lives lost to suicide annually in the US, urgent efforts are essential. Our goal is to ensure that everyone living in the Panhandle has access to the tools, resources, and information needed to have conversations about preventing suicide and to feel comfortable seeking help if needed.



### Hope Squads

Hope Squad is a school-based, peer-to-peer suicide prevention program. Hope Squad members, nominated by peers, meet with advisors to discuss mental health, learn to recognize distress signs, and connect peers to help. 10 Area schools have Hope Squads.

## Contact

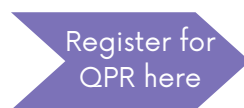
Cheri Farris, MPH, CHES  
Community Health  
Educator  
cfarris@pphd.ne.gov



**QPR**, like CPR, can be a lifesaver. QPR empowers anyone with the tools and skills to make a positive difference in the life of someone they know.

143 residents participated in QPR in 2024.

Use the QR code to register for a monthly QPR webinar. We also provide virtual or on-site training for partner organizations.



Counseling on Access to Lethal Means (CALM) is a powerful addition to existing strategies to reduce the risk of suicide death in at-risk people while respecting their rights and autonomy. Learn how you can help keep them safe. Contact us to learn more.



Coping After Suicide Loss Support Groups are intended to be a confidential, non-judgmental space where those bereaved by a suicide loss can find some comfort and support. Support group facilitators have lost someone to suicide, too, so they know the pain, questions, and complexity of losing a loved one to suicide.

If you've lost someone to suicide, consider joining a virtual or in-person group. Contact us to learn more.



# PANHANDLE PREVENTION COALITION



Suzanne Crane  
Community Prevention  
Coordinator  
308-672-9800  
scrane@pphd.ne.gov

## New Community Prevention Coordinator

Suzanne joined PPHD in October 2024, bringing a deep commitment to advancing the coalition's vital efforts in suicide prevention, reducing tobacco use, addressing binge and underage drinking, and combating overdose risks. Her dedication to fostering healthier, safer communities drives her work every day.



Throughout the year, the Panhandle Prevention Coalition (PPC) has focused on educating the community to improve the health and safety of Panhandle residents. PPC meeting presentations covered topics such as youth mental health and substance use data, regional drug trends, how to talk to young people about vaping, and a screening of the film *My Ascension*.

## Get Involved with the Panhandle Prevention Coalition!

The PPC holds bi-monthly meetings to collaborate on initiatives. We're always seeking new voices and perspectives to join us. If you'd like to learn more about how to get involved, please reach out to Suzanne Crane at [scrane@pphd.ne.gov](mailto:scrane@pphd.ne.gov). We'd love to hear from you!



## Suicide Prevention Community Walks

Walks are coordinated by PPHD and partners during the month of September. All funds donated support the annual walks and evidence-based suicide prevention programs throughout the Panhandle, including Question. Persuade. Refer. (QPR) and Hope Squad. Walks happened in Alliance, Scottsbluff, and Garden County in September & more walks are being planned for 2025.

## Boys Town Common Sense Parenting

This approach, designed for parents of children aged 6-16, emphasizes love, consistent boundaries, and open communication to nurture confident, responsible children. It fosters a stable, supportive environment for healthy development.



## Tobacco and Alcohol Compliance Checks

The Nebraska State Patrol conducts Checks to ensure businesses do not sell alcohol or tobacco to minors. These inspections enforce legal sales practices, prevent underage drinking, and promote community safety.

## New Community Prevention Educator

Jessica brings a strong passion for promotion and education to our team, and we're thrilled to have her on board. She will prioritize collaborating with partners to deliver onsite educational programs, helping to support and strengthen community initiatives.

Jessica Rocha  
Community Prevention  
Educator  
[jrocha@pphd.ne.gov](mailto:jrocha@pphd.ne.gov)

Prevention - Performance for Success

# Tobacco Free Nebraska

The Nebraska Tobacco Quitline can help you quit tobacco for good.

The Nebraska Tobacco Quitline is free, convenient, safe, and secure. The cessation program uses proven strategies and professional coaches to help you quit.

Did you know? Combining counseling and quit medication can double your chance of successfully quitting tobacco.

Enroll online, or find a class near you by visiting: [QuitNow.ne.gov](http://QuitNow.ne.gov)



1-800-QUIT-NOW (784-8669)  
1-855-DÉJELO-YA (335-3569)

## Quitting Today Will Help You For Years

Quitting tobacco use can greatly decrease the risk of developing tobacco-related diseases.

Did you know:

- **20 minutes** after quitting your heart rate and blood pressure drop.
- **Days** after quitting the carbon monoxide level in your blood drops to normal.
- **2 weeks-3 months** after quitting your circulation improves as does your overall lung function.
- **1-12 months** after quitting coughing and shortness of breath decreases.
- **5-10 years** after quitting your risk of cancers including mouth and throat is cut in half.

Keep your kids' lungs healthy and strong. Teens are 7x more likely to vape nicotine than adults. Talk to them today about the dangers and health effects of tobacco use.

## End Youth Tobacco Use

PPHD teams up with area athletes to highlight student leaders making a positive impact by promoting tobacco-free lifestyles and raising awareness about the dangers of e-cigarettes and nicotine on youth health.

**FACT:** E-cigarette aerosols contain cancer-causing chemicals and tiny particles that reach deep into the lungs.

**FACT:** Nicotine exposure can harm adolescent and young adult brain development which continues into the early to mid-20s.

Thank you for making the safe and healthy decision!

JOSIE SANDERS



“I choose not to vape or use tobacco to reach my highest potential as an athlete, and to set an example for younger athletes. Setting my future self up for success means making the right choices now.”

BOADY HUNTER



“I choose not to vape or use tobacco products so I can perform my absolute best in every extracurricular event I do. Ingestion of those destructive chemicals would hamper my potential now and for my future. Running is a big part of my life and causing damage to my lungs with vaping or tobacco use would keep me from doing what I love.”

JOSH HENKEL



“I don't vape or use tobacco products because it leads to future health problems that I don't want to deal with in the future.”

KELSIE MCVICKER



“I am tobacco and drug free because the best days of life are ahead of you.”



# Vaping Prevention

## DID YOU KNOW?

In 2023, nearly 30% of Panhandle 12th graders reported using nicotine or tobacco substitute.

Contact us today at [jvisser@pphd.ne.gov](mailto:jvisser@pphd.ne.gov) to schedule a training or implement a tobacco or vaping prevention program.

