

2025 ANNUAL REPORT



Health Department

402.336.2406 | ncdhd.ne.gov



 NCDHD

 ncdhealth



newsletter

FROM THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Heidi Kuklis, MPH



We have made meaningful progress in addressing our community's top health needs: heart disease, access to care, and mental health. Heart disease was addressed through physical activity classes, food prep classes, blood pressure checks, access to community blood pressure stations, disease screenings, CPR training, community education events, and 1:1 health coaching. We expanded access to health services by offering 100+ mobile immunization and 68 school-based dental clinics across our district, reaching individuals regardless of income or mobility. Our mental health efforts included expanding the number of trainers for suicide prevention training, hosting our first suicide awareness and prevention walk, supporting social-emotional learning applications for schools, and promoting the Credible Mind online mental wellness tool.

We are also proud to highlight several new initiatives. Part of our office was remodeled to accommodate a **clinical space and 6 private offices**. The new space allows us to deliver immunizations, screenings, and other health services in a more private setting. In partnership with local hospitals, we expanded access to preventive lung cancer screenings, helping residents at risk for radon exposure and smoking-related illness. We began offering **CPR training** to better equip our community members with lifesaving skills. We started **visiting daycares to provide dental health education**, encouraging healthy habits to start early. Catch My Breath **vaping curriculum** was offered to area schools, educating 170 youth.

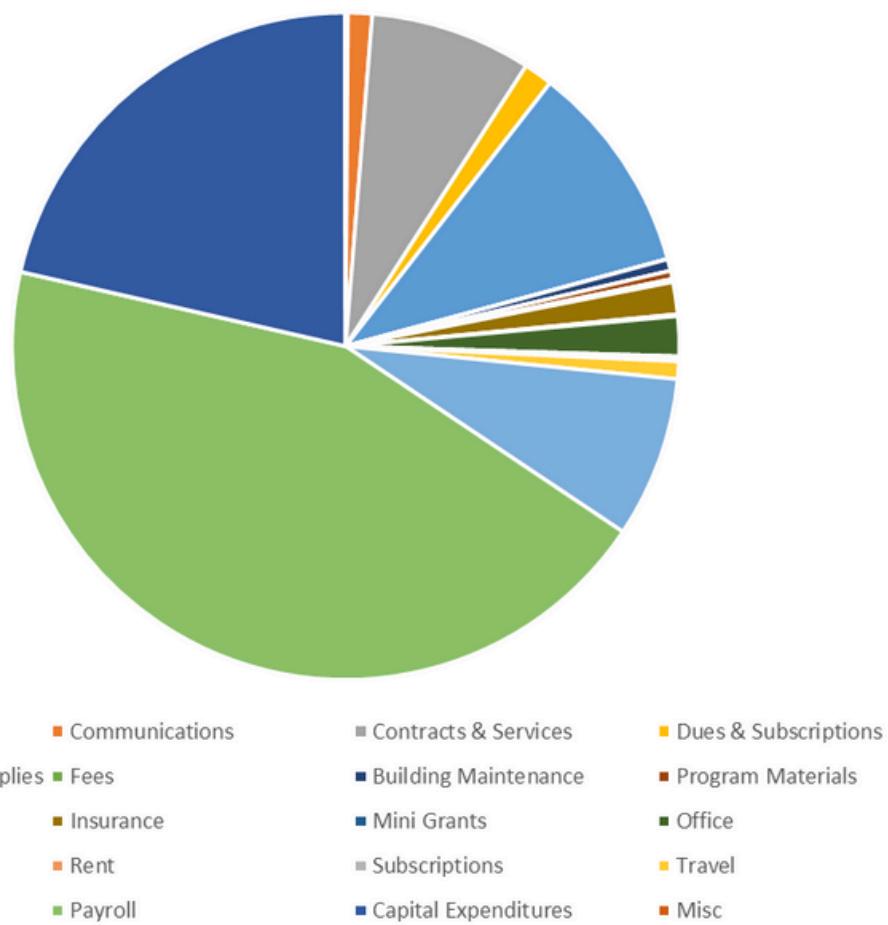
This year, we also completed a new Community Health Needs Assessment (CHA) in partnership with local hospitals and stakeholders that will guide our 2025–2027 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). Focus will be on:

- Supporting lifestyle changes to improve physical activity, sleep, and nutrition
- Enhancing socioeconomic stability through housing and food security efforts
- Improving access to transportation, health care, and childcare.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

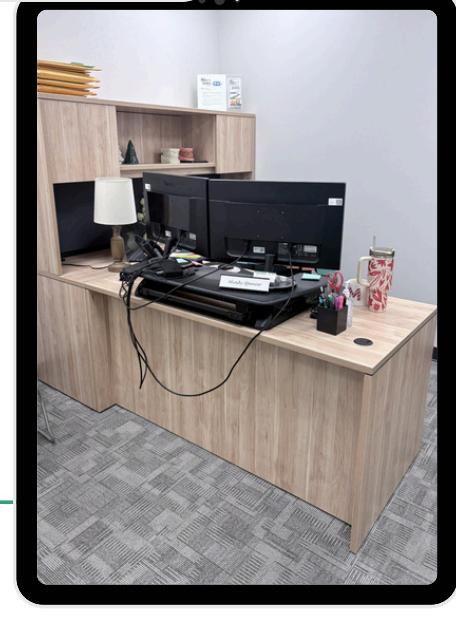
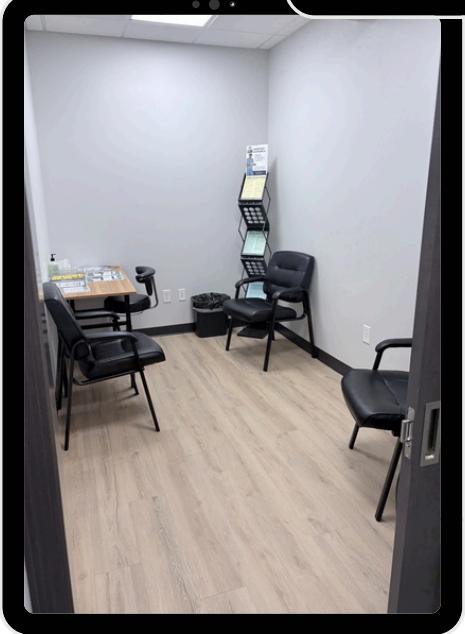
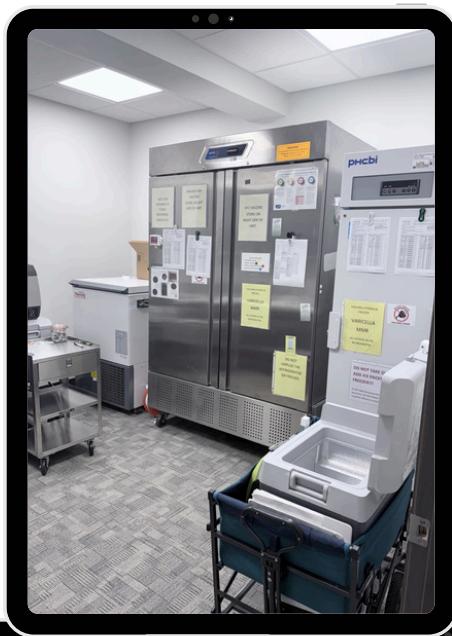
July 24-June 25

NCDHD's fiscal year for this report runs from July 2024- June 2025. Cash basis of accounting is utilized. The department spent \$2,121,813 during this period. The organization has strong financial health during this period with a net position change of \$618,502. The remodel of the main floor is represented below as capital expenditures.



