

# 2020 Annual Report

March 2021  
422 East Douglas Street  
O'Neill, NE 68763  
402-336-2406



# from the director

2020 was an exceptionally challenging year that proved the strength and cohesiveness of our staff. Without the efforts of each and every one of our team what NCDHD accomplished would not be possible. Our team ebb and flowed with developing new processes, navigating unknown territory, and making the best decisions in prevention, preparedness, and execution for the nine counties we serve.

The NCDHD team sacrificed hours of time away from family and friends dedicating their service for case investigation, vaccine deployment, and carrying on numerous other programs throughout the district to the best of our ability within the measure and guidance directives given by the Governor's Office and Department of Health and Human Services.

I couldn't be prouder of the grit and dedication our team showed this year. Looking forward to a strong 2021.



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.



In good health,

Roger Wiese  
Executive Director

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Roger Wiese  
*Executive Director*

Whitney Abbott  
*Substance Abuse Coordinator*

Allison Becker  
*Clinic Manager*

Jennifer Booker  
*Public Health Nurse*

Carol Doolittle  
*Chronic Care Management/HR*

Carolyn Gottsch  
*Public Health Nurse*

Heidi Hostert  
*Emergency Response Coordinator*

Tonya Hytrek  
*Contact Tracer*

Amy Latzel  
*Contact Tracer*

Mary Liska  
*Contact Tracer*

Claire Morrow  
*Health Educator*

Emily Morrow  
*Health Educator*

Cassie Ottman  
*Contact Tracer*

Elizabeth Parks  
*Disease and Epi Coordinator*

Denise Pribil  
*Finance*

Heather Samland  
*Public Health Nurse*

Braxton Stauffer  
*PPE Coordinator*

Susan Taylor  
*Office Manager*

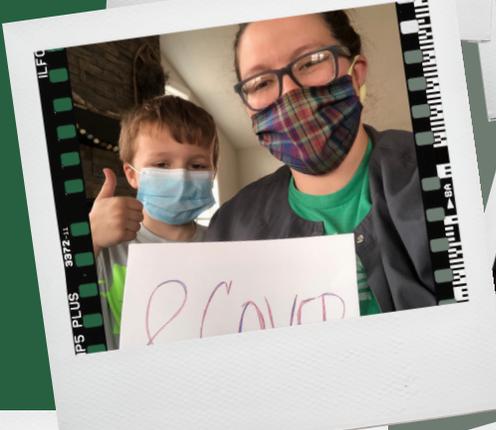
Deb Thramer  
*Public Health Nurse - Test Nebraska*

Sara Twibell  
*Miles of Smiles*

Nicole Wall  
*Clinic Manager*

Jane Yule  
*Public Health Nurse*

## our team



# 2020 The Year of the Nurse



In 2020 the World Health Assembly designated the year 2020 the International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife to honor the 200th anniversary of Florence Nightingale's birth and advance nurses' vital role in transforming health care around the world.

In 2020 NCDHD Nurses and staff time and time again showed compassion, care, and concern for our district while navigating a pandemic and carrying on other programs for the betterment of Public Health.

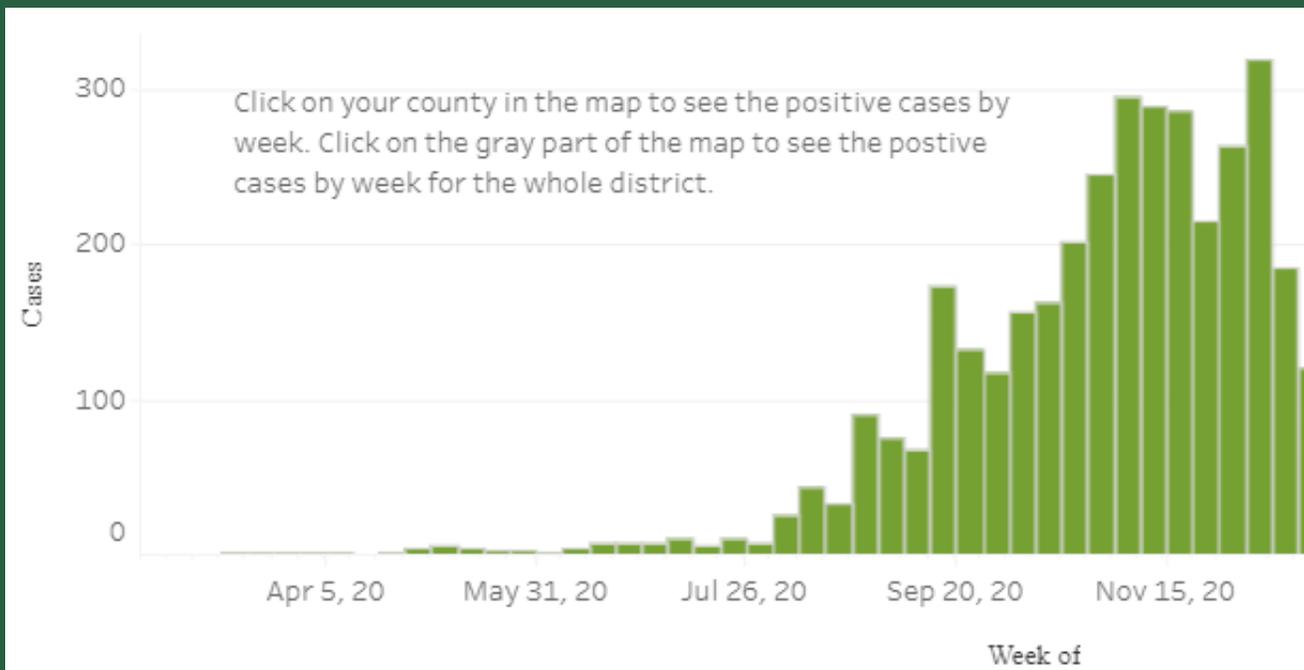
*Thank  
you!*

**JENNIFER BOOKER  
CAROLYN GOTTSCH  
ELIZABETH PARKS  
HEATHER SAMLAND  
DEB THRAMER  
JANE YULE**

# 2020 COVID-19 Response

## Epidemiology Totals

The first case of COVID-19 occurred in the district on March 10th, 2020. The fall of 2020 is when NCDHD experienced a surge of cases. The peak of cases was experienced in November into early December. An epi curve of cases is below.