## Signs a Teen Might Be Vaping

- Behavioral changes
  - Irritability, anxiety, prone to mood change, lack of impulse control
- Difficulty concentrating
  - Cognitive and performance impairment leading to poor grades
- Change in eating patterns
  - Leads to weight fluctuation
- Mouth sores
- Dry mouth
- Unexplained nosebleeds
- Sudden interest in burning scented candles or incense
- Sudden use of perfume/cologne

## Programs & Trainings

### CATCH MY BREATH



CATCH My Breath is the only FREE evidence-based youth nicotine vaping prevention program for grades 5-12 that has been proven to substantially reduce students' likelihood of vaping.

**Be sure your loved ones get the message, too.**

### HEALTH ROCKS

Health Rocks! applies 4-H's successful Positive Youth Development model with life skill development and decision-making philosophy to the challenge of reducing tobacco, alcohol, e-cigarette/vaping and drug use. Available for grades 3-9 and also available in Spanish.

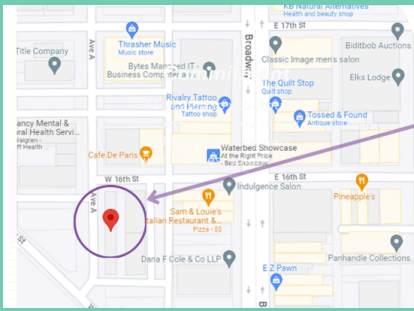
### 3RD GRADE WELLNESS DAY

Health Rocks vaping education was offered at the 3rd Grade Wellness Day with over 800 students learning about the harms and impact vaping has on the body.



# IMMUNIZATION SERVICES

## WALK-IN OR SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT



Have questions about immunizations, please call 633-2866 or go to [www.pphd.ne.gov/immunizations.html](http://www.pphd.ne.gov/immunizations.html)

### TAKE A LOOK AT OUR SERVICES



**ROUTINE IMMUNIZATIONS**  
We provide routine immunizations for all ages. If you are underinsured or have no insurance, we provide immunizations at no cost to you.



**TRAVEL IMMUNIZATIONS**  
Going on a trip and want to make sure you are protected? We provide travel consults and provide recommended immunizations.



**WORKSITE/SCHOOL CLINICS**  
We can provide immunizations at the worksite or the local school. This makes it easy for the employees/students while providing a healthy environment.



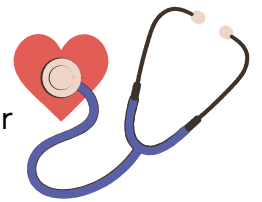
**FOR THOSE 50+**  
Pneumococcal vaccine is now recommended! It's never too late to protect yourself - vaccination is a lifelong job. Ask us about pneumonia, shingles, tetanus, flu, COVID, and RSV.



Paulette Schnell,  
RN, BSN, MSN  
Deputy Director  
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Tina Cook,  
RN, BSN  
Public Health Nurse  
Immunization Coordinator  
tcook@pphd.ne.gov



### Immunization Clinic Nurses



### Immunization Clinic Nurses

- Clockwise:  
Cheri Berry, RN  
Peg Jackson, RN  
Deb Keener, RN  
Teresa Thomas, RN  
Sheila Roberts, LPN  
Julie Brock, LPN  
(not pictured)  
Carol Sinner, RN

- MRC Volunteer Nurses**  
(not pictured)  
Betty Walsh, RN  
Marilyn Noel, RN



# WHY AGE 9

"Cervical and oropharyngeal cancer can be painful, debilitating, and lethal. There's a very effective vaccine that can safely & effectively prevent up to 90% of these cancers. It is critical that young people in our country get vaccinated! It can prevent them from having to undergo significant pain and suffering many years down the road." Dr. Vince Bjorling

## Prevent Six Cancers Starting at Age 9

HPV can be difficult to prevent after exposure, but there's a highly effective vaccine that offers protection against six types of cancer. When given at the recommended age, this vaccine can prevent more than 90% of HPV-related cancers. It's a simple, safe way to help protect kids and teens from serious health risks later in life.

Over 75% of U.S. parents have taken action to protect their kids from HPV-related cancers with the safe and effective HPV vaccine. Join them today!

**HPV  
VACCINATION** **=** **CANCER  
PREVENTION**

## HPV vaccine is safe and effective, with no long-term side effects

The HPV vaccine has been providing strong, lasting protection for over 15 years. Extensive research, including 109 studies with 2.5 million participants across six countries, has shown it's safe and effective, with no unexpected side effects beyond common reactions like allergies or fainting, seen with many vaccines.

Talk to your child's doctor today about this super important cancer-fighting shot. And guess what? Families with no insurance can snag it for free thanks to the Vaccines for Children program!

# OTHER CLINICAL SERVICES

## CPR Training

**Anyone can save a life!** PPHD offers CPR and First Aid training for adults, children, and infants—and we come to you! These interactive classes include watch-and-learn videos, hands-on practice with manikins, and a provided workbook. Participants receive a CPR certification card valid for two years. In 2024, PPHD trained 241 participants across 11 Panhandle schools, supporting Nebraska's new CPR training requirement for teachers and coaches.

## N-95 Respirator Fit Testing

A fit test is a test protocol conducted to verify that a respirator is comfortable and provides the wearer with the expected protection. PPHD provides the medical evaluation and Fit Test for organizations or individuals required to do this.

## PPHD Now Offers ACS Stop the Bleed Classes

Life-threatening bleeding can happen anytime—during an accident, disaster, or everyday life. Every second matters in these emergencies. ACS Stop the Bleed classes teach you how to recognize and control bleeding, empowering you to act quickly and save lives. Join a class to gain the skills to make a difference when it matters most. **Stop the Bleed—because every second matters.**



Myrranda Kelley, RN, BSN  
Public Health Nurse  
Fit Testing, CPR Certified  
Instructor  
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Sandy Preston, RN, BSN  
Public Health Nurse  
Genetic Clinic  
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Allyson De Los Santos, RN, BSN  
Public Health Nurse  
Disease Investigation, CPR  
Certified Instructor  
adelossantos@pphd.ne.gov

**For questions or to schedule an appointment,  
please call 308-633-2866**

## Disease Surveillance

PPHD works to prevent disease by promoting health in communities, families, and individuals. Staff collaborate with local hospitals, schools, nursing homes, labs, and Nebraska DHHS to monitor reportable diseases, detect outbreaks, and control disease spread, including sexually transmitted diseases.