OFFICE REMODEL

NCDHD was able to leverage federal American Rescue Plan Act funds to help support remodeling of our main floor. This project improved our access to the community by adding 2 private clinical rooms and a clinical preparations space near our front entrance. Previously, the office was without private clinical space. In addition, 6 private offices, and a meeting room were added to the main floor space.



STRATEGIC PLAN

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

NCDHD staff started the year by creating performance management goals. Within the goals, all staff included at least one a tech goal. Staff were instructed to share their tech trainings with the office. A workforce development committee was formed and started progress on an onboarding checklist. COOP days were set for 12/4 and 12/11.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: MARKETING AND OUTREACH

Seven (7) REACH Media TV were purchased and placed throughout the district; these TV's continue to be used to communicate with the district. NCDHD has continued to increase its presence at food pantries, county events, etc.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: CULTURE OF EXCELLENCE

Each staff member joined at least one of the following workgroups: Ethics Committee, Safety Committee, Wellness Committee, Workforce Development Committee, and the Team Building Committee. NCDHD adopted a volunteerism policy for staff to have 16 paid hours to volunteer in their community.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4: COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT & COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The 2025-2027 CHA and CHIP were completed. The 2025-2027 CHA and CHIP and 2022-2024 CHIP reports can be found at <https://ncdhd.ne.gov/reports>.

ACCREDITATION

The Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) conferred accreditation on NCDHD in March 2022. This was a great accomplishment for the office and for the district. In order to maintain accreditation status, health departments are required to submit annual reports outlining their continued effort to maintain industry standards. NCDHD submitted its Annual Report in March 2025 and was approved by PHAB. NCDHD strives to maintain accreditation status to ensure public health services are delivered at the highest standard in North Central Nebraska.

COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT/ COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN

In Spring of 2025, NCDHD and local partners completed the Community Health Assessment (CHA). This was the first time the CHA was completed on an online dashboard and can be found at www.ncdhd.ne.gov/cha.

Community Health Improvement Plan 2025-2027 (CHIP)

Implementation Summary

NCDHD is implementing priorities identified in the 2025-2027 Community Health Assessment through the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). These efforts address key health and wellbeing needs across the district and are advanced through coordinated department initiatives and strong community coalition engagement.

CHIP Priority Areas

Priority 1: Lifestyle Changes

Advocate for lifestyle changes to improve physical activity, sleep quality, and nutrition.



Priority 2: Socioeconomic Stability

Enhance socioeconomic stability through housing and food security efforts.



Priority 3: Access to Care

Improve access to transportation, health services, and childcare.

Coalition Engagement

Local coalitions play a critical role in CHIP implementation. Each coalition selected one or more CHIP priorities aligned with local needs and integrated them into workplans and community initiatives.

Coalition Focus Areas:

- **Knox County Cares (KCC):** Nutrition-focused education through development of easy-to-prepare recipe resources for busy families.
- **Healthy Choices for Cherry County (HC4CC):** Nutrition, diabetes prevention, and sleep health programming, including group and individual diabetes education and Sleepless in Nebraska training.
- **Healthy Choices for Pierce County (HC4PC):** Development of local resource flyers addressing social determinants of health.
- **Holt/Boyd Community Connections Collaborative (Holt/Boyd CCC):** Updates and distribution of social determinants of health resource guides.
- **Antelope County Does Care (ACDC):** Physical activity promotion through park signage encouraging movement.

District-Wide Progress Highlights

Priority 1 – Lifestyle Changes

- Bingocize® classes
- Cooking, meal-prepping, and freezer-meal classes
- Diabetes prevention webpage and online prediabetes risk assessment
- Online physical activity guide

Priority 2 – Socioeconomic Stability

- Updated social determinants of health resource flyers and online guides
- Support for 11 emergency food pantries across the district

Priority 3 – Access to Care

- Mobile vaccine clinics
- 9 community blood pressure monitoring stations

Through coordinated planning, coalition-driven action, and district-wide initiatives, NCDHD is making measurable progress on CHIP priorities. These efforts strengthen community partnerships, reduce barriers to care, and support healthier lifestyles across the North Central District.

Social Determinants of Health



Social Determinants of Health
Copyright-free

Healthy People 2030

HEALTH EQUITY

Community Engagement & Health Equity

NCDHD engaged Hispanic and Native American communities to identify access-to-care challenges and inform culturally appropriate solutions. Efforts emphasized trust-building, collaboration, and sustainable partnerships that reflect community priorities and cultural strengths.

Successes

- Built stronger relationships with Hispanic and Native American community leaders
- Advanced culturally grounded approaches to prevention and care

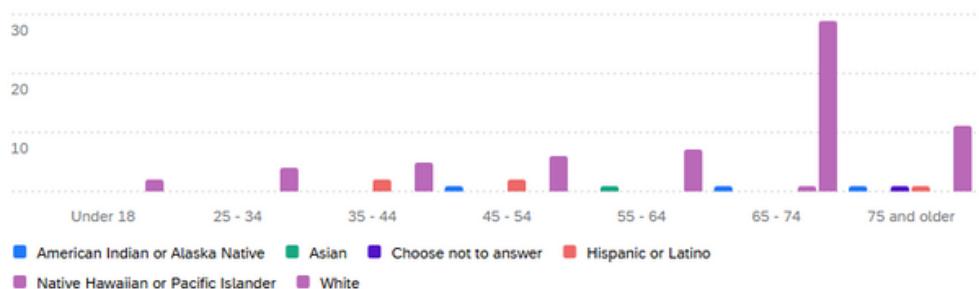
Data Integration & Care Coordination

Progress continued toward integrating the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) screening tool into the Patagonia electronic medical record system, supporting standardized data collection and improved coordination across providers.

Successes

- Formal approval of SDOH-EMR integration (May 8, 2025)
- Expanded use of SDOH screening in outreach and clinic settings

Age Groups ▾



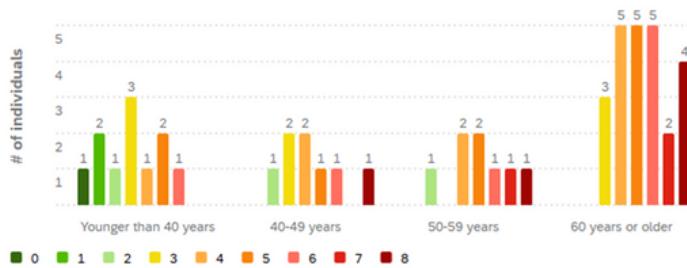
Chronic Disease & Diabetes Prevention

Diabetes prevention efforts expanded through a centralized online resource hub and promotion of a bilingual Prediabetes Risk Test, supported by partnerships with local coalitions to improve education, outreach, and access to prevention resources.