In 2020, NCDHD experienced the following cases of COVID-19:

Total cases: 3,761

Deaths: 57

Antelope: TC: 505, D: 5

Boyd: TC: 170, D:3

Brown: TC 266, D: 4

Cherry: TC: 380, D:6

Holt: TC: 731, D: 13

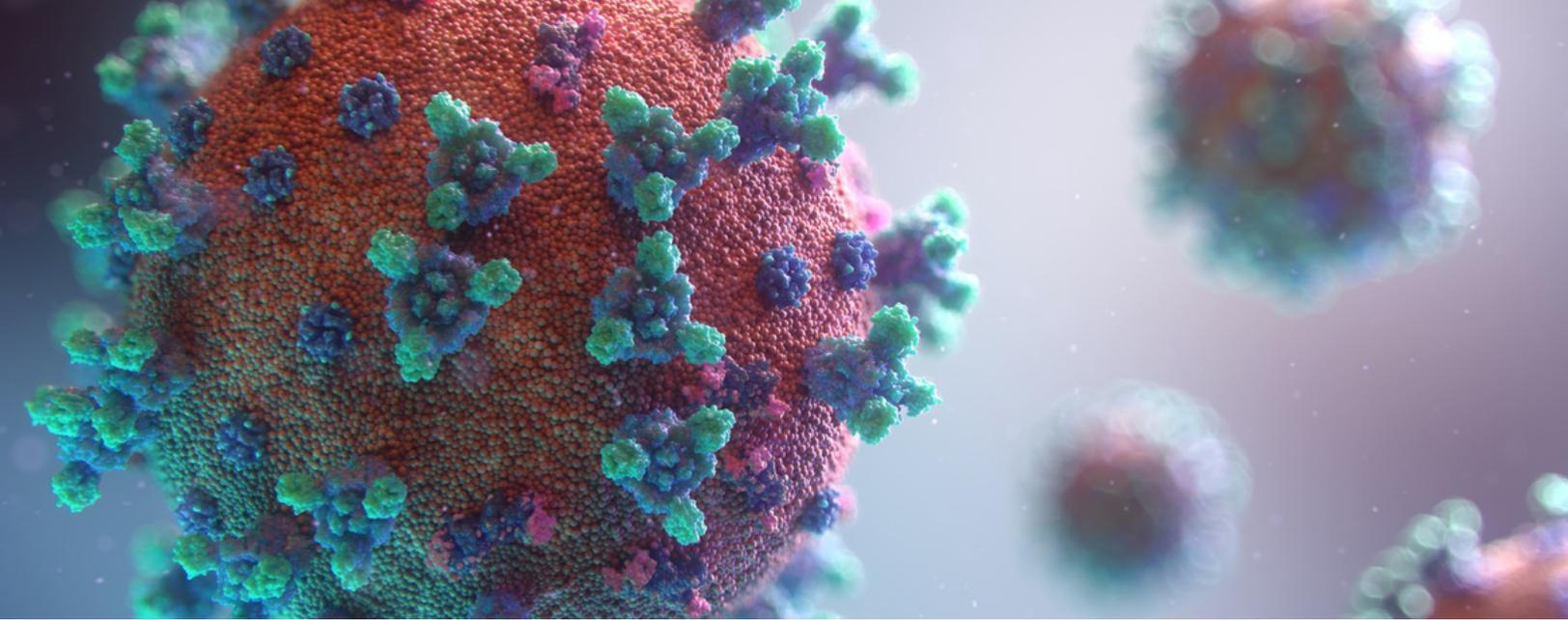
Keya Paha: TC: 41, D: 0

Knox: TC: 907, D: 6

Pierce: TC: 623, D:19

Rock: TC: 138, D:1

*TC= Total cases, D= Deaths*



# COVID-19 Testing

Testing was first launched with support from the Nebraska National Guard in the Spring of 2020 to test symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals to get community-level data. Very few positives were identified throughout this process.

As cases continued to grow, NCDHD launched its own testing program at established locations. Drive-through testing was the model utilized. Clients stayed in their car. Staff members approached them, registered them digitally on an iPad, and collected the swab through the car window. Long-term testing sites were eventually established in Bassett at the Rock County Fair Grounds, in O'Neill at the O'Neill Armory, and in Valentine at the Cherry Co Hospital (ran by Cherry Co Hospital). Pop-up testing continued in other communities and targeted heightened outbreaks such as a large pop-up testing event at the Santee Sioux Nation's Health Center. One unique thing about NCDHD's testing program is the department offered rapid testing in combination with PCR testing. This model allowed symptomatic individuals to get a lower efficacy, fast result rapid test. If positive, this person was deemed positive. If negative, a Gold-Standard PCR test was utilized and sent off. Depending on the number of cases in the state, these results typically returned in 1-3 days.

NCDHD also supported long-term care testing by helping all facilities get routine testing established in-house. School-based testing was approached, but due to lack of interest, this was not rolled out throughout the district.



## COVID-19 Testing



# Personal Protective Equipment

NCDHD launched a Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) distribution hub in the O'Neill Armory. NCDHD was fortunate to have an adequate space to eventually build a cache of supplies. This really helped long-term care facilities that experienced outbreaks within the facility.