## 2024 Disease Report

Panhandle Public Health District	2023	2024
Animal Exposure (bite or nonbite)	62	55
Aseptic meningitis	6	2
Botulism (infant)	1	0
Campylobacteriosis	60	55
Coccidioidomycosis	2	2
Cryptosporidiosis	5	1
Cyclosporiasis	1	1
Ehrlichiosis/Anaplasmosis, undetermined	1	1
Enteropathogenic Escherichia coli (EAEC)	29	25
Enteropathogenic Escherichia coli (EPEC)	75	57
Enterotoxigenic Escherichia coli (ETEC)	4	9
Escherichia coli (STEC) gastroenteritis	15	21
Giardiasis	7	2
Group A Streptococcus, invasive	12	9
Group B Streptococcus, invasive	17	8
Haemophilus influenzae, invasive	1	1
Hepatitis A, acute	1	1
Hepatitis B virus infection, chronic	4	2
Hepatitis B, acute	1	1
Hepatitis C virus infection, chronic or resolved	57	30
Kawasaki disease	1	0
Lead poisoning, child	23	16
Legionellosis	0	2
Lyme disease	1	0
Measles (Rubeola)	2	0
Mumps	1	1
Noroviruses, outbreak	2	14
Rabies, animal	0	1
Rabies, human	0	1
Rotavirus, outbreak	1	0
Pertussis	0	7
Q Fever, acute	1	2
Salmonellosis	24	30
Shigellosis	2	2
Spotted Fever Rickettsiosis	1	0
Streptococcus pneumoniae, invasive disease (IPD)	11	7
Strep, other, invasive, beta-hem (non-A, non-B)	5	14
Toxoplasmosis	2	2
Tularemia	2	2
Varicella (chickenpox)	2	0
Vibriosis (non-cholera)	1	2
West Nile virus disease, neuroinvasive	23	3
West Nile virus disease, nonneuroinvasive	17	6
Yersiniosis	6	9
<b>Total confirmed, probable, &amp; suspect cases</b>	<b>493</b>	<b>404</b>

# 4 STEPS TO IMPROVE YOUR DENTAL HEALTH

1



Brush your teeth  
2x per day with  
a fluoride  
toothpaste

2



Clean between  
your teeth daily

3



Eat a healthy  
diet that limits  
sugars

4



See your  
dentist  
regularly

## Dental Health Program



PPHD provides a school-based dental health program that provides dental care to all students. Currently, 97% of Panhandle schools participate in the program.



Pictured above are board member Marie Parker, school nurse Sierra Frickey, program coordinator Kendra Lauruhn, and school nurse Heidi Merrihew

4,985 dental screenings performed to detect early dental disease

4,696 fluoride treatments given to strengthen teeth

621 sealants placed to help protect molars from cavities

944 silver diamine fluoride applications to stop tooth decay

54 dental health presentations given that reached 1,002 people

58% student participation in dental health program

The Department of Health & Human Services Office of Oral Health and Dentistry recognized PPHD for our "Sustained Excellence in Nebraska Oral Health Promotion, Disease Prevention and Patient Education"

Kendra Lauruhn, RDH  
Dental Health Program  
Coordinator  
klauruhn@pphd.ne.gov



# Safe Driving Starts with You



## Bring national speaker Cara Filler to your school at no charge!

Contact Janelle at [jvisser@pphd.ne.gov](mailto:jvisser@pphd.ne.gov) to find out how.

Did you know?

In 2023, 81.5% of Panhandle 12th graders reported texting or using an app on a cell phone while driving.

Cara Filler is DRIVEN to Inspire. She is a compelling author, entrepreneur, and traffic safety specialist. Drawing from an immense personal tragedy in her own life, Cara's inspiring presentation focuses on dealing with peer pressure, traffic safety, and making everyday choices count. Why? Because it could just save a life!

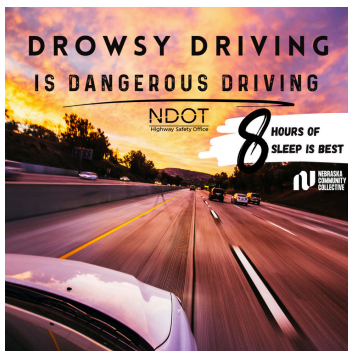
As of now, Cara has spoken at 11 Panhandle schools, engaging with more than 1,500 students and residents in the Panhandle.

## 5 Panhandle Schools offered Cara's Highway Safety Assembly in 2024.



While 64% of Panhandle drivers always wear seat belts when driving or riding in a car, we are 13% lower than the state average and nearly 26% lower than the U.S. average. This is concerning considering how far distances are between rural Panhandle communities, travel on country roads, and heavy agricultural traffic with trucks.

## Help us spread the word!



Be Patient on Roads During Planting Season.

Watch for ag equipment when driving. Help keep our roads safe.

Your life is worth saving!! Don't drive distracted!



[www.pphd.ne.gov/pphwc.html](http://www.pphd.ne.gov/pphwc.html)

# Walking & Rolling for Good Health



Janelle Visser  
Injury Prevention  
Coordinator  
308.760.6493  
jvisser@pphd.ne.gov

Creative crosswalks highlight pedestrian crossings, serving as a low-cost traffic-calming measure to reduce speeds and volume. Beyond being fun, they raise awareness of pedestrian safety. Research shows that drivers notice bright colors and patterns more than standard white paint. Cities report that upgraded crosswalks lead to slower vehicles and make pedestrians feel the street is for them as well.



Alliance added another crosswalk art project and updated their existing ones. Carnegie Arts Center Director Kyren Gibson and center volunteers painted crosswalks at Grandview and Emerson Elementary.

## Traffic Crossing Guard Program

The 5th graders at Gordon Elementary School have dedicated their time in service of others to keep their students and staff safe on the streets. Each day, four students take a different corner, grab their stop signs, put on their vests and prepare for early morning arrivals and dismissals after school. The 5th graders use the safety training and skills they received from the district's resource officer, who trained them at the beginning of the school year in how to safely cross pedestrians while also keeping themselves safe.



Walking, bicycling, and rolling to school enables children to incorporate the regular physical activity they need each day while forming healthy habits that can last a lifetime.

## 3RD GRADE WELLNESS DAY

Take care of your body

TAKE CARE OF YOUR MIND

Proudly part of:  
**Panhandle**  
Public Health District

This exciting, interactive day of nutrition and physical activity stations was held for 841 area 3rd graders from 26 schools with 80 volunteers assisting with the stations this Fall. These events take place in Alliance, Chadron, Scottsbluff, and Sidney and couldn't be done without the incredible volunteers and instructors!



### What the teachers say...

- Loved the anti-bullying station
- This year was great! Loved the addition of the lung health and anti-bullying
- Always love the blender bike station!
- This day just gets better every year! Great volunteers and activities! Thanks so much for doing this for our 3rd graders!
- Our school loves this field trip!
- Great energy! Lots of good info!
- Our kids had a fantastic time!

# HEALTHY FAMILIES NEBRASKA PANHANDLE

Healthy Families America (HFA) is a nationally recognized, evidence based home visiting program

Pregnancy and parenting can be overwhelming and confusing at times.