Successes

- Launched a centralized Diabetes Prevention webpage
- Increased community engagement with bilingual screening tools

Age group and total score 51

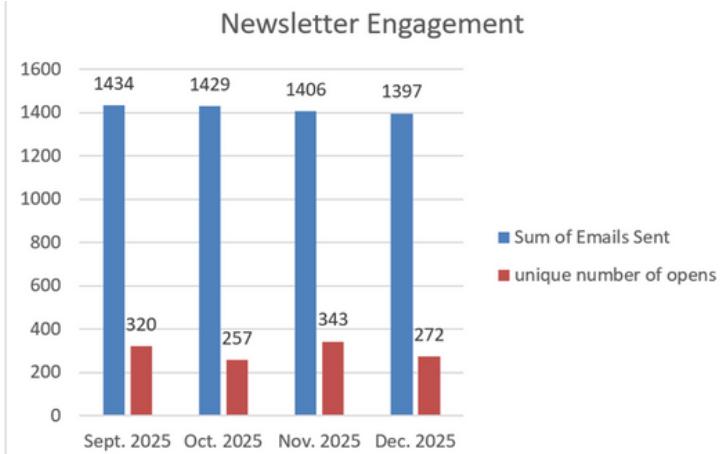


Communication, Outreach & Transparency

Public outreach was strengthened through enhanced website content, a redesigned newsletter, social media engagement, digital media displays, and participation in the statewide Public Health Is For You! campaign. NCDHD also launched a Community Health Assessment Dashboard to increase transparency and access to local health data.

Successes

- Increased engagement with seasonal health content and digital messaging
- Launched a public-facing Community Health Assessment Dashboard



WHY DISEASE SURVEILLANCE MATTERS



Disease surveillance is a core public health function at NCDHD. Through ongoing monitoring of communicable disease, such as foodborne illnesses, influenza and zoonotic conditions, NCDHD works to identify health threats early and respond quickly to protect our communities.

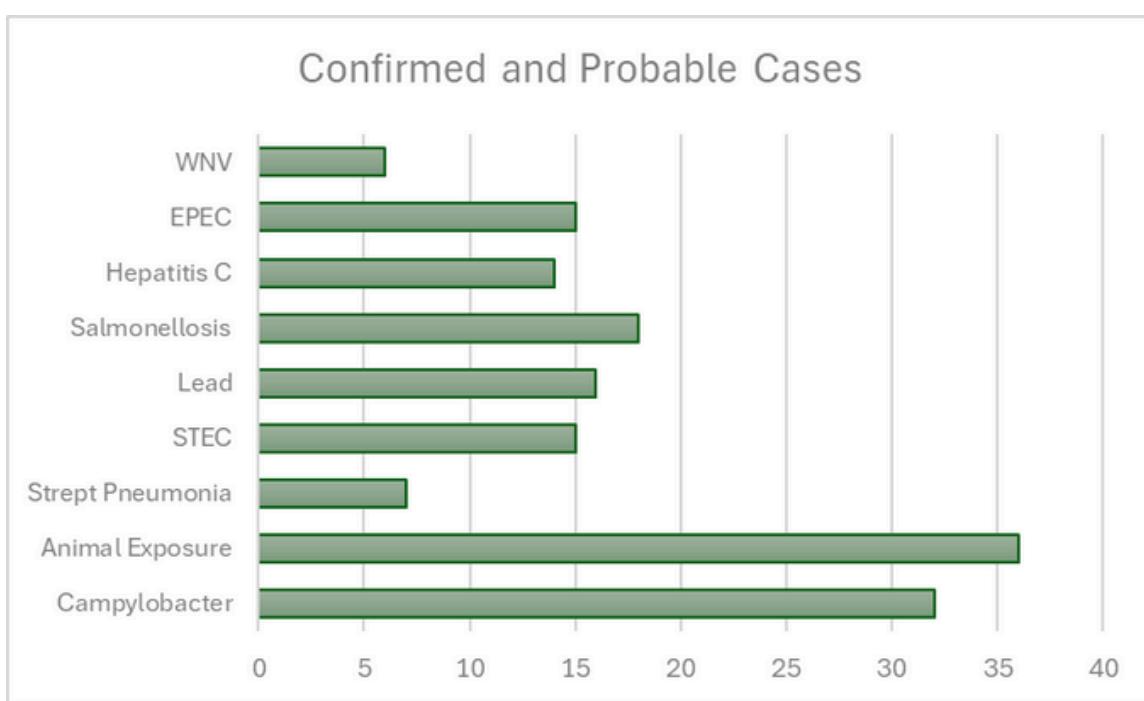
In recent years, increases in vaccine-preventable diseases like pertussis and measles have been reported both nationally and in Nebraska. These trends reinforce the importance of strong surveillance systems, routine immunizations, communication with partners, and rapid public health response to limit spread of illness and prevent outbreaks.



NCDHD's Approach

We continue to use a proactive and collaborative approach to disease surveillance and response. This includes rapid case investigation, timely communication, and close coordination with local healthcare providers, schools, long-term care facilities, laboratories, and DHHS. As disease patterns continue to evolve or return, strong surveillance and rapid response remain more important than ever to safeguard the health of our residents in preventing the spread of disease.

MONITORING COMMUNITY HEALTH



In 2025, NCDHD identified and reported 256 communicable diseases within our district. The accompanying graph illustrates 9 specific communicable diseases throughout the surveillance year, excluding STIs.





Water Quality Education & Testing

NCDHD partnered with schools to provide classroom lessons on nitrate health risks and to test home water samples collected by students. Minor scheduling and supply delays were managed through flexible planning and communication with school staff.

Numbers Served:

20 of 34 schools

364 students

7 more school events scheduled (≈161 additional students)

Sustainability: Strong school partnerships, improved supply management, and continued outreach support long-term success.

Miles of Smiles Dental Program

The program delivered preventive dental services—including screenings, fluoride varnish, and education—to students across the district. Services aligned with program goals and were well-received by schools and families.

Numbers Served:

34 schools 2,016 students

Sustainability: Ongoing school relationships, consistent family engagement, and routine yearly scheduling make this program stable and repeatable.

CPR Training Program

CPR classes were offered to all high schools for \$10 per student. Some schools have their nurses teach CPR internally.

Numbers Served:

CornerStone: 17 students, 2 staff across two classes

Ainsworth: 2 classes scheduled for May 2026

Cody/Kilgore: 2 classes scheduled for April 2026 (30 estimated students)

Sustainability: Continued outreach, repeat training cycles with participating schools, and efforts to add new schools help maintain program growth. Have focused on asking schools to help identify students that would benefit from the training.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

This year, NCDHD strengthened public health preparedness, training, and regional coordination across the district. Emergency Response Coordinator, Danielle taught CPR to 109 people including school staff, law enforcement, healthcare staff, students, and community members. Quarterly CPR classes in O'Neill are now established and discounted \$10, student CPR courses are being offered to high schools across the district. Seventeen students have participated so far with four additional classes scheduled and other schools beginning to show interest. Danielle also continued working the Northeast Community College to provide FEMA's Cyber Ready Game to partners across the district, supporting cyber preparedness and awareness.

Emergency Response Plans, POD plans, and MOUs were updated with healthcare facilities, convalescent facilities, schools, and hospitals. Site visits were completed to all hospitals, clinics, long-term care, and assisted living facilities, in coordination with RROMRS, to support planning and share preparedness materials. Vaccination clinics were also used to exercise POD operations in several long-term care facilities.

Following the 2024 explosion, NCDHD continued supporting Avera St. Anthony's by attending the 2025 Regional Disaster Planning Meeting and collaborating on a future functional exercise to strengthen hospital and community preparedness and coordination.

Danielle participated in PET, LEPC, and NACCHO PPOM meetings and supported joint emergency exercises with Antelope and Pierce Counties to strengthen regional coordination. Danielle attended the annual RROMRS MRSE symposia and exercise and was approved to serve as RROMRS Co-Chair through 2027. She also presented at the 2025 DHHS Fall Preparedness Seminar, sharing lessons learned from the 2024 explosion. Danielle regularly shares updates on NCDHD programs, events, and services at all meetings to increase awareness and ensure partners understand available support.

