

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



PUBLIC HEALTH

noun

Definition:

Public health is the science of protecting and improving the health of people and their communities. This work is achieved by promoting healthy lifestyles, researching disease and injury prevention, and detecting, preventing and responding to infectious diseases. Overall, public health is concerned with protecting the health of entire populations. These populations can be as small as a local neighborhood, or as big as an entire country or region of the world.

**PUBLIC HEALTH
CONNECTS US ALL**



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Healthy People, Healthy Communities

FROM THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Heidi Kuklis, MPH



I am happy to present the 2024 Annual Report for the North Central District Health Department (NCDHD). We remain steadfast in our commitment to work with community partners to meet the communities' needs especially in the areas identified on our community health improvement plan: heart disease, access to care, and mental health.

Over the past year, NCDHD made strides to reduce heart disease mortality rates due through several key initiatives. A HeartCorp employee was hired through a partnership with the American Heart Association allocating resources towards blood pressure monitoring, older adult education, food insecurity, and AED access. Ten permanent blood pressure monitoring stations were established as easy access referral points. Forty-eight (48) older adults partook in a 20-session physical activity and nutrition program.

To address access to care needs, the department continues to travel across the large 9-county area offering oral health and immunization services. We strive to improve the opportunity to access healthcare for all residents. Focus groups and 1:1 meetings continue to ensure needs of Native Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, the elderly, and low-income residents align with department efforts to improve access to healthcare. To address underlying barriers to health, the department led a paid media campaign to enhance awareness and support application assistance for Medicaid. In coordination with the Holt Boyd Collaborative, the department sponsors gap assistance and coaching for families in need.

Mental health needs are a top concern of residents. NCDHD is working to reduce deaths by suicide in an area that struggles with mental health provider shortages. Thirty (30) individuals were trained in Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) and 20 in Mental Health First Aid (MHFA). These trainings build community support and encourage early intervention. Two additional full-time Licensed Mental Health Professionals were placed in area schools with the support of the department. Media campaigns and community events promoting mental health awareness and suicide prevention reinforced the message that 'it is okay to not be okay'. The number of screenings for social determinants of health and depression assessments increased. NCDHD continues to perfect a pilot follow up referral program that supports individuals with needs identified on the screening assessment.

Throughout this report, you can see progress on these three initiatives and other programs our office provides. We look forward to collaborating in 2025 to provide all residents with what they need to be happy and healthy.



BOARD OF HEALTH MEMBERS

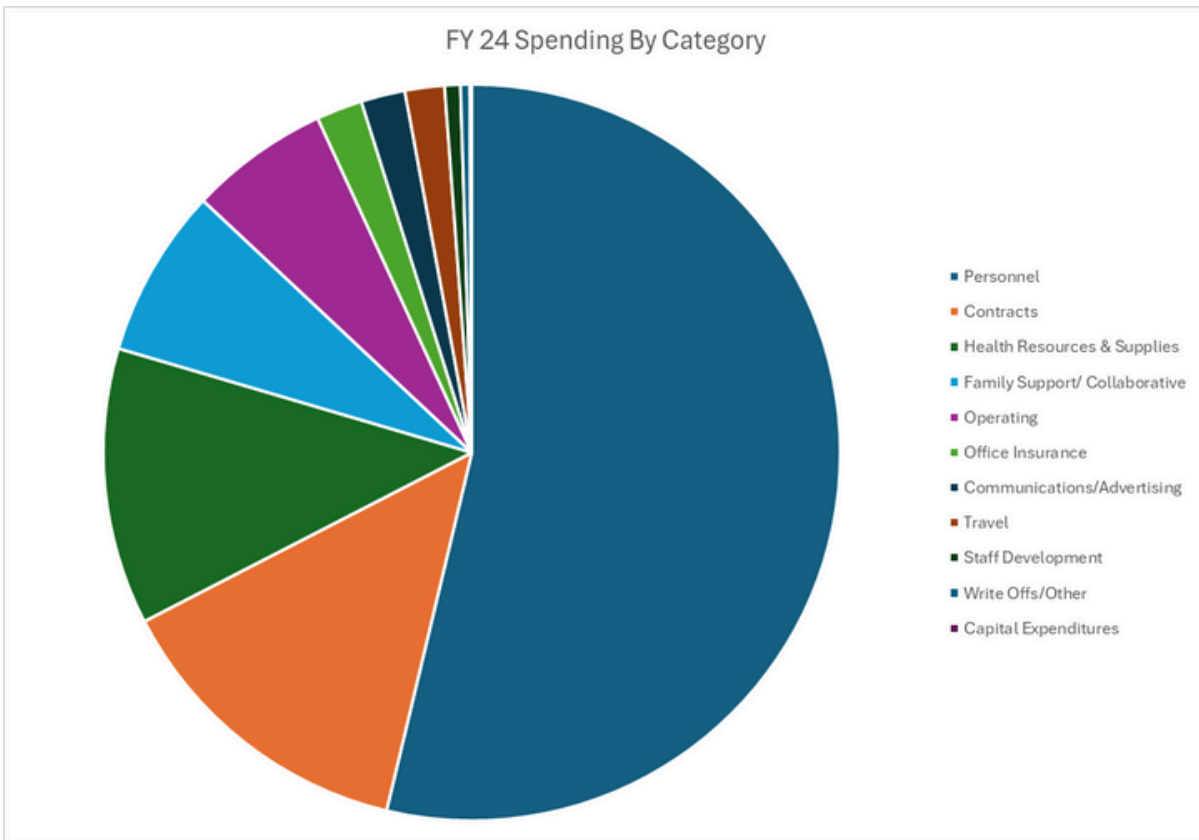
- **Antelope County**
 - Regina Krebs, County Commissioner
 - Dean Smith/Vacant, Spirited Citizen
- **Boyd County**
 - Greg Hull, County Commissioner
 - Kelly Kalkowski, Spirited Citizen
- **Brown County**
 - Dennis Bauer, County Commissioner
 - Carol Plate, Spirited Citizen
- **Cherry County**
 - Mike 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**
 - Tom Kuether, 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

