



Chaffee County Public Health

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Chaffee County Public Health Finalizes 2021 Community Health Assessment and 2022-2026 Community Health Improvement Plan

Chaffee County, Colorado- Chaffee County Public Health (CCPH) is excited to announce that it has finalized its 2021 Community Health Assessment (CHA) and 2022-2026 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). At a minimum, local public health agencies like CCPH are required to conduct a health assessment every five years that drives a health improvement plan for the next five years per statute. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, CCPH managed to pull this effort off in 2021, utilizing the Colorado School of Public Health's Community Health Assessment course students. Through key informant interviews, a community-wide survey, and stakeholder forums, the health assessment identified affordable and available housing, mental health including youth mental health, suicide, work stress, and isolation, access to healthcare defined as provider availability, quality, cost, and transportation, environmental health concerning air quality, water quality and availability, wildfire, climate change, and sustainability, and cost of living defined as strain on middle class and effects of population growth as Chaffee County residents' top health concerns. After an internal prioritization process, the three areas of focus chosen to be included in the CHIP are access to healthcare, behavioral health, and environmental health stewardship.

Efforts are already underway to address the top areas of focus. CCPH intends on piloting a free mobile health clinic, Chaffee Community Clinic, that will provide education, prevention services, outreach, referrals, and some clinical services to address the healthcare access issues that many people in our county report experiencing. CCPH also plans on providing harm reduction services in a wide variety of settings while hiring a behavioral health navigator to connect people to mental health and addiction supports. The environmental health division of CCPH will be exploring creative solutions to some of the area's greatest threats to consumer protection and natural resources.

While the assessment points out significant health disparities and needs in the county, it also highlights our local strengths and assets. Top strengths indicated are: collaboration, including public/private partnerships, advocacy, local government, and administrative support; natural resources defined as trails, mountains, and parks and recreation departments; active lifestyles including exercise, health consciousness, and healthy food awareness; community identity defined as "small town" feel, cultural events, and social networks; and public health which includes CCPH, its COVID-19 pandemic response, and the many prevention programs it oversees. Chaffee County residents rated their personal, emotional wellbeing as 7.8 on a scale of 1 to 10, and overall community health as 7.2 on the same scale.

"It is pretty incredible that CCPH and its partners accomplished everything they set out to do in the previous five- year plan which focused on oral health, aging well, and behavioral health, and I have no doubt that we

will be able to make considerable strides once again on behalf of the health and wellness of Chaffee County. We should all be proud of the coordinated and collaborative spirit that continues to be embedded in our work as we strive to make Chaffee County the healthiest place to live in Colorado,” said Andrea Carlstrom, CCPH Director.

The link to the document can be found here: bit.ly/ChaffeeCHIP2022. It has also been posted on the Chaffee County website under the Public Health section. Please be aware that the document is rather large at 129 pages. Hard copies of the document can be requested by e-mailing acarlstrom@chaffeecounty.org or calling 719-530-2564 although supplies are limited. In the future, CCPH will strive to get the document translated in Spanish.

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