We partner with families to help during this special time!

Healthy Families is FREE and VOLUNTARY!

## WE OFFER

Support in the Comfort of Your Home

Circle of Security Parenting Development Screenings

Referrals to Community Resources

Opportunities to Meet other Parents

Serving ALL Panhandle Counties



## WE PROVIDE EDUCATION

What to Expect When Expecting Bonding and Attachment

Child Development Early Language and Literacy Activities

Safe Sleep Breastfeeding

Positive Parenting Practices Child Health

Referrals to Healthy Families can be made using this QR code or go to <http://www.pphd.ne.gov/Pages/hfa.htm>

Accepting referrals for Panhandle families who are pregnant or parenting an infant three months or younger.

Self-referrals are encouraged!



If interested in more information call/text (308) 765-5249 or email [dbrandt@pphd.ne.gov](mailto:dbrandt@pphd.ne.gov)



**Dez Brandt**  
Program Manager  
[dbrandt@pphd.ne.gov](mailto:dbrandt@pphd.ne.gov)



**Jenn Buxbaum**  
Program Supervisor  
[jbuxbaum@pphd.ne.gov](mailto:jbuxbaum@pphd.ne.gov)



**Monica De Los Santos**  
Program Supervisor  
[mdelossantos@pphd.ne.gov](mailto:mdelossantos@pphd.ne.gov)



**Healthy Families**  
Nebraska Panhandle™

Proudly part of

**Panhandle**

Public Health District



# Healthy Families Home Visitation Specialists



Linda Ainslie



Ashleigh Rada



Alma Sanchez



Dezirae Wilkins



Rebecca Needels



Nohemi Leal

In late December 2024, we welcomed Home Visitation Specialist Becky Corona to our team!

## HFA Strengthens Parent-Child Relationships

- Parents are more confident and parent in ways that promote health child development
- Parents use more positive discipline, with less physical punishment and yelling.

## HFA Promotes Healthy Child Development

- Parents have fewer low-birthweight infants, more moms choose to breastfeed, and children receive more well-child visits and developmental screenings.
- Children demonstrate improved cognitive development and fewer behavioral challenges.

## HFA Enhances Family Wellbeing

- Moms are FIVE times more likely to pursue continued education, and teen moms are nearly TWICE as likely to complete at least one year of college. Children are more likely to have health insurance.
- Barriers are reduced as families gain access to community resources, health services, and economic support.
- Moms show improved mental health and lowered parenting stress.

## Healthy Families Nebraska Panhandle 2024 Highlights

Enrolled 80 Families



Served 150 Families



Provided 1,874 Home Visits



Graduated 11 Families

A successful graduation is a THREE year commitment!!!!



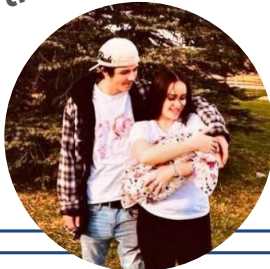
"This has been the best program, and I feel like I have the support I need with Healthy Families, it's the best."

"This program has given me so much information. I recommend this program to any father, or parent for that matter young or old. My son is more advanced because of this program, I know that for a fact."

Family Voices Tell the Story!



"We receive a lot of useful information and always get help from Healthy Families when we need it. I have recommended this program to other moms."



# PANHANDLE WORKSITE WELLNESS COUNCIL



Proudly part of

**Panhandle**

Public Health District

## Council Advisory Committee

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Dan Newhoff, Chair  
Box Butte General  
Hospital

---

Diana Lecher  
Chadron  
Community  
Hospital

---

Susan Wiedeman  
Panhandle Coop

---

Amy Doll  
Platte Valley Bank

---

Brooke Smith  
Northwest Community  
Action Partnership

---

Terri Allen  
Western Nebraska  
Community  
College

---

Jamie Bright  
Rural Prosperity  
Nebraska,  
Nebraska Extension

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The council serves area worksites, organizations, schools, and hospitals with a multitude of wellness and safety services to choose from. We proudly oversee the Governor's Wellness Award. This award was developed to help organizations of all sizes across the state of Nebraska become recognized for their wellness efforts and is sponsored by the Nebraska Department of Health & Human Services.

Annually, the council issues a survey to area worksites to evaluate and monitor area needs and opportunities. The worksite then receives a customized scorecard to help identify areas of opportunity. The scorecard initially focused on physical wellbeing in terms of healthy eating, active living, and tobacco cessation. It now also includes mental health, substance misuse, and driving behaviors. The follow-up consultation recommends evidence-based strategies, resources, and support along the prevention continuum to include policy, environment, programming, education, and awareness.



Nicole Berosek, MS  
Wellness and Prevention  
Program Manager  
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nberosek@pphd.ne.gov

### Workplace Policy Improvements Over Time

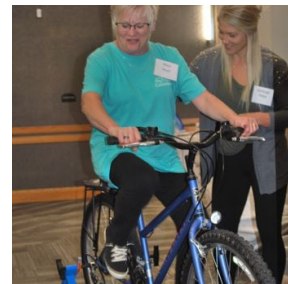
- 38% of workplaces now allow flextime for employees to engage in physical activity during work hours, up from 19% in 2011.
- 36% of workplaces now provide onsite exercise facilities, such as workout rooms or basketball courts, available to employees during work hours, up from 13% in 2011.
- 73% of workplaces now have policies requiring employees to wear seatbelts while driving or operating a vehicle for company business, up from 56% in 2011.
- 71% of workplaces now prohibit smoking in outdoor work areas, up from 50% in 2011. Additionally, 60% have policies restricting smoking near building entrances, an increase from 25% in 2011.

The council offers staff training, monthly promotions, newsletters, public communications, quarterly wellness chats, health risk appraisal and interest survey, mental health toolkit, and consultations. Set up an appointment today to complete the newly updated Governor's Wellness Award application. For a minimal fee, the council also provides onsite health screenings and vaccinations, an annual Safety & Wellness Conference, and wellness challenges.



# 2024 PANHANDLE SAFETY & WELLNESS CONFERENCE

Kim Engel was named the 2024 Leading Light Award Recipient



“ I am deeply honored to receive the Leading Light award as I retire, reflecting on the wonderful team I am leaving behind. This recognition not only celebrates my journey but also acknowledges the dedication and contributions of my incredible team. Your support has been invaluable, and I am truly grateful for our shared accomplishments. As I move into the next chapter of my life, I carry your spirit of teamwork and excellence with me. Thank you all for believing in me and for being part of this remarkable journey. ”

95% of attendees said the conference met their overall needs.

Here's what else they said...

- Overall great experience.
- Great job on this year's conference! It was full of excellent information to take back to our agencies.
- It was good to get together and network and the presentations were all good. Liked seeing flu shots offered.
- Very well-organized and presented!