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

2024

Category	Ratio of Spending
Personnel	53.7%
Contracts	13.7%
Health Resources & Supplies	12.1%
Family Support/ Collaborative	7.4%
Operating	6.1%
Office Insurance	2.0%
Communications/Advertising	1.9%
Travel	1.7%
Staff Development	0.7%
Write Offs/Other	0.4%
Capital Expenditures	0.1%

NCDHD's FY25 fiscal year runs from July 2023- June 2024. The department spent \$1,670,752.31 during this period. The majority (~67%) of fund go to internal staff and contracts to provide programming to Nebraskans. The organization has strong financial health, yet is primarily dependent on writing for grants as the primary source of income.



ACCREDITATION



The Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) conferred accreditation on NCDHD in March 2022.

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 2024 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

NCDHD embarked on a new Community Health Assessment (CHA) for 2025-2027, completed in tandem with local partners and non-profit hospitals. The CHA will be on a virtual dashboard, making the data accessible electronically on the NCDHD website.

STRATEGIC PLAN

2023-2028 STRATEGIC PLAN

Strategic priorities:

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

NCDHD created a workforce development committee to focus on improving staff training and education. NCDHD also participated in PH Wins to assess workforce strengths and weaknesses.

CULTURE OF EXCELLENCE

NCDHD worked to create a culture of excellence by creating internal workgroups for: workforce development, ethics committee, safety committee, cultural committee, and wellness committee.

MARKETING & OUTREACH

NCDHD has made significant strides in marketing and outreach priority by partnering with Reach Media to place NCDHD outreach TVs throughout the district at: Antelope County Courthouse, Plainview Pharmacy, Niobrara Valley Clinic, the Red and White grocery store in Ainsworth, the Rock County Library, Henderson IG in Valentine, and Lance's Trading Post in Niobrara.

COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT & COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN

NCDHD spent significant time on CHA/CHIP this year by organizing a new Community Health Assessment for 2025-2027.

HEALTH EQUITY

Credible Mind:

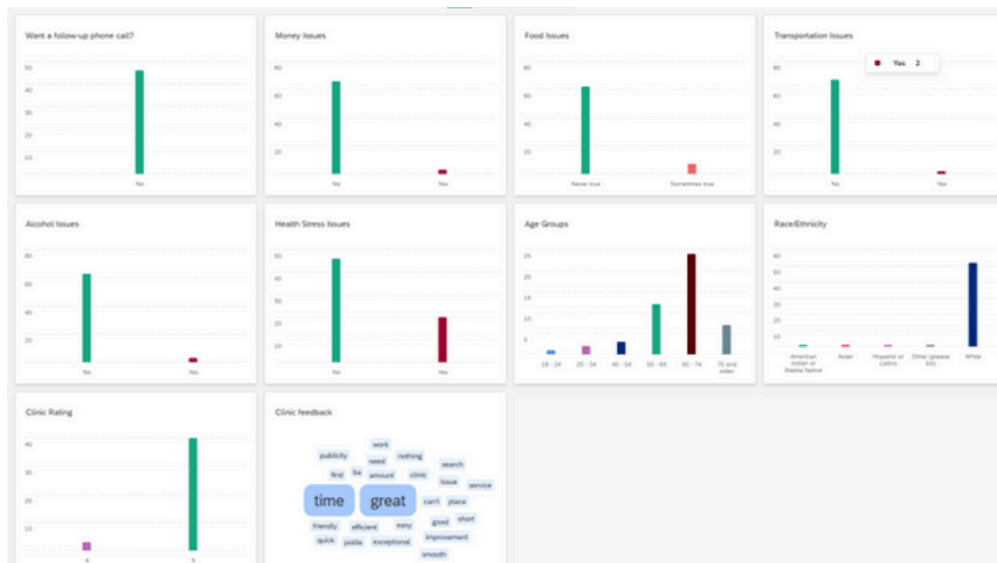
As part of its commitment to advancing mental health outreach, the North Central District Health Department (NCDHD) has actively promoted the online tool Credible Mind, a resource designed to provide discreet, accessible mental health support to individuals across the district.

Credible Mind offers a wide array of evidence-based tools and content, empowering users to address mental health concerns such as depression, anxiety, and stress management in a private and supportive manner.

Qualtrics:

Additionally, NCDHD has taken a leadership role in addressing Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) by implementing a new screening tool in alignment with the Nebraska Association of Local Health Departments. This initiative ensures consistent data collection across the state and enhances collaboration within Nebraska's public health network.

Through these efforts, NCDHD has reinforced trust, inclusivity, and partnerships, solidifying its position as a leader in community health and well-being across the district.



HEALTH EQUITY

Website:

NCDHD has demonstrated its commitment to advancing community health through strategic innovation, outreach, and partnerships. Leading the charge in website modernization, NCDHD successfully transitioned to its new domain, ncdhd.ne.gov, with technical support from the State Department. Despite challenges presented by Wix's limitations for .gov sites, NCDHD improved its online presence through homepage updates, menu enhancements, and progress toward ADA compliance.

Billboards:

In line with its ongoing commitment to health education and public awareness, the North Central District Health Department has significantly expanded its outreach efforts by launching 10 new billboards across the district. These billboards serve as highly visible platforms to disseminate vital information on pressing public health topics, ensuring that key messages reach diverse audiences in both rural and urban areas.