Partnered with NCDHD's Environmental Health Coordinator to attend multiple county fairs spanning six counties, providing emergency preparedness and environmental health materials. They engaged with 4-H youth, families, and community members and strengthened connections with Extension staff. Due to strong turnout and positive feedback, plans are already in place to return next year.

Danielle represented NCDHD at the Ranch Expo and the O'Neill Healthcare Conference and recorded a live radio spot from the Expo to promote NCDHD's booth and services, helping increase visibility and participation.

Lead



In 2025, Amy continued to assist with lead investigations through the NEDSS system. Responsibilities include educating families of children with elevated blood lead levels (BLLs), providing informational resources, and coordinating follow-up. When indicated, Amy initiates investigations in collaboration with the state lead investigator to ensure timely assessment and mitigation of potential lead exposure in homes. These efforts support early detection, family education, and community safety, contributing to NCDHD's ongoing mission to prevent lead poisoning in children across the district.



Educational flyers have been distributed to the OB departments at Cherry County Hospital and Avera St. Anthony's Hospital. These flyers cover key topics including why lead exposure matters, common sources of lead, safe cleaning practices, and actions to avoid during pregnancy. Flyers are provided to expecting parents during their prenatal evaluations to raise awareness and support preventive measures for maternal and child health.

What You Can Do to Keep Your Family Safe

☐ **Clean Lead Dust the Right Way:**

- Wet mop floors and windowsills weekly
- Use a damp mop — never dry sweep!
- Wash your baby's hands, toys, and pacifiers often
- Use a HEPA vacuum if available

☐ **Avoid These During Pregnancy:**

- Do not sand or scrape old paint
- Avoid being in the home during renovations
- Stay out of areas with peeling paint or visible dust

☐ **Eat Foods That Help Block Lead:**

- Iron-rich beans, meat, leafy greens
- Calcium-rich milk, yogurt, cheese
- Vitamin C: oranges, tomatoes, bell peppers

For more information on next steps or concerns contact the following:

North Central District Health Department
Website: www.ncdhd.org/programs/lead/
Contact: (402) 471-2910
Email: 470-471-2910

Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHSS) – Lead in the Environment Program
Website: dhss.ne.gov/lead/
Contact: Phone: (402) 471-2917
Toll-Free: 1-888-242-1100

SCAN ME

You Can Make a Difference
Protecting your baby starts with a clean, safe home.
Ask your care team today about lead prevention resources!

**ACTIONS TO REDUCE
CHILD LEAD EXPOSURE**

PROTECT YOUR BABY FROM LEAD POISONING

A Guide for Expecting and New Parents

Why It Matters
Lead is a dangerous metal that can harm a baby's growing brain and body — even before birth.

*There is no safe level of lead in the body and the only way to know is to get a blood lead test. Talk with your clinician about getting a test and when.

Common Sources of Lead in the Home

- Homes built before 1970 (old paint chips & dust)
- Renovation work without lead-safe methods
- Drinking water from lead pipes or plumbing
- Imported pottery, cosmetics, toys, or spices
- Jobs/hobbies using paint, bullets, construction materials

NCDDHD
Health Department
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

470-471-2910

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Radon

NCDHD continues to offer short-term radon test kits at a reduced price. Kits may be purchased online, in office or by calling the office. Kits are offered at \$10.00/plus tax and shipping if applicable.

In 2025, NCDHD continued to promote radon awareness and testing throughout the district. Radon test kits were available for purchase in-office, online, and through community outreach events such as farm and home shows, supporting lung cancer prevention and public education efforts.

Lung Cancer Screening & HQUIP Collaboration

NCDHD collaborated with the Healthcare Quality Improvement Platform (HQUIP) and Critical Access Hospitals to increase lung cancer screening rates. Monthly meetings focused on improving screening promotion and addressing barriers. Beginning October 2025, NCDHD transitioned to quarterly virtual meetings while continuing to receive monthly screening data reports from participating hospitals.

Recognition & Partnerships

In 2025, NCDHD was recognized by the Nebraska Hospital Association for outstanding work in promoting lung cancer awareness and rural screening outreach. A collaborative video highlighting community partnerships and the importance of lung cancer screening was featured at a statewide healthcare event on November 13, 2025. This recognition reflects the strength of NCDHD's partnerships and commitment to early detection and prevention in rural communities.

The Nebraska Environmental Public Health Tracking Program in partnership with the NDHHS Radon Program is excited to announce the new **Nebraska Radon Dashboard** where you can view radon testing levels in your county and learn more about how you can reduce your risk.



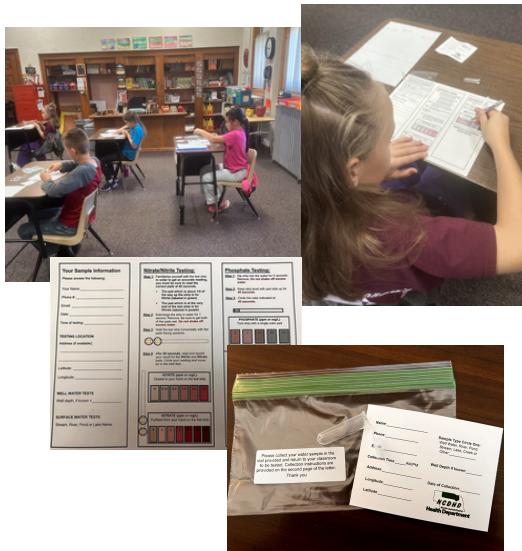
View the Dashboard:
<https://rb.gy/dicoq1>



Learn More About Radon:
dhhs.ne.gov/pages/radon

NCDHD has pushed out the new dashboard on social media and reach media for communities to track the levels of Radon in their county.

The Source Water Protection (SWP) grant has been awarded to NCDHD at a slightly reduced amount. This funding supports a pilot project expanding the Citizen Science water testing program in third-grade classrooms, providing hands-on learning about local water quality and environmental health.



ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

The Water Quality Citizen Science Project for the 2025–2026 school year has launched, with 28 schools scheduled and 15 schools completed, representing 304 student participants. Students are learning to test local water sources, ask questions, and explore the health effects of elevated nitrate levels in Nebraska.

All water testing results are collected in the SuWell Water Quality Database at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, contributing to statewide data collection and long-term monitoring.

NCDHD also conducts follow-up outreach to families whose well test results exceed 10 ppm nitrates. These families are provided communication from the Health Department recommending confirmation with a state lab test, paid for by NCDHD. If the results confirm levels above 10 ppm, NCDHD offers mitigation assistance, including up to \$800 toward a reverse osmosis system or point-of-use RO filter, or guidance on utilizing tax credits or cost-share programs through local Natural Resources Districts (NRDs).

To complement classroom learning, NCDHD developed and distributed educational flyers to the OB departments at Cherry County Hospital and Avera St. Anthony's Hospital, highlighting the importance of private well testing and nitrate-related health risks. Nursing staff report these flyers have been well received by expecting and new parents.



Keep Your Baby Safe: Nitrates in Drinking Water from Wells Can Be Harmful

What are Nitrates?
Nitrates are chemicals that can get into private drinking water wells from:

- Farm fertilizers
- Animal manure
- Septic systems

How Can Drinking Nitrates be Harmful?

During Pregnancy
High nitrates can increase the risk of:

- Early birth
- Low birth weight
- Pregnancy problems

Breastfeeding is safe—nitrates do not pass into breast milk.