SIGN UP TODAY



## TEST NEBRASKA

Test Nebraska will be in our district the remainder of this week. If you have not already done so, and would like a test please log on to [testnebraska.com](http://testnebraska.com) and register.



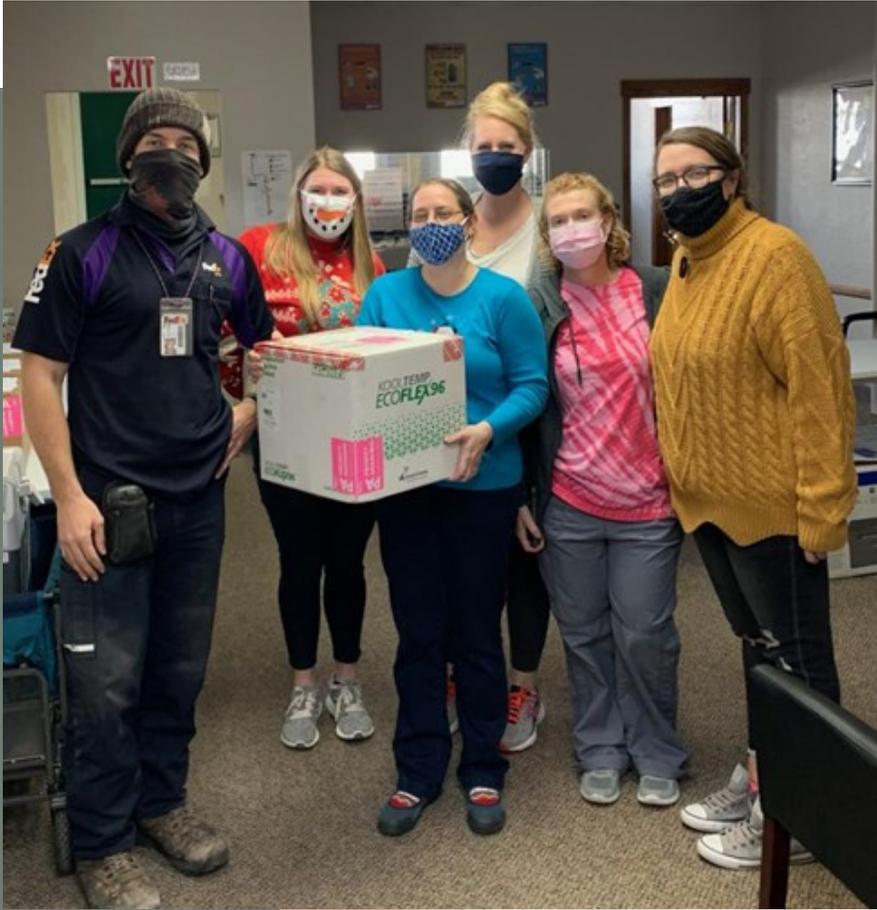
### O'Neill

Holt County Roads Department  
June 19th and 20th  
8:00 AM - 12:00 PM

### Valentine

Valentine Fire Hall  
June 21st 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM  
June 22nd 8:00 AM - 12:00 PM