2025 Panhandle Safety & Wellness Conference  
September 18, 2025  
Gering Civic Center

# SAVE THE DATE

Take your pick or let us customize a training for your worksite, organization, hospital, or school!

## Resilience First Aid Starter Training (RFAST)

We all have the natural ability to manage stress and turn it into a source of growth and resilience. This evidence-based training provides powerful tools to unlock your coping potential, helping you transform everyday stress into an asset for thriving.

## 8 to Great

8 to Great empowers students and adults with the skills for greater happiness and success, thereby instilling hope and inspiring possibilities.

## Financial Wellness

Living Financially Well provides information on:

- Thought Barriers to Financial Wellness
- Essential 1: Budgeting

# Environmental Health

The air you breathe, the water you drink, and even the homes you live in all can impact your health. Take charge of your environment today and stay healthy year round.

## Air Quality

### Indoor Air

Mold is present in 100% of homes to some degree. To minimize exposure and reduce health risks, keep indoor humidity between 35-50%, promptly repair any leaking pipes, and clean hard surfaces regularly with a bleach solution. Find more information on mold:

[epa.gov/mold](http://epa.gov/mold)

Radon, a colorless, odorless, and tasteless gas, is found in one out of every two homes in Nebraska. The only way to detect it is through testing. Contact PPHD today to request a free radon test kit and ensure your home is safe.

### Outdoor Air

Wildfire smoke and other pollutants can negatively affect your outdoor air. Check your local air quality: <https://www2.purpleair.com>

## Lead Poisoning Prevention

### Lead Exposure

Lead is a toxic metal that can harm a child's health, especially children under 6 years of age. Children can be exposed to lead by breathing or swallowing lead or lead dust, which is found in lead-based paint.

Lead can be found in:

- Peeling paint and dust in homes built before 1978.
- Soil around the home.
- Dust carried in from a parent's job.
- Older water pipes and fixtures.
- Imported products such as glazed pottery, toys, cosmetics, and spices.

Lead poisoning is 100% preventable. Contact PPHD today to discuss lead testing options for your home.

Source: [leadsafe.ne.gov](http://leadsafe.ne.gov)

## Water Quality

### Well Water Testing

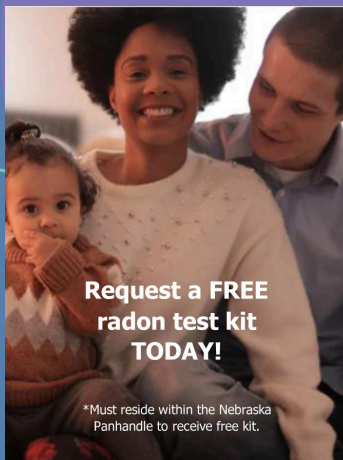
If you are a private well owner, test your water annually for coliform bacteria, nitrates, total dissolved solids, and pH levels.

Children under six months that ingest large amounts of nitrate or nitrite in drinking water can develop blue baby syndrome. Nitrate can also cause cancer.

**Nebraska has the highest rate of pediatric cancer west of Pennsylvania.**

Contact your local Natural Resource District to test your well water to help prevent serious health issues:

<https://www.nrdnet.org/nrds/find-your-nrd>



Request a **FREE** radon test kit **TODAY!**

\*Must reside within the Nebraska Panhandle to receive free kit.

Mail this coupon to Panhandle Public Health District, PO Box 337, Hemingford, NE 69348, call (308) 487-3600 ext. 108, or e-mail [mhaas@pphd.ne.gov](mailto:mhaas@pphd.ne.gov) to get your free kit.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

By accepting this free kit, I give my permission for results to be reported to myself and PPHD.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_



Melissa Haas, MS  
Environmental Health Coordinator  
[mhaas@pphd.ne.gov](mailto:mhaas@pphd.ne.gov)

# Preventing Lead Poisoning

Lead poisoning is  
100% preventable.

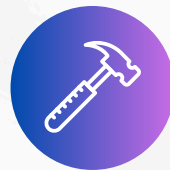


If you live in a home built before  
1978, you might have lead paint  
present.



## BLOOD TEST

PPHD has the ability to test  
children for lead in the blood.  
Please call for more information  
or to schedule a time to test.



## CONTRACTORS

If you are hiring a contractor,  
they should follow lead-safe  
work practices. Find a  
certified contractor to ensure  
the work on your home is done  
safely.



## CLEANING

Wipe down window sills  
and mop floors regularly. It  
is important when cleaning  
to always do wet cleaning,  
not dry.



## TESTING

Lead paint and dust are the  
top ways children can be  
exposed. PPHD can test your  
home for lead paint with  
immediate results.

## UPCOMING TRAININGS IN 2025 (TBD)

- Lead Abatement Supervisor Training
- Lead Abatement Worker Training
- Renovate, Repair, and Painting (RRP) Training

These trainings will be provided free of charge  
through funding provided by Housing & Urban  
Development.



Scan the QR  
code to get  
more information  
on lead,  
trainings, or to  
discuss lead  
testing options.



# Tick Awareness and Prevention



Ticks found in our area can carry diseases that pose serious health risks. PPHD conducts surveillance to monitor tick populations and the risks they may pose, helping to keep our community informed and protected.

The type of tick you encounter can determine the diseases it may carry. Here are some common ticks in the Panhandle to watch for on your next hike.



The American dog tick, Nebraska's most common tick, is recognized by the white semi-circle on its back and can transmit Rocky Mountain spotted fever.

The black-legged tick, identifiable by its black semi-circle and legs, resembles the American dog tick but spreads Lyme disease.



Common symptoms include a rash, fever, muscle or headaches, nausea, vomiting, and loss of appetite.

Use EPA-registered bug spray, avoid wooded and grassy areas, check yourself and pets after being outdoors, and shower promptly to reduce risk.



The lone star tick can be found by the bright white spot on its' back. These ticks spread Enrlichiosis.

Stay vigilant, and don't hesitate to consult a healthcare provider if you notice symptoms after a tick bite. PPHD continues to track tick-related health risks to ensure our community stays informed and prepared.

## Tick Bites and Alpha-Gal Syndrome

A typical outdoor day turned life-changing for Diana Lecher of Chadron when a tick bite led to alpha-gal syndrome (AGS), a serious allergic condition linked to the bite of the lone star tick. AGS causes a reaction to alpha-gal, a carbohydrate found in mammal meat, triggering delayed allergic symptoms that can range from mild itching to life-threatening reactions. For Diana, years of unexplained episodes culminated in a diagnosis after a severe reaction left her unconscious. "I cannot eat mammal meat, but I've learned to adapt," Diana shares. She now takes preventive steps, like sticking to mowed paths and performing regular tick checks, to avoid future bites.