REACH Media:

Working to strengthen its community connections by fostering collaborative partnerships with local businesses to host Reach Media digital displays. These partnerships represent a strategic approach to embedding public health messaging within the community's daily environments, making health information more accessible and visible. Currently operational at seven targeted locations, these digital displays serve as dynamic platforms for disseminating important health resources, program updates, and educational messages.





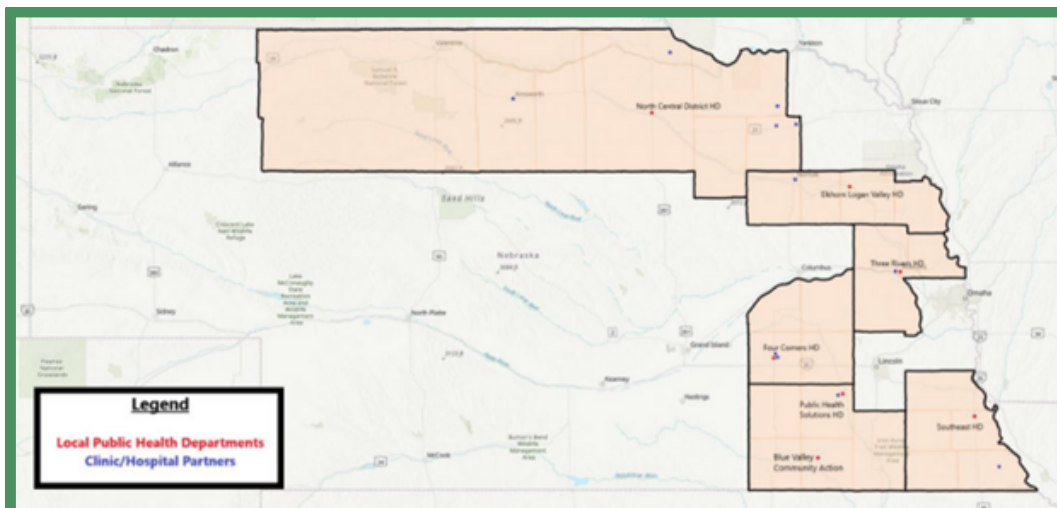
CATCH, INC. | HRSA

Community Access to
Coordinated Healthcare, Inc.
<http://www.catchnebraska.org>

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 contract with Osmond General Hospital - Wausa Clinic - and developed a data-tracking document and has given referrals to NCDHD. We are continuing to work with the clinic and have monthly meetings and follow ups to stay connected.

We are excited to have a new director for the Catch program, Dr. Patrick Hotovy, who has been a great asset to the program and has visions to integrate and acquire more referrals through his processes. Addressing SDOH and mental health will be the main focus of this program as we move forward.



WHY DISEASE SURVEILLANCE MATTERS

Disease Surveillance is a cornerstone for North Central District Health Department, enabling the detection, monitoring, and management of communicable diseases within our district. By systematically collecting, analyzing, and interpreting health data, we can take timely and informed actions to protect public health. Prevention, mitigation and control are vital steps to ensure the safety of our residents.

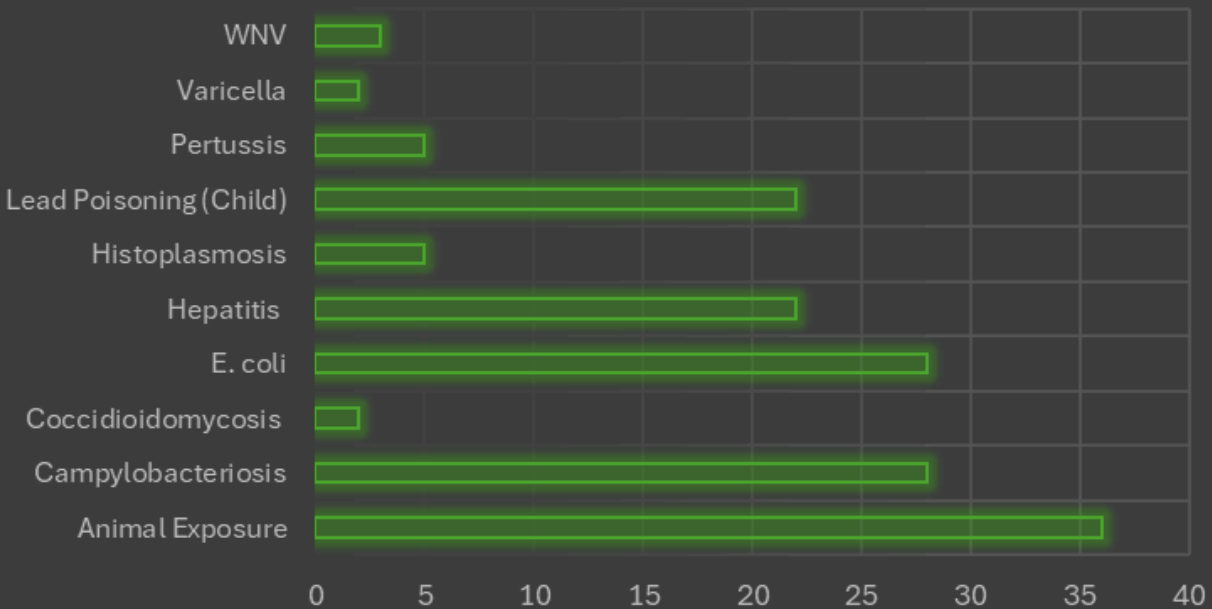


NCDHD's Approach

Disease Surveillance not only protects the health of individuals but also strengthens the resilience of our communities across the district and state. It allows us to collaborate among healthcare providers, schools, and community organizations, creating a network of vigilance that reduces the risk of widespread illness and health crises. By investing in robust surveillance systems, we safeguard our collective health and well-being.