# Vaccine Rollout



**Tanner Timmerman**

*Fed Ex*

**Heidi Hostert**

*Emergency Preparedness*

**Amy Latzel**

*Case Investigator*

**Heather Samland**

*Public Health Nurse*

**Elizabeth Parks**

*Epidemiology Coordinator*

**Jennifer Booker**

*Public Health Nurse*

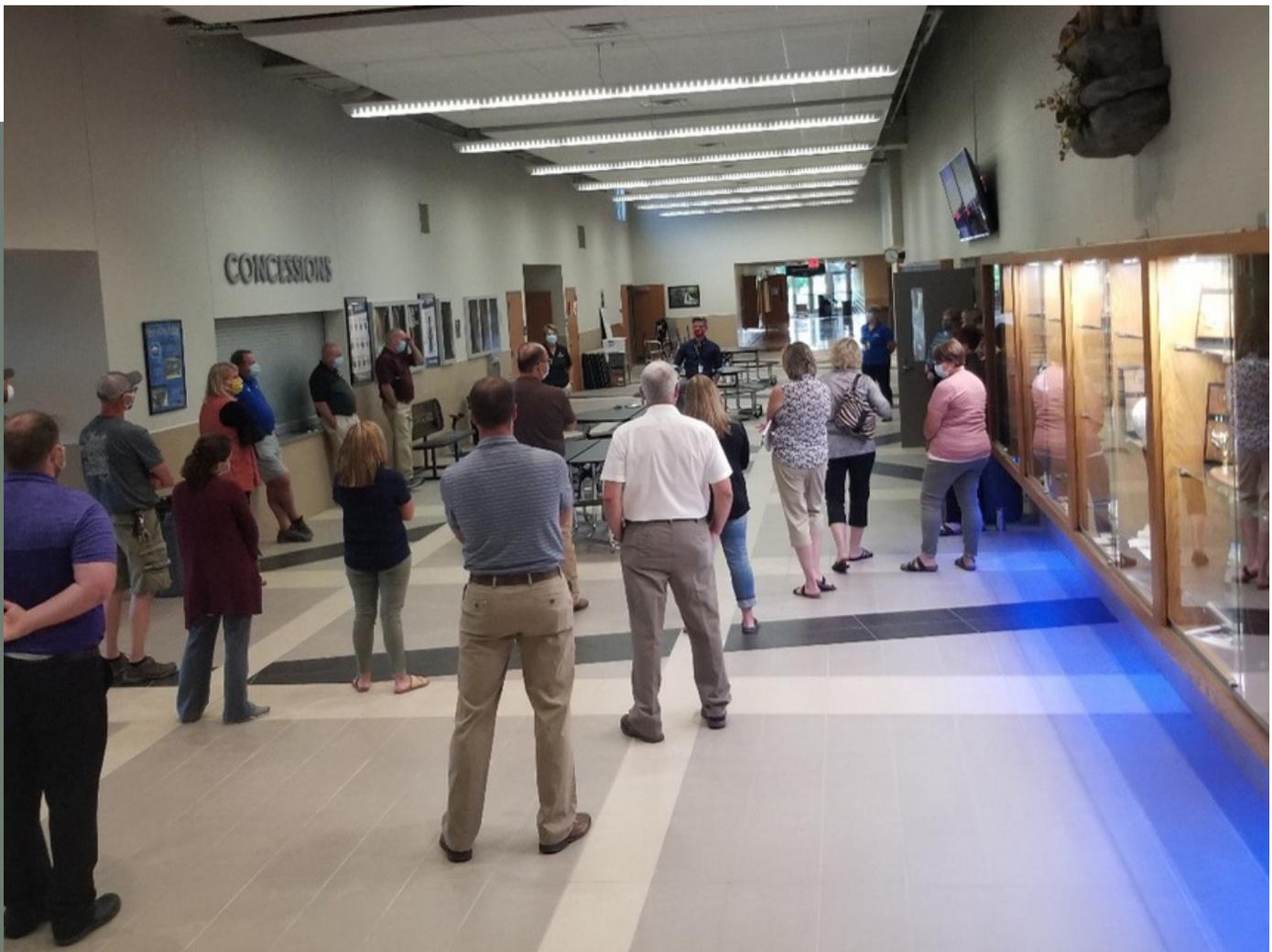


Moderna vaccine was first received in the NCDHD district on December 22nd. This is an mRNA vaccine that showed 95% effectiveness in the clinical trials. Very limited doses were received in 2020 with all doses going to healthcare entities. Below is a picture of several staff members supporting sweater day and the arrival of the first doses of vaccine.

# School Preparedness

## Working with Schools During the Pandemic

NCDHD worked with all area schools to help prepare them to safely deliver education in the Fall of 2020. This was a majority priority after schools closed in the Spring of 2020 to help prevent the spread of the illness. A risk dial was created along with a base plan that helped launch schools into a successful school year. Schools that utilized masking as a prevention strategy were generally the most successful. Below is a picture of a school site visit with UNMC experts Shelly Schwedhelm and Dr. John Lowe.



# Media & Information Sharing

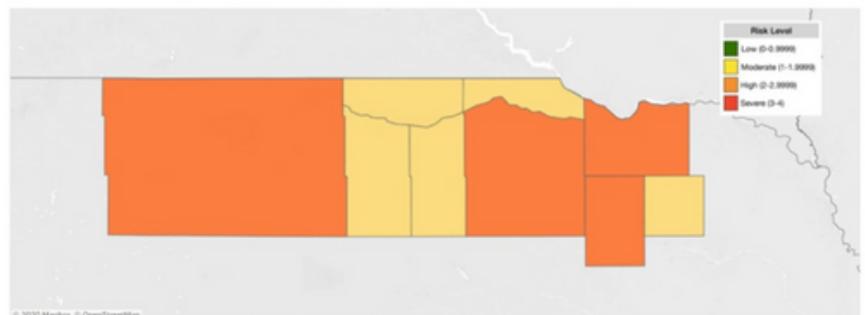
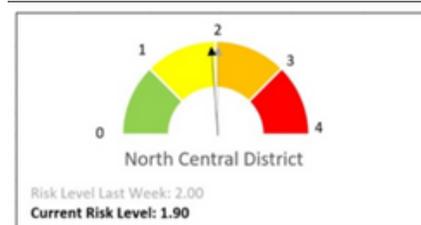
NCDHD had a strong media presence in 2020. Weekday reporting started in 2020, eventually transitioning to twice weekly reporting (Monday, Thursday) by the end of 2020. A risk dial that showed the current risk of COVID-19 throughout the district was published every Wednesday night in 2020. Many members throughout the district, especially those with school associations watched our social media pages for the release of this information. An example of the risk dial is below.

Other educational materials were created and shared through media sources such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. An example of one of the materials is below.

## COVID POSITIVE. NOW WHAT?

- 1** Isolate from others including those in your household. 
- 2** Keep your family at home. 
- 3** Contact people you have been around for 15 mins or more, within 6 feet of. Think back 2 days before your symptoms started. 
- 4** Call NCDHD if you have had your results for more than 24 hours and have not been contacted. 

 OFFICE HOURS  
MONDAY - FRIDAY  
8:00 AM - 4:30 PM  
CALL US AT  
402-336-2406



WATCHING A FIREWORKS SHOW THIS WEEKEND?  
STAY SAFE AND ENJOY THE SHOW

6 ft.

Happy 4th of July!



# Large Event Plans

Direct Health Measures put in place by the Governor's office controlled gathering sizes. One additional regulation put in place for large events was the need to submit a plan to your local health department for approval. NCDHD worked with community partners to ensure proper safety measures were in place to proceed.

## GATHERINGS



- Gatherings will be limited to 25 people for events held at:
  - Homes
- Gatherings will be limited to the greater of 25 people (excluding staff) or 25% of rated occupancy (not to exceed 3,000) for gatherings held at:
  - Indoor or Outdoor Arenas, Indoor or Outdoor Auctions, Stadiums, Tracks, Festivals, Zoos, Auditoriums, Large Event Conference Rooms, Meeting Halls, Indoor Theaters, Libraries, Swimming Pools or any other confined indoor or outdoor space
  - Ticketing must be done in groups no larger than six (6) individuals.
  - Six (6) feet separation between different ticketed groups must be maintained
  - Parades, carnivals, midways, street dances, beer gardens are prohibited through June 30th and may be extended.
- Parades where patrons remain in their vehicles and the public does not line the streets are permitted.
- Drive-in movie theaters may open at full capacity as long as patrons remain in/on their vehicles while viewing the movie and congregating at concession and restroom areas are not permitted.
- All locations/venues that hold (500 or 1000) or more individuals will be required to submit a reopening plan for approval to their local health department. The reopening plan must contain planned number of guests, how the location will meet social distancing guidelines, and sanitation guidelines.