While there's no treatment for AGS or many other tick-borne diseases, prevention is key. Avoiding tall grass and wooded areas, conducting thorough tick checks, wearing light-colored clothing, and using EPA-registered repellents can significantly reduce the risk. Diana's story serves as a reminder of the importance of tick bite prevention to protect your health and enjoy the outdoors safely.



# Healthy Brain, Healthy Life

## Maintaining brain health is essential for wellbeing.

Alzheimer's, the leading cause of dementia, affects memory, thinking, and behavior. In Nebraska, over 35,000 people live with Alzheimer's, and this number is expected to increase as the population ages. Promote brain health by managing risk factors can help prevent or slow Alzheimer's. Early diagnosis and intervention are key to improving quality of life. Talking to your doctor as soon as you notice warning signs can increase your options for treatment. PPHD is available for presentations to community and medical organizations.



## LOVE YOUR BRAIN

Recent scientific studies show that we can protect our brain from dementia by eliminating or modifying other risk factors—which account for more than 40 percent of cases—with our lifestyle choices. Moreover, researchers show that these modifications don't have to be significant, life-altering events. Even slight changes starting at any stage of life can be effective.

## It is never too early or too late for dementia prevention.

- **Be active daily** – Exercise regularly to support brain health.
- **Stay connected** – Engage with friends, family, or community groups.
- **Quit smoking** – Use resources to stop for good.
- **Drink less alcohol** – Follow recommended limits to protect your brain.
- **Prevent head injuries** – Wear helmets and prevent falls at home.
- **Protect your hearing** – Use ear protection and get hearing checks.
- **Manage health conditions** – Keep conditions like diabetes and high blood pressure in check.
- **Address depression** – Seek support if you feel down or overwhelmed.
- **Care for your heart** – Eat well, stay active, and reduce stress.
- **Get quality sleep** – Sleep 7–9 hours nightly for brain health.

## 10 WARNING SIGNS OF ALZHEIMER'S

- Memory Loss that disrupts daily life
- Challenges in planning or solving problems
- Difficulty completing familiar tasks
- Confusion with time or place
- Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationship
- New problems with words in speaking or writing
- Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps
- Decreased or poor judgment
- Withdrawal from work or social activities
- Changes in mood or personality

# The Nebraska Panhandle Needs Increased Access to Driver's Ed

## Driver's Ed Rates in the Panhandle

Only 20% of Panhandle teens take Driver's Education courses compared to the state average of 50%. Driver's Education reduces crashes and traffic tickets enhancing individual and community safety.

## What can you do?

- If Driver's Education is available and accessible to your child, encourage they take it!
- Advocate for all Panhandle residents to buckle up, slow down, and be aware of your surroundings – it can save a life!
- Complete a parent survey accessible here: <https://tinyurl.com/4ub4yazt>



## Why is this a concern to you?

Scotts Bluff & Box Butte counties rank top 10 in Nebraska for crashes due to improper driving, speed, and distraction.

**Table 1.** Top Ten Nebraska Counties of Teen Driver and Passenger-Involved Crash Rates by Vehicle Miles Traveled, 2016-2020

Overall Crash				Improper Driving Related Crash				Speeding Related Crash				Distraction Related Crash			
County	Miles	Freq	Rate	County	Miles	Freq	Rate	County	Miles	Freq	Rate	County	Miles	Freq	Rate
Scotts Bluff	1,503.2	846	56.3	Box Butte	493.7	84	17.0	Box Butte	493.7	30	6.1	Platte	1,682.6	157	9.3
Adams	1,231.5	677	55.0	Scotts Bluff	1,503.2	225	15.0	Adams	1,231.5	56	4.5	Scotts Bluff	1,503.2	137	9.1
Platte	1,682.6	880	52.3	Platte	1,682.6	243	14.4	Madison	1,530.5	68	4.4	Box Butte	493.7	44	8.9
Madison	1,530.5	763	49.9	Saline	599.5	85	14.2	Scotts Bluff	1,503.2	66	4.4	Saline	599.5	49	8.2
Lancaster	12,612.4	6,196	49.1	Adams	1,231.5	168	13.6	Platte	1,682.6	68	4.0	Adams	1,231.5	98	8.0
Saline	599.5	287	47.9	Madison	1,530.5	178	11.6	Colfax	644.7	24	3.7	Dodge	1,834.2	138	7.5
Douglas	22,621.1	10,786	47.7	Dodge	1,834.2	213	11.6	Dawes	483.8	17	3.5	Phelps	568.9	42	7.4
Sarpy	6,922.9	3,137	45.3	Hall	3,449.5	388	11.2	Saline	599.5	21	3.5	Red Willow	557.5	41	7.4
Hall	3,449.5	1,562	45.3	Brown	213.9	24	11.2	Saunders	1,258.1	42	3.3	Lincoln	3,220.6	234	7.3
Box Butte	493.7	209	42.3	Phelps	568.9	61	10.7	Dodge	1,834.2	60	3.3	Hall	3,449.5	237	6.9
Statewide	101,475.3	35,859	35.3	Statewide	101,475.3	6,904	7.5	Statewide	101,475.3	1,917	1.9	Statewide	101,475.3	4,071	4.0

Data source: Nebraska Department of Transportation County Level Vehicle Miles Travel, 2016-2020.



# Building Resilient Communities

Public health preparedness ensures our communities are ready to prevent, respond to, and recover from emergencies. By fostering collaboration, planning, and resource sharing, we protect health and save lives.

Health Care Coalitions play a vital role, uniting healthcare providers, public health agencies, and emergency management to ensure a coordinated and effective response to any crisis.

**Together, we are building stronger, safer communities.**

Through planning, exercises, and partnerships, PPHD strengthens six key areas of preparedness to enhance state and local public health systems' readiness for health emergencies.

- ✓ **Community Resilience**  
Preparing for and recovering from emergencies
- ✓ **Surge Management**  
Expanding medical services to handle large events
- ✓ **Biosurveillance**  
Investigating and identifying health threats

- ✓ **Information Management**  
Making sure people have information to take action
- ✓ **Countermeasures and Mitigation**  
Getting medicines and supplies where they are needed
- ✓ **Incident Management**  
Coordinating an effective response



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Deputy Director of Health Promotions and Preparedness  
tprochazka@pphd.ne.gov

Marissa Peterson  
Program Support Specialist  
mpeterson@pphd.ne.gov



# EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS



We need VOLUNTEERS to fill non-medical and medical roles.

**The Medical Reserve Corps (MRC)** is a volunteer network of medical and non-medical professionals supporting public health and emergency response.