MONITORING COMMUNITY HEALTH

Investigations

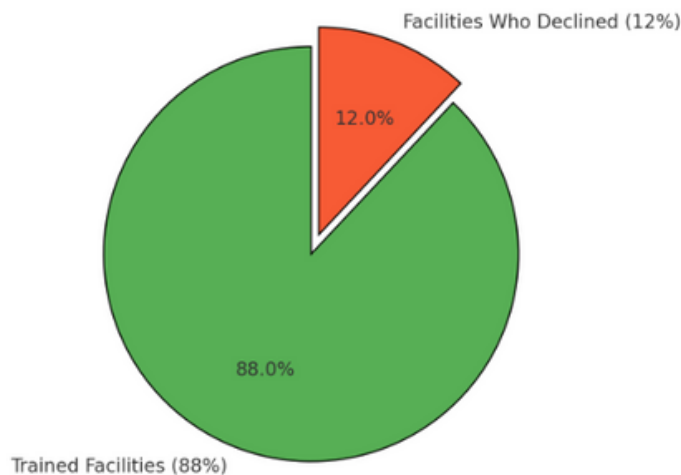


In 2024, NCDHD identified and reported 252 suspect, probable and confirmed communicable diseases within our district. The accompanying graph illustrates 9 specific communicable diseases throughout the surveillance year. This data excludes sexually transmitted infections. We also assisted many schools and nursing homes through outbreaks such as influenza, norovirus and COVID-19.

HOSPITAL ACQUIRED INFECTIONS PROGRAM

In 2024, NCDHD successfully completed its enhanced collaboration and training initiative with long-term care and assisted living facilities across the district. As part of this effort, final outreach included performing comprehensive training for facility personnel on conducting FIT testing for their staff. The NCDHD team continues to support facilities through ongoing education, current surveillance concerns, and guidance on mitigation and control measures related to HPAI and other communicable diseases.

NCDHD FIT Testing Completion Rate for Long-Term Care and Assisted Living Facilities



"All of the facilities were very organized and knowledgeable making it a pleasure to collaborate with them on prevention efforts. We remain committed to maintaining strong partnerships with these facilities as we work together to slow the spread."

-NCDHD HPAI Team

"I am proud to say that NCDHD had one of the highest completion rates in the state, and I'm glad to have played an important role in achieving that."

-Danielle Roessler, ERC



EMERGENCY RESPONSE

NCDHD achieved significant milestones this year in health preparedness, hazard mitigation, and community engagement. All the 10,000 COVID-19 tests provided by DHHS were successfully distributed across the region, ensuring accessibility for residents. Additionally, the FIT Test Training Program for long-term care and assisted living facility staff concluded in April, with strong participation from local facilities.

Hazard Mitigation Planning remained a key focus throughout the year. Efforts continued for Boyd, Keya Paha, Rock, Brown, and Cherry Counties, while Pierce County finalized its plan as part of a larger Northeastern Nebraska initiative. The Santee Sioux Nation's Hazard Mitigation Plan was completed and submitted to FEMA, with no sections requiring board approval.

Emergency Response Coordinator (ERC), Danielle Roessler, represented NCDHD at multiple workshops and trainings, including the Rural Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) workshop in Cleveland, Ohio, that she received a scholarship to attend free of charge. She also attended Medical Countermeasures Planning and Response training, and Incident Action Plans training in South Sioux City. Danielle participated in the annual Preparedness Seminar hosted by DHHS, was appointed chair of NACCHO's quarterly nationwide Rural PHEP group and accepted a two-year term on NACCHO's Preparedness Planning, Outcomes, and Measurement (PPOM) committee. Danielle also filled in as an interim member on the RROMRS executive committee as one member retired.

Cybersecurity and emergency preparedness were enhanced through a series of Cyber Ready games developed in collaboration with FEMA and Northeast Community College. The first game, held in July at Northeast's Norfolk campus, attracted 40 participants. Additional games were hosted in Ainsworth and O'Neill, with further dates to be announced. These events provided local businesses, healthcare services, utilities, and emergency management agencies an opportunity to improve their preparedness strategies and the feedback from community members was positive.

Danielle represented the district at the Neligh Farm and Home Show and the Ranch Expo in Bassett. The department also hosted the NCDHD Healthy Living Expo in Niobrara, further connecting with residents and promoting health initiatives. Awareness campaigns were bolstered with the completion of a new STD awareness billboard and website page.

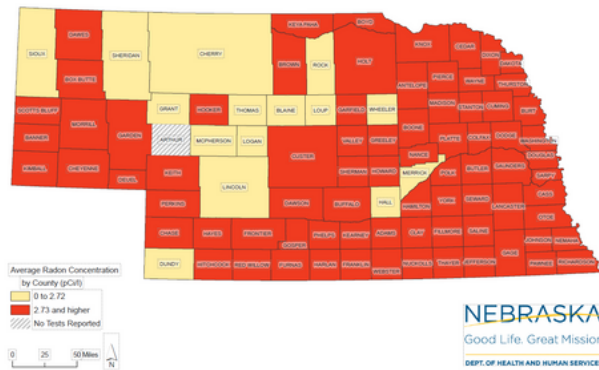
The NCDHD team assisted with the response to the October explosion that affected St Mary's schools and Avera St Anthony's Hospital by coordinating communication between hospitals and the state, providing on site assistance and mental health resources from Heartland Counseling.

Through hazard mitigation planning, preparedness training, cybersecurity initiatives, and community outreach, NCDHD continues to serve as a leader in public health and emergency readiness for the region.