## New DHM

Effective: June 1 - June 30

*Regional Change*



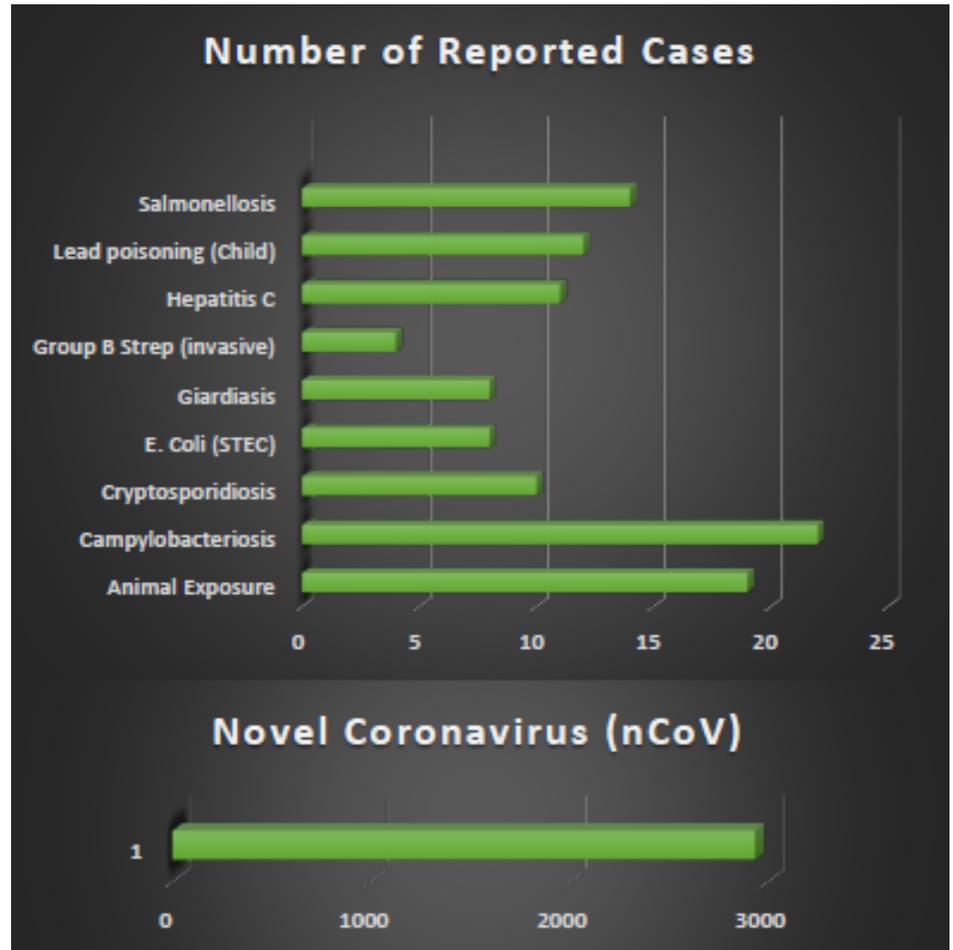
# Communicable Diseases

## Why it Matters:

Disease Surveillance is a critical service provided by North Central District Health Department to help identify emerging infectious diseases, and potential pandemics, as well as providing a basis for evaluating the outcome of public health prevention programs.

Communicable disease surveillance includes but is not limited to foodborne illness, vaccine-preventable diseases, influenza, vector borne diseases, and animal related diseases such as rabies. They can be contracted from human living environment, including disease passed from person to person, food or water, animals or insects.

\*CDC



During the 2020 surveillance year, North Central District Health Department had 3,152 communicable diseases reported in our district. The above graph depicts the top 10 communicable diseases during 2020 surveillance year (not including STIs). \*Source: NEDSS Datamart

## What NCDHD is doing:

**We strive to prevent the incidence of disease by promoting healthy communities, families, and individuals through communicable disease surveillance. The intention of surveillance is to identify, promptly investigate, and monitor each incident of reported communicable disease. Timely recognition of the disease within the community enables the proper implementation of prevention and control activities. This action helps NCDHD contain the spread of the disease before the illness becomes a major public health crisis.**

**2020 was a very different year for not only NCDHD but the community at large. Many changes were made including the addition of contact tracers to help in prevention and control of the COVID surge NCDHD was experiencing in the fall of summer/fall of 2020. As a result, most other communicable diseases were handled by DHHS and third party contractors.**

# General Immunizations



TOTAL NUMBER OF CLIENTS  
 PEDIATRIC (0-18): 10  
 ADULT (19+): 50  
 AIP: 13  
 VFC: 11  
 PRIVATE PAY: 2

INFLUENZA VACCINE CLINICS  
 FLU SHOTS GIVEN: 1250  
 AIP: 63  
 VFC: 143

**TOTAL NUMBER OF VACCINES GIVEN: 89**

| Tdap/Td/Dtap | Polio | MMR | Hep B | Hep A | HIB | Pneumonia | Varicella | Rabies | Rotavirus | HPV | Meningitis | Typhoid | Zoster |
|--------------|-------|-----|-------|-------|-----|-----------|-----------|--------|-----------|-----|------------|---------|--------|
| 11           | 7     | 2   | 10    | 9     | 1   | 5         | 4         | 0      | 0         | 4   | 4          | 1       | 37     |

2020 was a year that provided many challenges, from an increased need for protection to changes in how we gave vaccinations. Due to limited space in the office and concerns for staff and clients, NCDHD suspended in office vaccinations in April and May, then resumed with Drive through clinics utilizing the back door of the office. Flu clinics were changed to be completely drive-through clinics, they were very well received, and many customers expressed gratitude for the change. Because of the limitations in office and weather, flu shots did not continue after clinics this year. November and December were dedicated to preparations for anticipated COVID vaccinations and 44 COVID Vaccinations were given to first responders and assisted living residents and staff before December 31.