Babies*
High nitrates can increase the risk of "Blue Baby Syndrome" (Methemoglobinemia) which can cause:

- Blue or Purple skin
- Trouble Breathing
- Low oxygen in the blood and even death

*Babies under 6 months are especially vulnerable to nitrates. Drinking formula mixed with nitrate-contaminated well water can cause serious health problems and, in severe cases, may be life-threatening. Do not make formula with water that tests above 40 mg/L of nitrate.

How do I Know if My Well Water has Nitrates?
You cannot see, taste, or smell nitrates in water. The only way to know if your well water is safe to drink is to test it. If your home uses a private well for drinking water, you are responsible for testing it. City water is tested by utility companies, private well water is not.

What Do I Do If Nitrate Levels are High?
If your private well tests at more than 10 mg/L of nitrate, you should:

- Short-Term**
 - Use distilled water for drinking and baby formula
 - Use a filter that removes nitrates, distillation, or reverse osmosis
 - "Water-style" or "bottled" items usually DO NOT remove nitrates
- Long-Term**
 - Install a nitrate treatment system certified for nitrate removal
 - Use a filter that removes alternative water source or deepening the well
 - Keep fertilizers, manure, and septic systems away from wells
 - Have your well inspected and maintained regularly

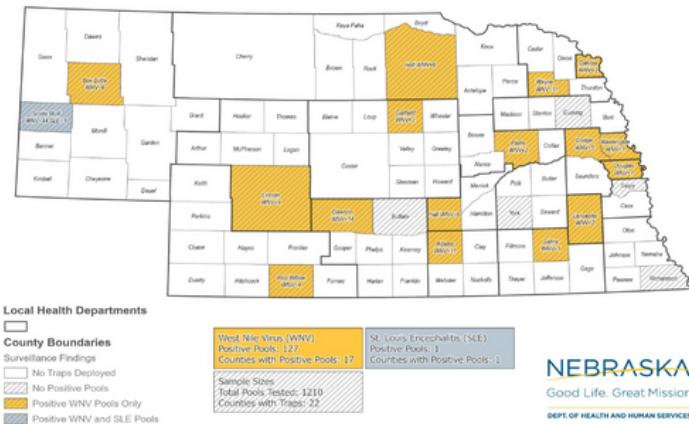
Test Your Well
You can request a nitrate and/or bacteria sample kit for a free water quality analysis at water-test.ncrec.org, or by using the QR code here. You can also call the North Central District Health Department at (402) 336-2406 for questions about testing or nitrate.

VECTOR BORN ILLNESSES



2025 CDC Light Trap Mosquito Surveillance

Updated: October 21, 2025



In 2025, NCDHD continued its mosquito surveillance program across the district to monitor populations and detect mosquito-borne diseases such as West Nile virus.

Trapping Sites & Participation: Multiple sites were monitored in Holt County, including Bridge Site, Carney Park/Softball Fields, and Potato Plant. Traps were set for one night per site with CO₂-CDC traps to collect adult mosquitoes.

Species Monitored: The program tracked multiple species, including *Aedes sollicitans*, *Aedes trivittatus*, and *Aedes vexans*, with counts recorded by male and female mosquitoes.

Results: Across the sites recorded in the data set, several species were captured in notable numbers, such as *Ae. vexans*, which had the highest counts among trapped species. This information contributes to understanding local mosquito population dynamics and potential disease risk.

Data from these traps help NCDHD guide community education, mosquito bite prevention messaging, and vector control strategies.

NCDHD continues to coordinate with state surveillance programs to track mosquito-borne disease activity and provide timely updates to the public during peak mosquito season.

Nebraska Mosquito Surveillance

<https://arcg.is/0TXTz0>



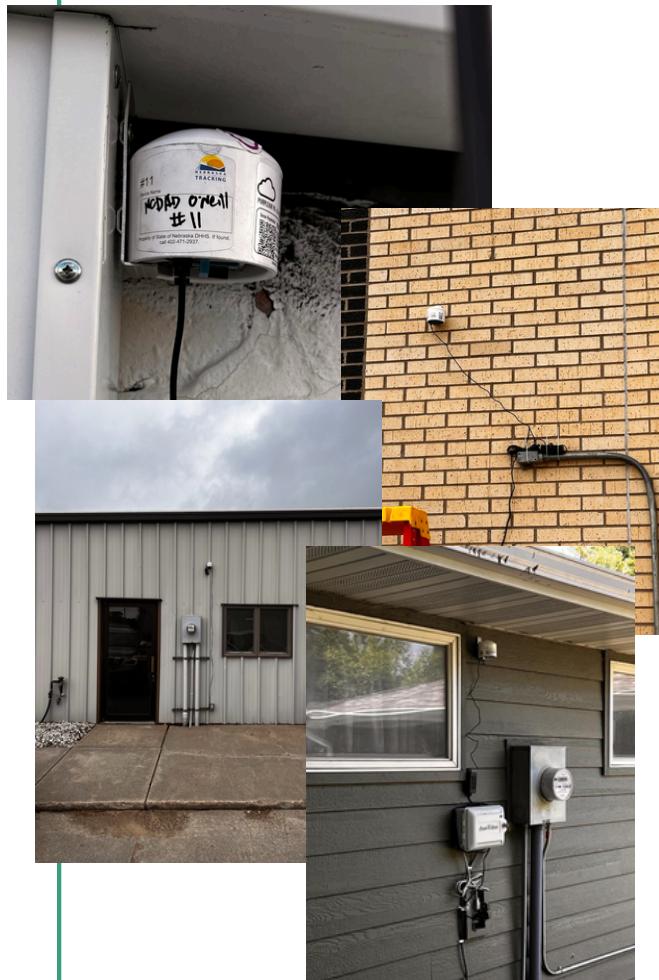
Visit the link below to view current and historical tick surveillance data.

Data is updated yearly at the end of each surveillance season.

<https://dhhs.ne.gov/TickMaps>



Environmental Health



NCDHD has installed six purple air monitors throughout the district in Boyd, Holt, Brown, Pierce, Antelope, and Knox counties, providing more comprehensive air quality coverage.

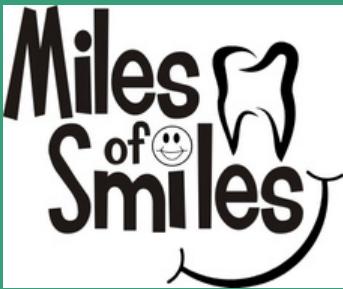
These monitors allow the department to track local air conditions in real time. NCDHD also receives updates and alerts from NOAA and the National Weather Service when air quality concerns are flagged, enabling timely notifications to schools and communities to protect public health and safety. Residents can track NCDHD's monitors in real time using the PurpleAir network and AirNow.gov, providing immediate access to local air quality data.

The AirNow Smoke and Fire Map also offers public guidance on protective actions during air quality events. To further increase accessibility, NCDHD has posted QR codes in community locations such as convenience stores and libraries, allowing residents to quickly access this information.