RADON



Average Radon Concentrations by County
Data Collections Reported to the Nebraska Radon Program
for October 1, 2018 to September 30, 2023



Radon is everywhere, under every home in every neighborhood in every community. The colorless and odorless radioactive gas - the No. 2 overall cause of lung cancer deaths and the top lung-cancer killer of non-smokers - seeps into all homes. The environmental toxin, however, can pose a health danger in one home while the home across the street has an acceptable gas level. Nebraska is the No. 3 state in the nation with the potential for high radon levels, with the eastern third of the state the most vulnerable. Iowa is the No. 1 state with the potential for high radon levels.

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 per kit.

NCDHD continues to partner with HQIP (Healthcare Quality Improvement Platform) Program to encourage lung cancer screening in adults with limited access to facilities that offer low dose CT's. Thus far, NCDHD has partnered with Avera St Anthony's Hospital and Avera Creighton Hospitals and recently has included Osmond General, Antelope Memorial and Cherry County Hospital to promote this preventive measure. We hope to encourage other critical access hospitals in the district to partner and help with early detection of lung cancer due to our district having Radon levels greater than 4 pCi/L.





VECTOR BORNE ILLNESS

2024 Statewide Routine Mosquito Surveillance and Testing Summary

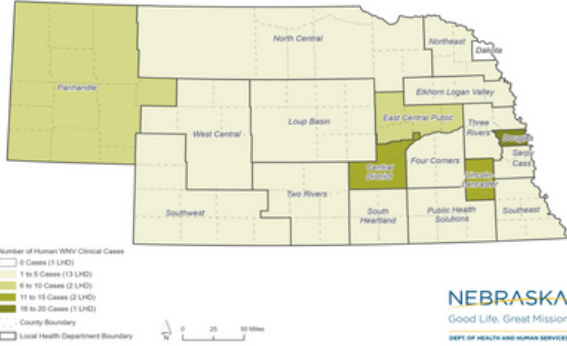


- 2024 Mosquito Surveillance
 - Routine mosquito surveillance has ended for the season.
 - 102,933 total mosquitoes (34 different species) collected during the season.
 - This is 14% more mosquitoes collected than in 2023 (n = 90,233).
 - 27,639 total Culex mosquitoes (primary WNV vectors) collected during the season.
 - This is 23% fewer Culex mosquitoes collected than in 2023 (n = 35,706).
- 2024 Routine Mosquito Testing
 - 26,615 Culex tested (in 1,303 pools) during the season.
 - 94 positive WNV positive pools detected.
 - This is 58% fewer positive WNV pools than in 2023 (n = 224).
 - 7.2% of pools positive for WNV.
 - This is lower than in 2023 (14.3%).
 - Statewide cumulative WNV Mosquito Infection Rate (MIR) of 3.8 per 1,000 mosquitoes.
 - This is lower than in 2023 (6.7 per 1,000 mosquitoes).
 - No positive SLE or WEE positive pools were detected during the season.



Educational materials along with insect wipes were distributed at farm and home shows. Vector control wipes and dunks were offered to each of the counties for use at community events and larva control in standing water and ponds. Several golf courses in the district utilized mosquito dunks for use in their water hazard areas as well.

2024 West Nile Virus Human Clinical Cases by Local Health Department, Updated 30 October 2024



NCDHD collected Ticks at Hull Lake WMS, Dry Creek WMA and Niobrara State Park. A total of **288 ticks** were collected amongst all three parks over a two-month period. There was a single lone star tick (*Amblyomma americanum*) that was picked up from the Boyd County site. It is believed to be the furthest north a lone star tick has been found in the state.



ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH



Environmental Health Program

The Environmental Health Program is committed to protecting public health by addressing environmental risks that impact the well-being of our community. In 2024, we made significant strides in tackling key areas, including radon, lead, water quality, air quality, vector-borne diseases, and city nuisances.

Radon Awareness and Mitigation

2024 Highlights:

- Distribute radon testing kits and mapped high-risk areas.
- Increased community outreach through educational campaigns and resources to encourage radon testing and mitigation.

Lead Exposure Prevention

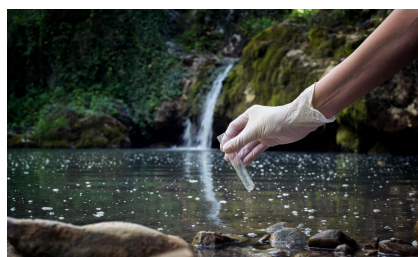
2024 Highlights:

- Conducted lead awareness webinars in collaboration with the EPA, focusing on homes built before 1978.
- Promoted lead-safe practices through schools and community programs.

Water Quality Protection

2024 Highlights:

- Collaborated with third-grade classrooms on citizen science projects to test and monitor water quality.
- Engaged students and families in discussions about water safety and shared results to increase awareness.
- Advocated for the statewide free nitrate testing program and provided resources to address contaminants in drinking water when identified.



ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH



Air Quality Monitoring

2024 Highlights:

- Installed three new Purple Air Monitors in Ainsworth, Butte, and O'Neill.
- Developed an air quality workplan tailored for rural communities, addressing potential concerns despite limited risks.
- Partnered with local stakeholders to promote air quality awareness and share monitoring results.

Vector-Borne Disease Prevention

2024 Highlights:

- Conducted mosquito and tick trapping to monitor populations and assess disease risks.
- Distributed educational materials on preventing mosquito and tick bites and reducing breeding areas.

Why It Matters

Addressing environmental health risks improves community safety, prevents disease, and fosters long-term resilience. Our efforts in 2024 have helped reduce exposure to harmful substances, raised public awareness, and empowered residents to take action to protect their health.