Join today to help build a healthier, more resilient community!  
<https://tinyurl.com/mr38dch3>.



## Why it Matters:

- Enhances coordination across sectors during emergencies.
- Ensures efficient use of limited resources.
- Protects vulnerable populations during emergencies.
- Ensures timely responses to minimize health and economic impacts.
- Builds resilient communities better equipped to face future challenges.
- Improves outcomes for patients and communities.

# COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATES



**Childcare:** This year, two hospitals opened new childcare centers, providing essential support for working families. Through the Panhandle Partnership workgroup, we continue to collaborate with childcare professionals to advocate for more childcare options across the region, helping meet the needs of our growing community.

**Cultural Awareness and Support:** Our local hospitals are making care more accessible for everyone in the community. This year, four new Spanish medical interpreters began training to help patients communicate better with their healthcare providers. Hospitals also worked together to improve how they connect people with helpful resources. They expanded the number of languages available for important documents, making it easier for more families to get the support they need.

**Access to Mental Health Services:** Hospitals and health partners across the Panhandle are working together to improve access to mental health care. A key focus has been crisis stabilization, ensuring people in urgent need have the right support at the right time. This priority has been shared with state leaders to advocate for the resources our community deserves.

**Affordable Housing:** The Panhandle Coalition for Housing & Homelessness stepped up during a critical time this summer, providing weekly support and connecting unhoused neighbors in Scottsbluff with essential services. Together, we're working to address housing challenges and support those in need.

## NEW! COMMUNITY HEALTH DASHBOARD

Check It Out Here!



Megan Barhafer  
Community Health Planner  
Quality Improvement and  
Performance Management  
Coordinator  
mbarhafer@pphd.ne.gov

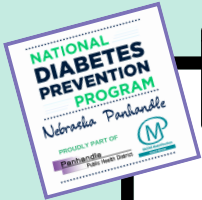


# Get Healthy. Stay Healthy.

## Programs to Support Your Healthy Lifestyle.



PPHD offers programs that provide support and proven tips to get and stay healthy. Whether you want to lose some weight, improve your blood sugar, cholesterol, blood pressure, or figure out how to implement a healthier lifestyle, we have the no-cost program to support you in your journey.



### Healthy for Life!

**Tuesdays at Noon**  
**What You'll Get:**

- A personal session to set your unique goals
  - 16 Weekly Zoom Sessions
  - Monthly Zoom support for the first year
- Learn skills and strategies to:
- look and feel great now
  - get healthier your way
  - reach your goals
  - reduce your risk for diabetes & other illness

[Register here >](#)



### Living Well

**What You'll Get:**

- Support from others like you
- Strategies to deal with pain, fatigue, & frustration
- Discover how healthy eating can improve your condition
- Create an activity program that works for you
- Understand treatment choices
- Explore how to talk with your doctor and your family about your needs.
- Chronic Conditions, Chronic Pain, Diabetes, and High Blood Pressure workshops



**NEW**

### Living Well with High Blood Pressure!

**Thursdays at Noon**

Join our FREE, proven workshop designed to help individuals with hypertension manage blood pressure through lifestyle changes with the help of your coach and others in the group.

[Register here >](#)



### Colon Cancer Screening

Major problems from colon Cancer can be prevented with early and often screening. Age 45 - 74? Get your free at-home test kit today!



### Contact

Cheri Farris, MPH, CHES  
Community Health Educator  
cfarris@pphd.ne.gov





# YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

Participants from left to right: Adeline Fredrickson, Hay Springs; Kate Pieper, Mitchell; Ellison Paetow, Mitchell; Miranda Betson, Crawford; Katelyn Walker, Morrill; Maddison Brown, Scottsbluff; Carson Wilkins, Mitchell; Kail Miles, Hemingford; Madison Engel, Scottsbluff; Marlee Keracik, Gordon/Rushville; Makenzie Todd, Gering; Bristol Prado, Chadron; Jazlyn Ferguson, Hemingford; Natalie Peterson, Gering.

## At PPHD we believe in the power of youth voice and seek to amplify and include it in all that we do.

The youth advisory council (YAC) was created as a way for youth to provide their input and opinions on important health topics in their community and surrounding areas. The YAC consists of 14 high school age students from Chadron, Crawford, Gering, Gordon-Rushville, Hay Springs, Hemingford, Mitchell, Morrill and Scottsbluff. They meet virtually to discuss their thoughts and opinions on programs offered by the health district and other organizations in their community.

In addition to monthly virtual meetings, PPHD hosts an annual in-person leadership retreat. The leadership retreat seeks to help youth learn important skills in working with individuals they may have never met before.

Time was spent learning and understanding human behavior, motivators and ultimately improving communication through the Real Colors Assessment.

If you are interested in learning more about the Youth Advisory Council or have topics you would like to bring before the council, please email Kelsy Sasse at [ksasse@pphd.ne.gov](mailto:ksasse@pphd.ne.gov).



If you or someone you know is interested in participating in the YAC, scan the QR code or email Kelsy Sasse to apply. Members receive compensation for their time during all meetings as well as any necessary travel.

# Advancing Health for All

## HIGHLIGHTS

The 5 priority areas identified during the 2021 Minority Health Assessment were Equitable Access to Mental Health Services, Increase Cultural Competency, Ensure Continued Data Collection and Sharing, Equitable Access to Health Services, Availability of Translation and Interpretation Services.

In 2024, we continued to expand upon these 5 priority areas. Four additional Panhandle residents began coursework to become trained in Medical Interpretation. Through supporting the Welcoming Communities Conference, hosted by our partners Empowering Families, Panhandle Partnership, and UNL Panhandle Research Extension and Education Center, we continue working together to create communities where all residents belong and have the potential to thrive.

In addition to these examples and many others, PPHD has partnered with Nebraska Minority Resource Center to facilitate data collection and planning to increase the health and wellbeing of Native Americans in the Panhandle of Nebraska.

## BECOMING INCLUSIVE

Cohorts from Panhandle Public Health District, Chadron Community Hospital, and Western Nebraska Community College participated in a 12-month guided journey to becoming inclusive with Dr. Helen Fagan.

PPHD is proud of the individuals who dedicated themselves and their organizations to this intensive process. Together, we have further developed the skill, knowledge, ability and competence to continue working together to make significant strides in addressing systemic issues in the Panhandle of Nebraska.

You can learn more about PPHD's coaching experience by listening to our podcast episode, found on [helenfagan.com/podcasts](https://helenfagan.com/podcasts). If your organization is interested in future cohorts, please reach out to Kelsy Sasse.