Air Quality Index - Particulate Matter



301 – 500	Hazardous
201 – 300	Very Unhealthy
151 – 200	Unhealthy
101 – 150	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups
51 – 100	Moderate
0 – 50	Good

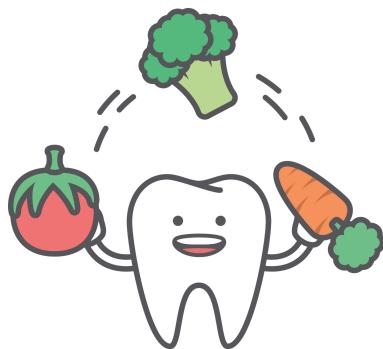


- Miles of Smiles (MOS) is a school based oral screening and fluoride varnish program that is available to preschool, elementary, and middle school age students within the nine-county health district.
- The Program contracts with three Public Health Authorized Registered Dental Hygienists.
- Each participant received a toothbrush and toothpaste along with oral health education.
- We completed 3,711 dental screenings and 2,875 fluoride varnish applications.
- 711 children were referred for suspicious areas. 58 children were referred for urgent dental care.
- We provided dental education at local daycares, serving 259 children. Each child received a free toothbrush, toothpaste, toothbrushing chart, and coloring pages to take home.
- The program provides preventive dental care and education to children who might not otherwise have access to a dentist, helping catch problems early before they become painful or costly. By bringing services directly to schools, the program reduces barriers to care and supports children's overall health, attendance, and ability to learn.

Dental caries remains the most prevalent chronic disease in children nationwide.



Morgan Dvorak, one of our Public Health Registered Hygienists, at clinic





Sr. Midwest Health Director: Tim Nikoli;
2023-'26 HeartCorps Member TyLinn Dodd

PARTNERING WITH HEARTCORPS

Program of AmeriCorps and American Heart Association

About AmeriCorps and HeartCorps

For years, [AmeriCorps](#) has worked to make service to others an indispensable part of the American experience. Through the nation's most trying times, they have come together to help those in need by bringing out the light of human kindness through volunteer work. They provide pathways to quality public health-related careers through onsite experience, training, and more, to gain members who reflect the communities they will serve.

In 2022, [AmeriCorps](#), along with the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) and the [American Heart Association](#), created and launched the [HeartCorps](#) program. The goal is to improve cardiovascular (heart) health in rural communities, especially those that are currently or historically underserved. The members recruited for each community will be able to provide information and aid in finding resources needed for heart health and hypertension (high blood pressure) awareness, while helping to create partnerships and lasting bonds within the community. Members serve 1-2 years but the impact they have will last well beyond that.



Why it's Important:

Nearly [half](#) of all Americans have high blood pressure, and many don't know they have it. Uncontrolled high blood pressure is a silent killer that causes unnecessary and inequitable disease, disability and death, robbing us of precious time with loved ones. It can cause heart attacks, heart failure, stroke and other devastating conditions. We must keep track of our health so that we can experience life without fear of poor health holding us back, especially when it is preventable!

Together We Will:

- Increase personal blood pressure awareness and management of high blood pressure in the community.
- Increase access to blood pressure cuffs
- Create media surrounding heart health programming and awareness of the risks of abnormal blood pressure.
- Offer Bingocize
- Increase continuous access to food and improved access to health foods for those who rely on food pantries.
- Educate on hands-only CPR.



NCDHD, through grant funding, supports and staffs Substance Abuse Prevention Coalitions in our 9-county district. These coalitions are the heartbeat of NCDHD's Substance Abuse Prevention initiatives and strategies. The mission behind each county coalition is to bridge the gap between communities and schools.

PREVENTION ACTIVITIES

- 7 Responsible Beverage Server Trainings (RBST) provided
 - 47 Employees trained with a 100% passing rate
- Impaired Driving activity reaching 1 school
- Pig Lung Demonstrations reaching 3 schools
- 1 Catch My Breath Training
 - 28 local students

TRAINING

- CATCH My Breath Train-the-Trainer Anti-Vaping Curriculum
- Responsible Beverage Server (RBST) TIPs Trainer
- Question, Persuade, Respond (QPR) Gatekeeper Suicide Prevention Trainer
- CADCA Mid-Year National Convention

ALCOHOL/SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION

MEETINGS & EVENTS

- 36 mini coalition meetings
- 4 ASAP meetings

DISPERSAL OF RESOURCES

- Distributed 50+ Large Medication Lockboxes through NCDHD booths and offering to local hospitals/organizations

COMMUNITY/SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT

- Mike Donahue Value Up School Presentations to 5 district schools





CENTRAL NAVIGATION

- Central Navigation services, offered through the Holt/Boyd Community Connections Collaborative, is a single point of contact for individuals and families when they need help and support. They work with the Navigator who will connect them with different sources of assistance by partnering with area agencies, at no cost to the participant.
- Families and individuals may be able to receive assistance from the Collaborative one time per year, up to \$1,000 per year.
- In 2025, the Holt/Boyd Community Connections Collaborative provided financial assistance to 41 families with children, and 39 families/individuals without children, for the following services:
 - Housing
 - Utilities
 - Car Repair
 - Cell Phone Services
 - Childcare
- Assistance from the Collaborative enabled families to stay safe and avoid eviction from their homes.



Immunization Program Staff: Nancy Turpin, Clinic Scribe, and Jennifer L. Booker, RN/BSN-Vaccination Coordinator

Mobile clinics bring vaccines directly to communities, making it easier to prevent dis-ease, reduce outbreaks, and keep people healthy.



In 2025, NCDHD continued to provide vaccination services across the nine-county region to ensure access regardless of location. **A total of 53 mobile vaccination clinics were held**, including 37 fall flu and COVID-19 clinics, in addition to weekly walk-in clinics in O'Neill. Clinics were offered bimonthly in Bloomfield, Ainsworth, Valentine, and Niobrara during 2025, with plans to adjust schedules in 2026 to better match community need.

NCDHD also ensures vaccines are affordable for everyone. We accept most insurance plans and participate in VFC and VFA programs. Some VFA vaccines are limited, but influenza, COVID-19, and Tdap are always available. Vaccines are provided for a donation, and no one is turned away if they cannot pay.

Making vaccines easy to access, available for all ages, and affordable helps prevent disease, protect the community, and strengthen public health across our region.



Offering walk-in clinics across multiple locations reduces barriers to care and ensures timely access to vaccines, especially in rural communities.



NCDHD remains committed to ensuring everyone can access vaccinations, including people with mobility challenges, those who are homebound, and older adults living in care settings. **These efforts help protect individuals at higher risk for severe illness and support healthier communities.**

All NCDHD vaccine clinics are designed to be accessible. A wheelchair is available at every clinic, and vaccines can be administered in a person's vehicle when needed, **ensuring mobility challenges do not prevent vaccination.**



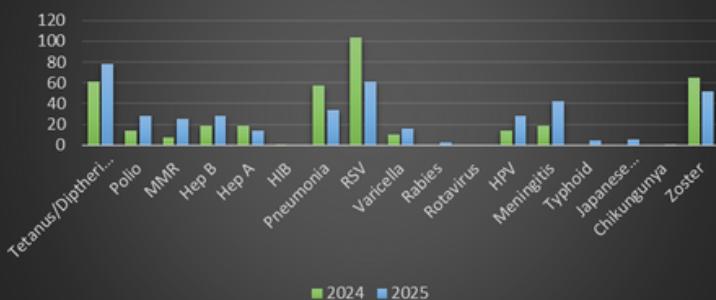
To reach homebound residents, NCDHD continues to offer the Relinquishment Program, which allows nursing homes, assisted living facilities, home health agencies, and other trained providers to obtain vaccines from NCDHD and return completed paperwork for billing and records. **In 2025, 4 programs participated, vaccinating 100 individuals through this program.**



Making vaccines easy to access, available for all ages, and affordable helps prevent disease, protect the community, and strengthen public health across our region.

NCDHD also provides on-site vaccination clinics for assisted living facilities, bringing vaccines directly to residents who may have difficulty traveling to clinics. **In 2025, 3 facilities participated,** with COVID-19, influenza, shingles, and RSV vaccines administered.