# Substance Abuse Prevention

## Big Year for Prevention

North Central District Health Department's (NCDHD) substance abuse prevention work is completed primarily through its partnership with Area Substance Abuse Prevention (ASAP) coalition and its associated task forces in each county. In 2020, ASAP reached 10,829 community members (4,235 adults and 6,594 youth) through services provided: information dissemination, education, and alternative activities. The coalition's work has resulted in over 1,269,710 media impressions this year.

2020 proved a monumental year for prevention in Nebraska. Rosie Nelson, an Area Substance Abuse Prevention coalition member, visited the O'Neill City Council, urging them to update their tobacco ordinances in the city to include e-cigarettes and associated devices. The City took Rosie's suggestion and updated their codes prior to the State of Nebraska updated their laws to include such devices. Nebraska's legislature responded to the pandemic-sized issue of e-cigarettes created in the state by passing LB 840 and 1064. Legislative Bill 840 added electronic cigarettes to the Nebraska Clean Indoor Air Act, which prohibits smoking in a place of employment or public place. This law went into effect on November 14, 2020. Legislative Bill 1064 raised the minimum age for tobacco products (including electronic nicotine delivery systems) from 19 to 21. Starting October 1, it will be illegal to sell tobacco products to anyone under the age of 21. Nebraska became the 33rd state to raise the age to 21.

Tony Hoffman toured North Central Nebraska speaking at 5 locations (Cody-Kilgore, Rock County, O'Neill High, Niobrara Public, and Plainview High School) with 13 schools (Ainsworth Public, Keya Paha, West Holt, O'Neill St. Mary's, Boyd County, Santee, Bloomfield, and Osmond St. Mary's) and more than 1,400 students. As a recovering drug addict, Tony walked students down the substance abuse road and



**Tony Hoffman at O'Neill High School**

what it takes to turn your life around. After being released from prison Tony became a BMX Professional athlete, though an injury would cut his athlete career short Tony remained focused and represented the U.S. at the 2016 Rio Olympics as a BMX coach.

Today, Tony continues to coach Olympians and speaking throughout the county on substance abuse, mental health, work ethic, positive attitude, the importance of self-education, and the impact one choice can make. Students were encouraged to speak up if they are experiencing depression, emotional neglect, suicidal thoughts, anxiety, or trauma. Oftentimes, youth use alcohol and drugs to find temporary relief from their emotional pain.

NCDHD and ASAP received another Drug-Free Communities (DFC) Grant for a total of \$625,000 over five years. This is the last five-year cycle NCDHD can apply for within the DFC grant. This funding stream provides Responsible Beverage Server Trainings to area alcohol retailers, one coordinator, alcohol and tobacco compliance checks, media campaigns, and education materials for residents.

NCDHD also received an Overdose Prevention grant to address opioid-related overdoses in the district. A needs assessment was conducted and a strategic plan was drafted to address the needs in the district as they related to overdose prevention and education.



**Niobrara**



**Plainview High**



**Rock County High**



**Cody-Kilgore**





# Other Program Activities

Vector-Borne Illness

SUMMER 2020



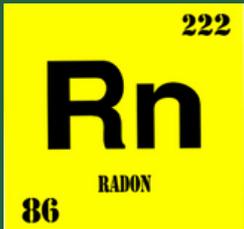
# MOSQUITO REPORT

*The latest from North Central District Health Department*

*Proudly serving Antelope, Boyd, Brown, Cherry, Holt, Keya Paha, Knox, Pierce, and Rock counties*



NCDHD continues to produce a newsletter for area applicators that contains updated information on tick and mosquito-borne illnesses, upcoming training, and other program information.