Kelsy Sasse, MHA  
Community Health Planner  
308-487-3600 Ext. 2  
[ksasse@pphd.ne.gov](mailto:ksasse@pphd.ne.gov)

## INTERESTED IN HELPING ELIMINATE HEALTH DISPARITIES?

PPHD is actively recruiting participants to serve on the Minority Health Advisory Committee. This committee serves PPHD in guiding initiatives and work plan objectives aimed to decrease health disparities across the Panhandle. If you are interested in participating or have additional questions. Scan the QR code or email Kelsy Sasse at [ksasse@pphd.ne.gov](mailto:ksasse@pphd.ne.gov)

# Our greatest asset is our staff!

Our 2024 staff survey says...

## The most important reasons that I continue to work for PPHD

- Meaningful work/feeling like I'm making a difference
- Flexibility
- People I work with
- Benefits
- Work environment

## Employee Satisfaction at a Glance

- 100% agree that PPHD is a good place to work
- 97% are satisfied working for PPHD

“ The people I work with are second to none! The leadership & vision of PPHD is strong. The mission of PPHD is serving the people of our community & the Panhandle, and that's what makes PPHD great! ”

Our staff continue to choose PPHD because they feel valued, supported, and empowered to make a difference every day.

At PPHD, our employees are the heart of everything we do. We're proud of the exceptional team that serves the Panhandle community, and our employees consistently tell us why they love being part of our organization.



Erin Sorensen  
Human Resource  
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Angie Shaw  
Office Manager  
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Linda Mundell  
Administrative Assistant  
lmundell@pphd.ne.gov

## Quality Improvement

### in Mental Health Stigma Reduction

Quality improvement is our effort to ensure we are providing the best services possible. We do this by studying how well we are doing! Here is an example of a project we worked on.

- **Step 1:** Drink Coasters – Distributed in small towns under 1,000 people. **Result:** Moderate outreach, with some interaction.
- **Step 2:** Flyers with Hospital Partners – Shared to reach a broader audience. **Result:** Better outreach, with higher interaction levels, though further engagement is needed with additional partners!
- **Current Step:** Collaborating with hospital partners to find new ways to share Credible Minds materials aiming to expand reach and maximize community engagement.



# Financial Statement



Sara Williamson  
Deputy Director of  
Finance & Accreditation  
swilliamson@pphd.ne.gov

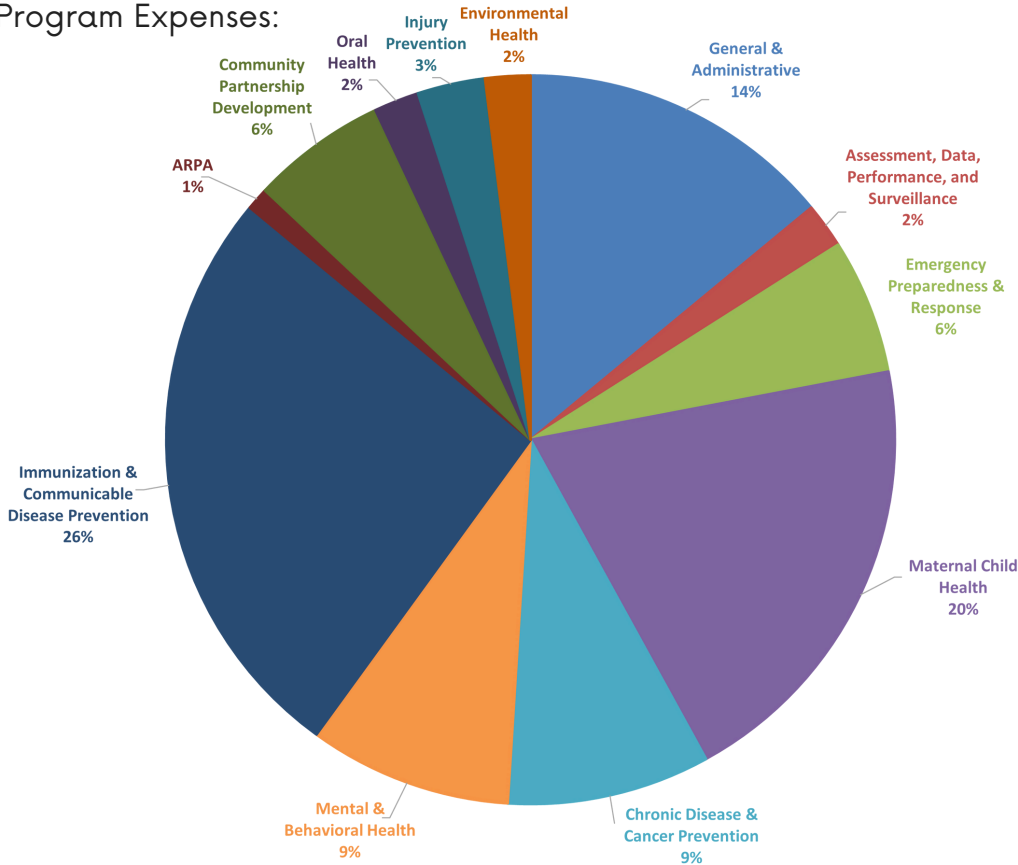


Amanda McClaren  
Finance Coordinator  
amclaren@pphd.ne.gov

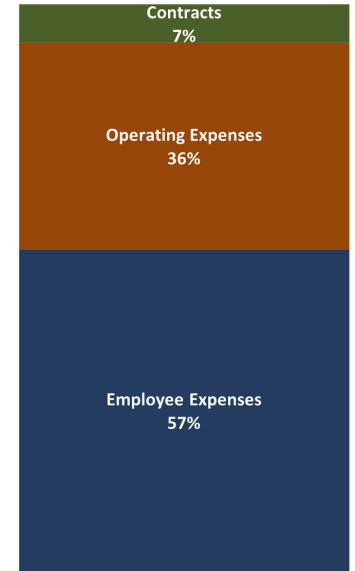
Total Operating Revenue \$ 4,734,961  
Total Operating Expenses \$ 4,450,714

## Where does the money go?

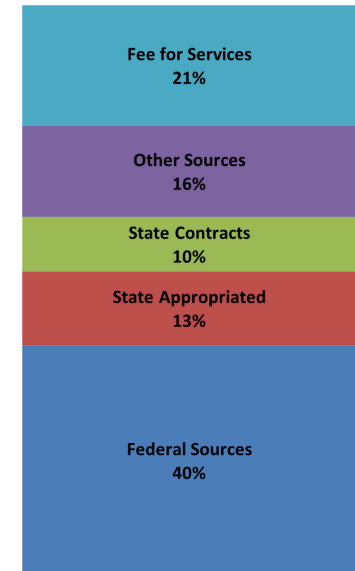
Program Expenses:



## Expenses by Type:



## Revenues by Source:



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