Routine Vaccinations given in 2024, compared with 2025



Tracking vaccination trends allows NCDHD to adjust services, prevent outbreaks, and ensure vaccines are available where they are most needed.

NCDHD offers a full range of recommended vaccines for children and adults, including vaccines required for routine care, school, travel, and immigration. All vaccines are available at the O'Neill clinic without prior notice. With advance notice, any vaccine can be brought to a mobile clinic, making it easy for anyone to stay up to date.

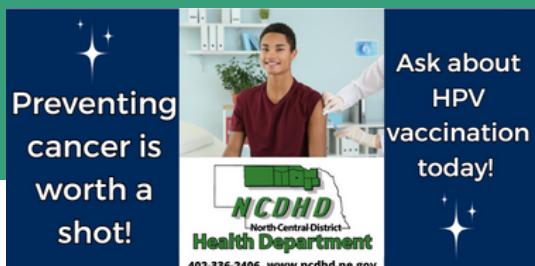
Due to measles outbreaks, the **MMR (Measles, Mumps, Rubella) vaccine was added to all mobile clinics. With higher demand, HPV (Human Papilloma Virus), Meningitis ACWY, and Meningitis B vaccines** were added to the list as well. Other vaccines offered at mobile clinics include flu, COVID-19, Tdap, shingles, pneumonia, and RSV.

Vaccination trends in 2025 (see charts) reflect changing community needs.

Pediatric clients increased again, driven by catch-up vaccinations and higher demand for travel and immigration-related vaccines. Uptake of adolescent vaccines, including HPV and meningitis, also increased. Adult vaccination patterns remained stable, with shingles (zoster) vaccines holding steady and a slight decrease in RSV, which was expected due to a limited eligible age group and single-dose recommendation.

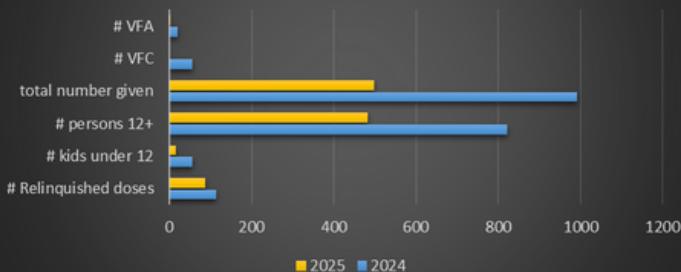


Increasing HPV vaccination during adolescence reduces future cancer risk and supports long-term community health.



In 2025, **NCDHD received a new grant to increase HPV vaccination among children and adolescents.** HPV vaccination prevents several types of cancer and is recommended for both males and females, yet national coverage remains lower than other adolescent vaccines. NCDHD launched the "Preventing Cancer Is Worth a Shot" campaign, including billboards and community messaging. In 2026, outreach will expand to schools and medical offices.

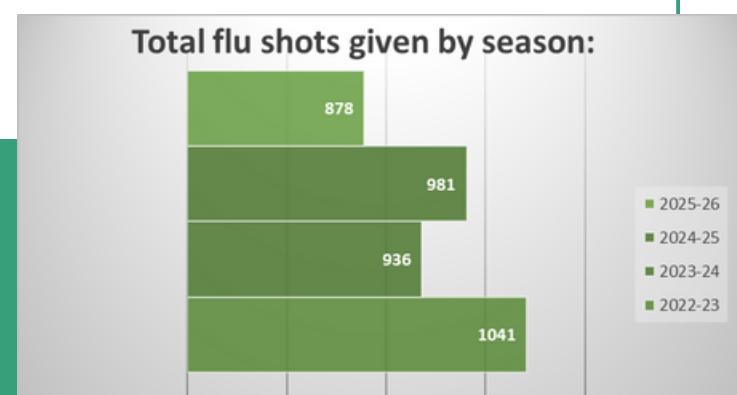
Comparison of 2024 and 2025 COVID-19 Vaccinations



Vaccination patterns for COVID-19 and influenza continued to shift in 2025 as national recommendations and schedules changed. COVID-19 vaccinations decreased across all age groups, with the largest decline among children, largely due to updated schedules. NCDHD continues to follow guidance from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) to ensure access for children and pregnant or breastfeeding individuals. **COVID-19 vaccines remain available for everyone aged 6 months and older at all NCDHD clinics.**

Influenza (Flu) Shots

Total flu shots given by season:



Comparison of Number of flu shots given at NCDHD Clinics during flu shot season.
Disclaimer: Flu shot season typically runs from September-April, total numbers for 2025 will not be available until 2026.

Flu vaccination participation at NCDHD clinics remained stable despite continued national declines.

High-dose flu vaccine use among adults over 65 decreased slightly, while rates among those under 65 remained consistent. Total flu doses administered were comparable to previous years. **Flu vaccines are available from September through April 30, providing extended seasonal access.**

Maintaining steady flu vaccination rates helps protect older adults and individuals with chronic conditions, even as national uptake declines.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH & EDUCATION

In 2025, NCDHD expanded outreach and education by meeting people where they live, work, and gather. NCDHD hosted a booth at the Farm and Home Show in O'Neill, offering vaccinations and sharing vaccine information with an interactive Plinko game. Vaccination education was also provided at the Farm and Ranch Show in Bassett and shared with child care providers at the Child Care Conference.



Community Blood Pressure Events

As part of the Cardiovascular Health Learning Collaborative, NCDHD held community blood pressure events to raise awareness about knowing blood pressure numbers and promote the Healthy Living with High Blood Pressure class. **A total of 9 locations with 57 participants** was reached through this initiative.



Fall Flu Vaccine Clinics and Food Pantry Outreach

Preventive screenings and blood pressure checks were offered at fall flu vaccine clinics and food pantry events to help participants better understand their health. Participants completed a short diabetic risk screening. Those scoring 4-5 or higher were offered an A1C test, a finger-stick blood test that measures average blood sugar over 2-3 months to identify prediabetes or diabetes.



Food pantry and food bank outreach remained a key focus. NCDHD partnered with Zion Lutheran Church Ministerial Association (Ainsworth), Plainview Food Bank, O'Neill Food Pantry, Antelope County Food Pantry, Rock County Food Bank, and Atkinson/Stuart Food Pantry. Antelope and Rock County Food Pantries provided space for vaccinations, blood pressure checks, and diabetic screenings onsite. All pantries received program and resource information, and in-person outreach participants also received resource bags with educational materials and free health products from Americares and Direct Relief.



Cardiovascular Health Learning Collaborative

The Cardiovascular Health Learning Collaborative (CVH LC) is a partnership between the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (NDHHS) and the North Central District Health Department (NCDHD). **The collaborative brings together healthcare providers, community organizations, and local governments to support heart health across the NCDHD district.**

The CVH LC meets monthly via Zoom to share ideas, align efforts, and implement community-based strategies. In 2025, six organizations participated consistently, helping guide and support the initiatives selected by the group.

The CVH LC is open to organizations and individuals interested in improving cardiovascular health in the NCDHD district. If interested in joining Contact: Email: jennifer@ncdhd.ne.gov | kirsa@ncdhd.ne.gov
Phone: 402-336-2406

Heart disease and high blood pressure are leading causes of illness, but they can be prevented and managed through education, physical activity, and healthy lifestyle choices. The CVH LC helps communities work together to reduce risk, improve access to resources, and empower individuals to make small, sustainable changes that support lifelong heart health.