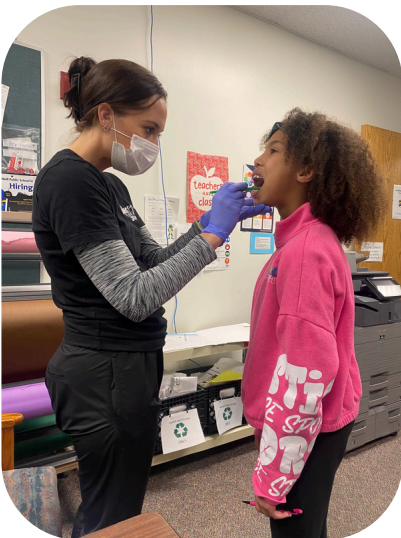
Looking Ahead

The Environmental Health Program will continue to build on the successes of 2024 by expanding partnerships, increasing public engagement, and advancing policies and initiatives that promote a healthier, safer environment for all.

2024 MILES OF SMILES



- 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 3,965 dental screenings and 3,191 fluoride varnish applications.
- 489 children were referred for suspicious areas. 60 children were referred for urgent dental care.
- 28% of the children that participated noted they do not have a dental home.



**Dental caries/cavities
remain the most
prevalent chronic disease
in children nationwide.**



SELF-MONITORING BLOOD PRESSURE PROGRAM



Feel Better. Live Better. Lower Your
Blood Pressure for Better Health.

Program Highlights:

- **Educational Resources:** Participants gain access to comprehensive educational resources, ensuring they are well-equipped with the knowledge needed for effective self-monitoring.
- **Ongoing Support:** A key feature of the program is the continuous support provided to participants. Our commitment extends beyond resources to ensure participants feel supported.
- **Regular Blood Pressure Monitoring:** Encouraging participants to monitor their blood pressure regularly forms a crucial aspect of the program. This simple yet impactful action serves as a proactive measure for health management.
- **Detailed Reports to Healthcare Providers:** To facilitate seamless communication, a final report summarizing participants' blood pressure data is submitted to their primary healthcare providers. This ensures that healthcare professionals are kept in the loop about participants' progress.
- **Program Objective:** The primary objective of the Self-Monitoring Blood Pressure Program is to mitigate the risk of hypertension-related complications within our community. By fostering a culture of active health management, we aim to enhance overall health outcomes for our community members.
- **Next Steps:** As we move forward, our focus remains on providing valuable resources, support, and encouragement to participants. Continuous improvement and adaptability are at the core of our approach, ensuring that the program evolves to meet the dynamic needs of our community.



2024-'25 HeartCorps Member TyLinn Dodd
Valentine, NE Emergency Outdoor Pantry

PARTNERING WITH HEARTCORPS

Program of AmeriCorps and American Heart Association

About AmeriCorps and HeartCorps

The HeartCorps program is an AmeriCorps initiative focused on improving public health and expanding access to quality healthcare services in underserved communities. AmeriCorps members participating in HeartCorps serve in a variety of roles, such as health educators, outreach coordinators, and support staff, working to address health disparities, promote preventive care, and enhance community health. By engaging directly with local populations, HeartCorps aims to foster healthier environments and empower individuals with the knowledge and resources needed to live healthier lives.

This is the 2nd year that NCDHD has hosted the program continuing work with our HeartCorps Service Member TyLinn Dodd. She continues her work through assisting with AED placement, providing emergency outdoor food pantries, host free blood pressure screenings, and providing community health activities through programs like Bingocize. All these goals and more provided to the rural communities in the north central district area of Nebraska.

Why it's Important:

Nearly half of all Americans have high blood pressure and is a growing concern in rural communities. Access to healthcare and health education can be limited. In these areas, individuals may be less likely to receive regular screenings or seek treatment for high blood pressure due to factors like lack of medical facilities, transportation challenges, and limited awareness of the condition's risks.

Improving hypertension awareness and prevention in rural communities requires inclusive education and outreach programs that focus on lifestyle changes, such as healthier eating and increased physical activity. Increasing access to affordable healthcare and encouraging routine blood pressure monitoring are essential steps toward managing hypertension and reducing related health risks in these communities.



Together We Will:

- Increase personal blood pressure awareness and management of high blood pressure in the community.
- Increase access to blood pressure cuffs
- Offer more community interactions
- Increase continuous access to food and improved access to health foods for those who rely on food pantries.
- Educate on hands-only CPR.



2024 HeartCorps Retreat in Dallas, Tx | Feeding the community CitySquare



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 reduce substance abuse.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- NCDHD provided Responsible Beverage Server Trainings to servers and Seller of Alcohol
- NCDHD taught the Catch My Breath Vaping curriculum to Plainview and Elgin Public Schools.
- Through direct NCDHD funding and partnership funds, NCDHD assisted nearly 2,000 student, staff, and community members experience some type of prevention presentation in person. These presentation included: Mike Donahue, Understanding the Opioid Epidemic, Des Moines Adams, etc.
- Provided a Tall Cop presentation to 80 partners
- NCDHD and the Health Choices for Cherry County coalition participated in National Night Out in Valentine, NE and provide the Pig Lung Demonstration (pictured below).





Immunization Report

It's important to NCDHD that everyone, no matter their age, location, or how much money they make, can get access to vaccinations. Here is what the Immunization Program did in 2024 to make that possible!

Look for us in:
Valentine and
Niobrara in the
even months,
Bloomfield and
Ainsworth in the
odd months

Expanding Access Across All Counties In 2024, NCDHD continued to provide vital access to vaccinations throughout our nine-county region. A total of **54 fall flu shot clinics** were held, in addition to weekly clinics in O'Neill and bi-monthly clinics in Niobrara, Bloomfield, Ainsworth, and Valentine. At mobile clinics, we offered flu, COVID-19, shingles, pneumonia, Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis), and RSV vaccines. Other vaccines were available upon request with prior notice.