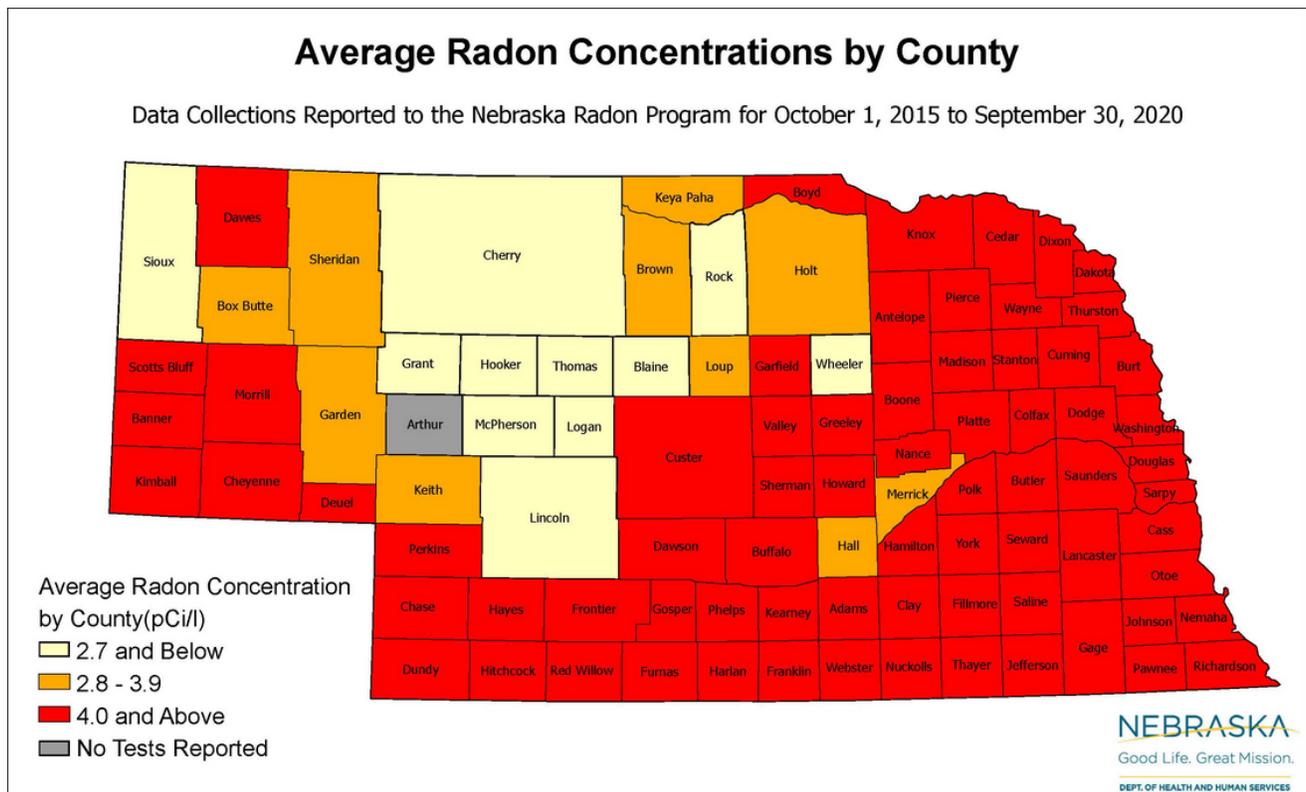
# Radon Risk Profile

2020

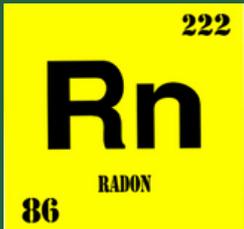
## Why it Matters:

Radon is a radioactive gas that is prevalent at elevated levels in the soil throughout the entire NCDHD region. This gas is clear, odorless, and tasteless, so it is hard to detect. It seeps through the foundation of homes without residents being aware.

According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), radon is the number one cause of lung cancer among non-smokers. The EPA estimates that approximately 21,000 annual lung cancer deaths are radon.



Radon is prevalent at elevated levels in the soil throughout the entire NCDHD region. Hazardous levels of radon are most common in Boyd, Knox, Antelope & Pierce county.



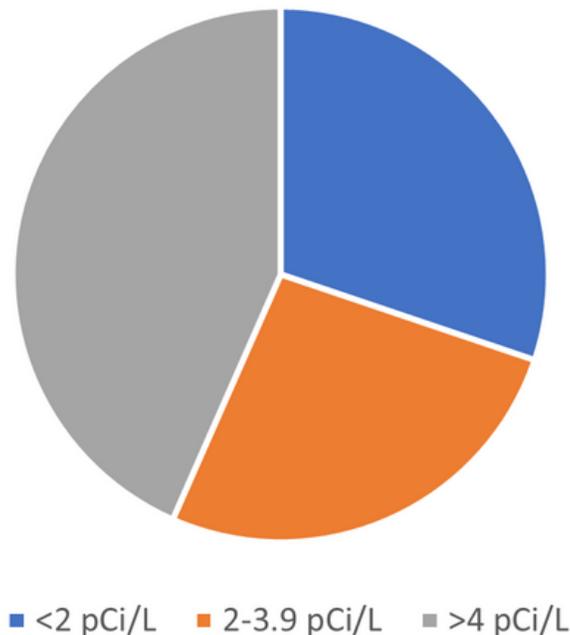
# Radon Risk Profile

2020

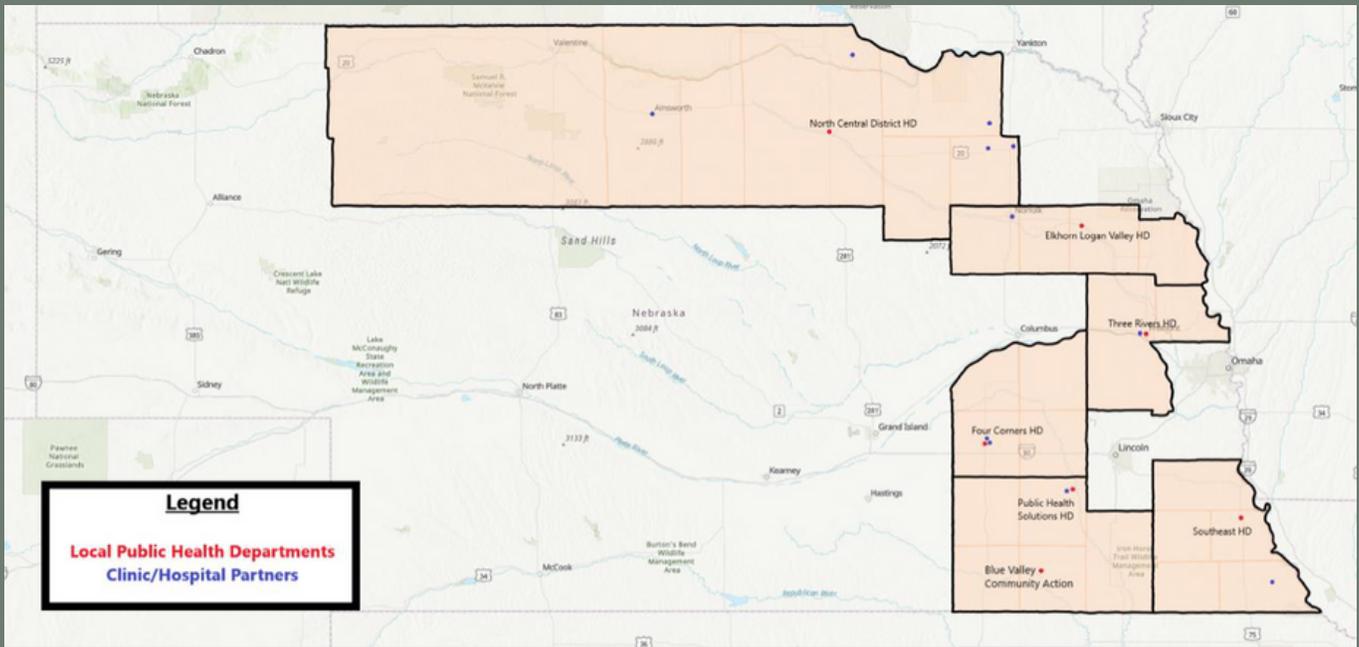
What NCDHD is doing:

NCDHD makes short-term Radon Testing Kits available for a reduced cost of \$8/kit. In 3-7 days, kits provide radon concentration levels. NCDHD follows up with test results at or above 4.0 pCi/L. This level is considered unhealthy. Typically, secondary tests are recommended for high levels. A Do-It-Yourself (DIY) mitigation guide and a list of licensed radon mitigators are also provided with secondary test kits. In 2020, 132 kits were distributed. NCDHD also provides general education about the risk of radon gas and encourages radon testing.

The average radon concentration measured by short-term radon test kits distributed by NCDHD in 2020



Having radon levels at or above 4.0 pCi/L is considered dangerous for your health. The short-term radon tests distributed in the NCDHD reflected 43% of homes that were tested were at or above this level. These homes should be mitigated.



# CATCH, Inc. | HRSA

**Community Access to Coordinated Healthcare, Inc. (CATCH)** is a service delivery system made up of six local health departments and one Community Action Agency in Southeast Nebraska. CATCH is designed to foster improved health outcomes through health education, training, outreach, and referral services including case management and access to care. Incorporated in 1997 as a 501(c)3 non-profit membership organization, CATCH is governed by a board of directors and is a membership network of six local health departments (LHDs) and a multi-county community action agency (CAA).

NCDHD contracted with Osmond General Hospital - Wausa Clinic - and developed a data-tracking document to begin collecting data

Brown County Hospital has been introduced to the project and has identified a staff member who will be the point of contact for the project.

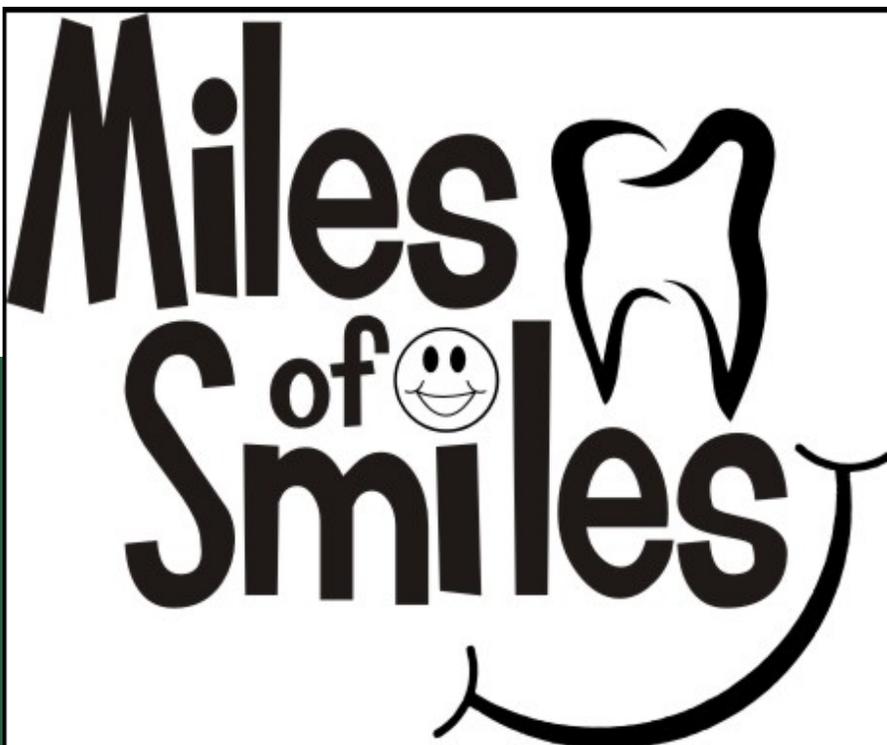
Niobrara Valley initially showed interest in the project and NCDHD is working to reconnect with them to begin data collection.

# Miles of Smiles

Miles of Smiles (MOS) is a school-based oral screening and fluoride varnish program available to preschool, elementary, and middle school-age students within the nine-county health district. The MOS program uses Public Health Authorized Registered Dental Hygienists to conduct oral screening examinations and apply fluoride varnish.

In 2020 NCDHD averaged a 56% participation rate for Miles of Smiles. We were only able to go to 10 schools in the spring of 2020 before schools closed down due to the Covid pandemic. Fall of 2020 was also an unknown time and after lots of rescheduling, we were able to make it into all but 2 schools before most of our district's schools were not allowing visitors to come into buildings anymore due to Covid. With that being said, averaging 56% participation was very good for the year as well as applying fluoride varnish on 40% of school-age children. We only had 44 children needing immediate referrals to a dentist and saw 20% Medicaid clientele.

Only 236 sealants were placed for the year and only in the fall, we were not able to do a sealant program in the spring. As far as our partnership with the Nebraska Community Foundation we are still averaging about \$22,000 over what we need for our match funding each year, which is phenomenal.



*Bring on  
2021*

**Thank you for your  
support during a  
challenging year.**