Healthy Living with High Blood Pressure

The CVH LC promoted NCDHD's Healthy Living with High Blood Pressure program, an evidence-based, 8-week course offered in person and virtually. Each session lasts 1.5 hours and focuses on understanding blood pressure, recognizing contributing factors, and making manageable lifestyle changes. Outreach included clinics, pharmacies, community blood pressure events, and a live KBRX radio interview. Two classes were completed in 2025, with one participant in each. Classes are currently offered in O'Neill, with expansion based on interest.

Physical Activity Promotion

To increase access to local physical activity opportunities, the CVH LC supported a community-driven Physical Activity Guide hosted on the NCDHD website. The guide lists parks, walking paths, sports teams, swimming pools, and local events, allowing communities to submit and update information. A social media campaign helped collect initial entries and raise awareness.

<https://ncdhd.ne.gov/physical-activities>

2025 CVH LC Metrics at a Glance

- **6 consistent partner organizations**
- **11 collaborative meetings**
- **2 Healthy Living with High Blood Pressure classes completed**
- **14 community pools participated**
- **123 discounted season pool passes distributed**
- **\$15 discount per pass**
- **1 Physical Activity Guide webpage launched**

Discounted Pool Pass Initiative

CVH LC funding also supported a discounted pool pass initiative in early summer to encourage low-impact exercise. Fourteen community pools participated, providing 123 discounted season passes at \$15 each. Participating pools displayed educational materials on pool-based activities for families, supported by a social media campaign. The initiative was well received and helped reduce cost barriers while encouraging physical activity.

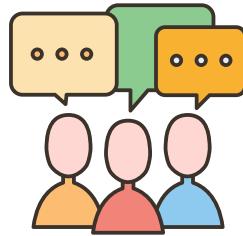


Obesity rates continue to rise across Nebraska, increasing the risk for chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and high blood pressure. Prevention efforts that strengthen skills, improve access to healthier food options, and increase opportunities for physical activity are critical to improving health outcomes across the lifespan.

The Obesity Prevention Grant **supports efforts to address the rising incidence of obesity in Nebraska** through sustainable, community-based strategies focused on nutrition and physical activity. Efforts in 2025 emphasized planning, partnership development, and assessment to support long-term, sustainable implementation.



Obesity Prevention Grant



In 2025, **NCDHD participated in two statewide forums:**

- Nutrition Forum (August)
- Physical Activity Forum (November)

Participation in these forums positioned NCDHD as an active partner in ongoing statewide collaborations focused on nutrition and physical activity improvement.

Food Pantry Nutrition Support

NCDHD provided practical nutrition education focused on using foods commonly received from food pantries.

Resources will be available on the NCDHD website to ensure continued access beyond the grant period.

School-Based Nutrition Initiatives

School-based initiatives are under development for 2026. In 2025, NCDHD conducted initial assessments and gathered information to inform future efforts, including review of snack options and concession stand offerings.

Foundational Food Safety & Cooking Skills

This initiative is planned for development in 2026 and will provide basic food safety and cooking guidance applicable across community settings. Materials will be housed on the NCDHD website for long-term access.

Community Input

Food pantry staff, school personnel, and community members provided input to guide future nutrition education and resource development.

Physical Activity Initiatives

NCDHD focused on planning for expanded physical activity opportunities, including development of Bingocize® programs and community physical activity challenges to be launched in 2026.

VACCINE BILLING

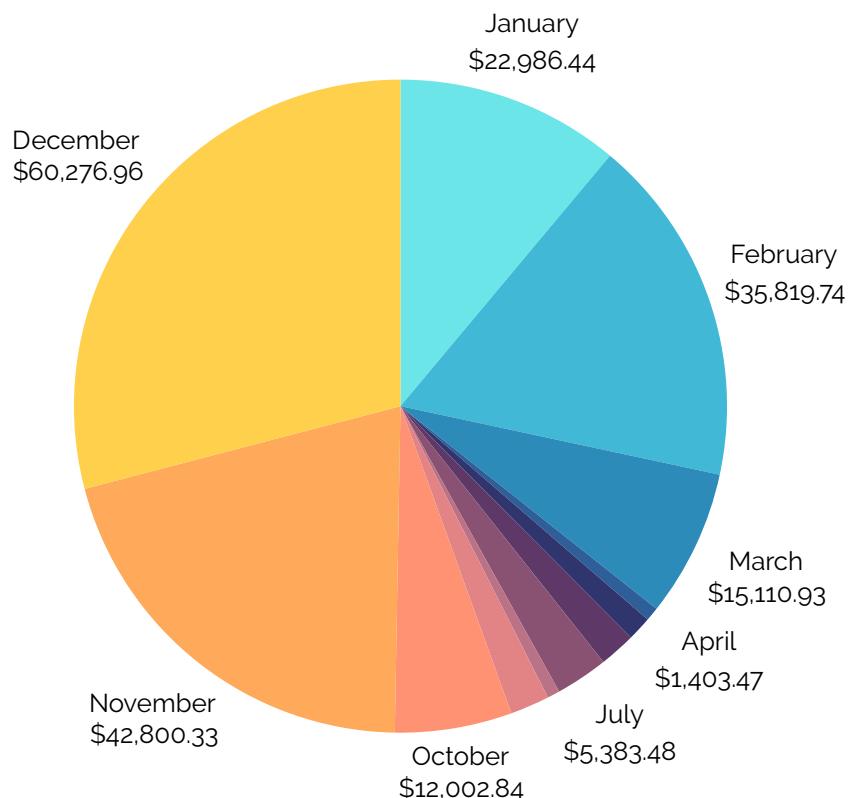
Health billing is up-to-date with claim submission. We are working to fix any errors or denials that have come back to us and get them resubmitted in a timely manner.

Insurance paid on 91% of flu and 91% of COVID-19 immunizations.

Bill practices continue to improve for other routine immunizations. In 2023 we started offering the RSV vaccine. These claims have been successfully submitted to Medicare Part D through our TransactRX program that was implemented in June. We have seen remits come through with other insurance carriers to cover our cost.

The Health Departments have put together a community of practice with a professional coder. This has proven to be a knowledgeable and beneficial opportunity to have this coding specialist learn from and share any billing issues that may arise.

We will be having those billing meetings 2-3 times a month, and she is always available by email. Marci is on board for the next 2 years of service to Nebraska's Health Departments.





Health Department

BOARD OF HEALTH MEMBERS

"I firmly believe that volunteering is good for our society and brings communities together. It's a fantastic opportunity to get involved in your local community, to meet new people and to gain a sense of pride and achievement."

• **Boris Johnson**

- **Antelope County**
 - Regina Krebs, County Commissioner
 - Vacant, Spirited Citizen
- **Boyd County**
 - Greg Hull, County Commissioner
 - Kelly Kalkowski, Spirited Citizen
- **Brown County**
 - Dennis Bauer, County Commissioner
 - Carol Plate, Spirited Citizen
- **Cherry County**
 - Mike McConaughey, County Commissioner
 - Vacant, Spirited Citizen
- **Holt County**
 - Dustin Breiner, County Commissioner
 - Denise Pribil, Spirited Citizen
- **Keya Paha County**
 - Corey Nilson, County Commissioner
 - Vacant, Spirited Citizen
- **Knox County**
 - Kevin Mackeprang, County Commissioner
 - Jean Henes, Spirited Citizen
- **Pierce County**
 - John Steinkraus, County Commissioner
 - Lon Knievel, Spirited Citizen
- **Rock County**
 - Wade Hollenbeck, County Commissioner
 - Doug Fox, Spirited Citizen
- **District Physician**
 - Dr. Ronald Morse, MD
- **District Dentist**
 - Dr. Kenneth Tusha, DDS