Vaccination Services for All Income Levels Our commitment to affordability ensures that everyone can receive vaccines regardless of income. We accept most insurance plans and participate in the Vaccines for Children (VFC) and Vaccines for Adults (VFA) programs. Through these programs, NCDHD provides vaccines to those without insurance or with limited vaccine coverage for a donation. If a person cannot donate, they are still vaccinated at no charge. A private-pay option is also available for those who prefer it.

Enhanced Accessibility for Mobility Challenges NCDHD remains committed to inclusivity by providing a wheelchair at all clinics and offering the option to administer vaccines directly in a person's vehicle. These efforts ensure that mobility issues do not prevent anyone from receiving critical immunizations.

NCDHD helps those with mobility problems



DID YOU KNOW?

If you have trouble walking or just need a little help, NCDHD brings a wheelchair with us to every clinic!

Look for the wheelchair inside the entrance door at all mobile clinics.

Look for the wheelchair right inside our clinic door at our office in O'Neill!

NCDHD will also come out to your vehicle!

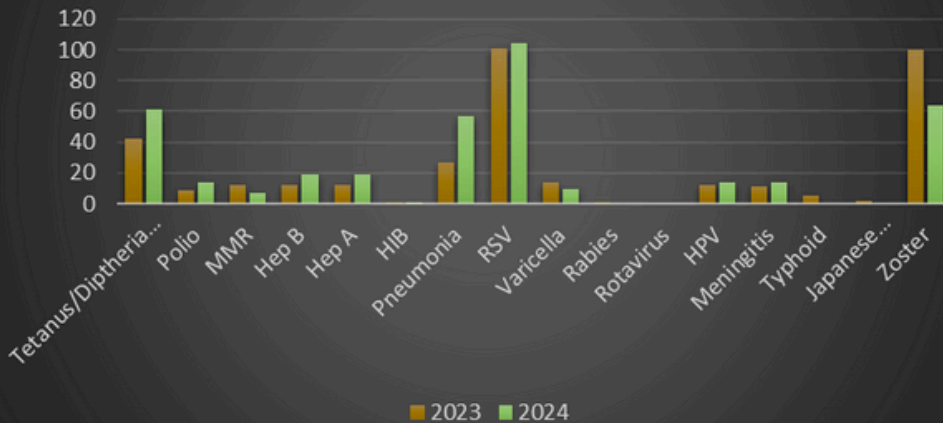
Visit with clinic staff to find out how this works!



Relinquishment Program for Homebound Residents The Relinquishment Program 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 filing. In 2024, five programs participated, vaccinating 114 people through this initiative.

On-Site Clinics for Assisted Living Facilities NCDHD continued offering on-site vaccination services to assisted living facilities. This fall, four facilities took advantage of the program, where COVID-19, flu, shingles, and RSV vaccines were administered. This program enhances access for vulnerable older adults and supports healthier communities.

Routine Vaccinations given in 2024, compared with 2023

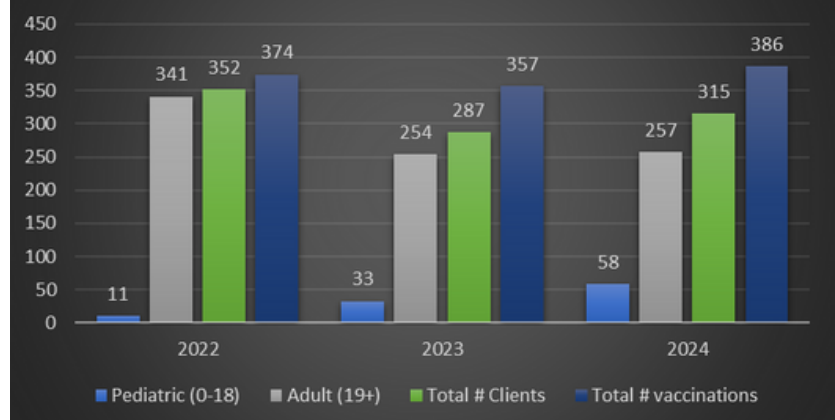


Number and types of vaccinations given by NCDHD in 2024, does not include COVID-19 or Influenza

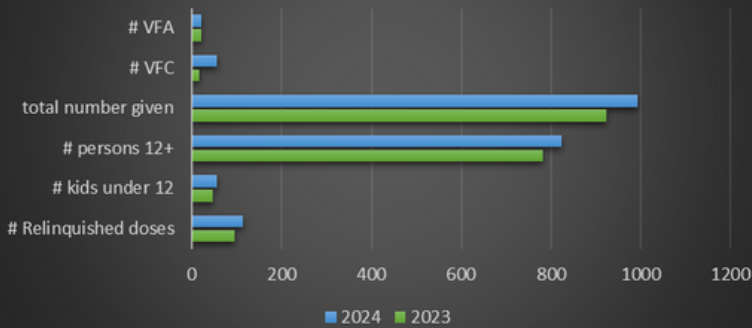
At NCDHD, we have all the vaccines you might need. If you're not sure or have questions, just give us a call - our friendly staff are here to help. NCDHD also provides vaccines needed for travel, immigration, and school. And guess what? We'll bring any vaccine to our mobile clinics if you let us know in advance.

As you can see in the chart, the number of pediatric clients grew significantly, from just 11 in 2022 to 58 in 2024, showing a notable rise in childhood vaccination participation. Despite a dip in adult client numbers, overall engagement remains strong. The increase in total vaccinations reflects NCDHD's ongoing efforts to provide access to preventive healthcare.

Comparing Number of clients



Comparison of 2023 and 2024 COVID-19 Vaccinations



COVID-19 vaccine update

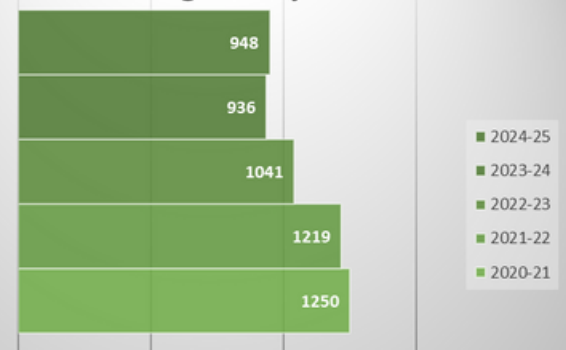
The updated COVID-19 vaccines became available in fall 2024, marking a shift toward an annual update as a new standard. Many locations stopped offering COVID-19 vaccines or limits them to adults only. NCDHD continues to fill this gap by providing vaccines for everyone aged 6 months and older at all clinics. COVID-19 vaccination uptake in the pediatric population increased significantly, with only two doses given to children aged 6 months to 11 years in fall 2023 compared to 55 doses in fall 2024. A rise in vaccinations was also observed among adolescents aged 12 to 19. Adults aged 65 and older can receive a second dose six months after their fall shot if needed. It is recommended that anyone whose last COVID-19 vaccine was before September 2024 receive a new dose.

Influenza (Flu) Shots

Nationwide, flu vaccination rates continued to decline in 2024. However, NCDHD's clinic participation remained steady compared to last year.

For the fourth year in a row, uptake of high-dose flu vaccine (HD vaccine) for adults over 65 was higher, reflecting increased awareness of its importance for older adults. Flu vaccines are available at NCDHD clinics from September through April 30 each year, ensuring extended access for all.

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 2024 will not be available until 2025.



Outreach and Education The Immunization Program expanded its educational efforts in 2024, acquiring a plinko game to engage the public in learning about vaccines. Participants answered vaccine-related questions in exchange for tokens to win prizes. The program participated in several community events, including the Antelope Co. Ag & Home Expo, Ranch Expo, and the O'Neill Health Conference. In addition, Vaccine clinics were offered at both the Healthy Living Expo and the KBRX Farm & Home Show, providing additional access to immunizations. These events provided valuable opportunities to educate the public about the importance of vaccines and increase community engagement.

NCDHD helps spread awareness through Community Outreach and Education



A new outreach initiative was launched in partnership with local food pantries to support health equity for pantry clients. In two pantries (Rock Co. and Antelope Co. Food Pantries), on-site clinics were held, where vaccinations were offered along with free products, county-specific resources, and environmental hazard information. Additionally, four other food banks received clinic location details, and county-specific resources to be placed in the distributions.

VACCINE BILLING

Vaccine billing remains critical to the fiscal viability of the department. The 2024 billing year showed improved remits with fewer denials compared to the previous year.

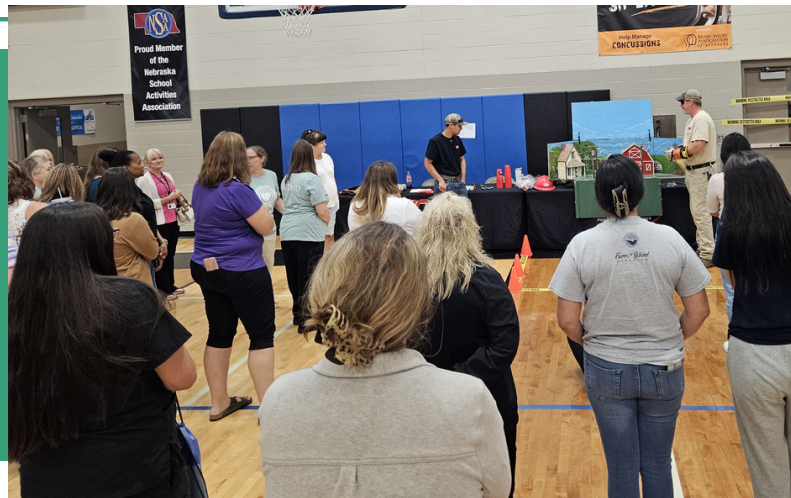
NCDHD engaged in a billing and coding community of practice in 2024. This has improved success with denials and been very beneficial to our program ensuring we are capturing all available billing codes.

Total 2024 Insurance Payments For Vaccinations
\$236,307.13

The training for the implementation of the Patagonia EHR started in 2024. They will continue trainings into 2025 with a mid-February go live for the program. This system will also be used for all vaccination billing for 2025 claims.



2024 Healthy Living Expo- Niobrara



Initiated and hosted by NCDHD, the Healthy Living Expo in Niobrara was a one-day event designed to provide access to essential community services for residents of all ages. The Expo had four key objectives:

1. Showcase all NCDHD services.
2. Include community partners offering on-site services or education on healthy living, housing, transportation, food, and mental health.
3. Improve residents' knowledge of available community resources.
4. Identify gaps in community resources.

The event featured 32 community vendors covering topics such as radon and environmental hazards, Medicaid and insurance information, prevention services, mental health resources, hospital services, water testing, pest control, and weather. NCDHD highlighted its programs with eight booths, including Environmental Health, Vaccinations, Prevention, American Heart Association, Dental, and Communicable Disease Programs.



We attended the Health Expo in Niobrara at the gym. It was very informative and well organized. Great job to everyone that had a part in it. Would love to see it again next year.



An exit survey completed by 41 respondents showed that all participants successfully obtained the services or information they sought and expressed a willingness to attend future events. The overwhelmingly positive feedback confirmed that this was a well-received event, and NCDHD looks forward to continuing the Healthy Living Expo in the future.