Legislative Council Staff
Nonpartisan Services for Colorado's Legislature

Memorandum

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TO: Interested Persons

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SUBJECT: Overview of Colorado's Public Health Delivery Structure

Summary

State rule defines "public health" as the prevention of injury, disease, and premature mortality; the promotion of health in the community; and the response to public and environmental health needs and emergencies in the community; and is accomplished through the provision of essential public health services and activities.[1]

This memorandum provides an overview of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), including the divisions, offices, and boards within CDPHE. It also discusses the role of local public health agencies in the provision of public health services. It concludes with a list of recent LCS publications concerning public health and environmental issues.

Divisions and Offices within CDPHE

The CDPHE has ten divisions and seven offices.[2] The duties of each organizational unit are outlined in more detail below.

Administration Division

The Administration Division provides core operational functions that support the rest of the department, including building operations, financial services, human resources, legal and regulatory services, strategic planning, and evaluation.[3] CDPHE's executive leadership is also located within the division. These functions support virtually every other component of CDPHE,

[1] 6 CCR 1014-7

[2] CDPHE Divisions and Offices

[3] Section 25-1-102 (2)(a), C.R.S.

giving the Administration Division a department-wide role rather than a focus on a particular public health or environmental program.

Air Pollution Control Division

The Air Pollution Control Division, guided by the Air Quality Control Commission, enforces the state's air pollution laws.[4] It issues air-related emissions permits and conducts inspections of regulated pollution sources, both mobile and stationary. It conducts rulemaking related to air quality issues, including soliciting public input and responding to air quality complaints. The division also oversees the department's Climate Change Program, which conducts the statewide greenhouse gas inventory and develops regulations to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. Together, these activities make the division the state's primary regulatory body for controlling air pollution and addressing the environmental and public health impacts associated with poor air quality and greenhouse gas emission.

Center for Health and Environmental Data

The Center for Health and Environmental Data collects public data on issues related to environmental and public health. It maintains the Colorado Health Information Dataset to provide information on births, deaths, cancer, drug overdoses, health indicators, environmental epidemiology data, immunization, and community health, among others. It also tracks medical marijuana and maternal and child health. The Office of the State Registrar of Vital Statistics is the state's central repository for birth, death, and other vital records, and is where Coloradans may request a copy of birth certificates, death certificates, and other documents. The center also houses the state's medical marijuana registry.

Colorado Public Health Lab (Lab Services Division)

The Colorado Public Health Lab performs a wide array of laboratory services to detect, investigate, and control public health hazards.

Disease Control and Public Health Response Division

The Disease Control and Public Health Response Division works to prevent and control the spread of communicable diseases and other public health threats. It promotes disease prevention and coordinates rapid responses to outbreaks. The division publishes public health information on workplace safety, emergency preparedness, and preventable diseases. It also

[4] 25-7-111, C.R.S.

works to expand access to vaccines, testing, treatments, and other resources that help prevent illness.

Division of Environmental Health and Sustainability

The Division of Environmental Health and Sustainability contains programs to enforce safety standards for food, schools, child care facilities, state correctional facilities, and tanning facilities. Its food safety programs include milk, manufactured food, and retail food establishments. The division also oversees animal feeding safety in the agricultural industry and regulates waste programs, including medication take-backs and recycling.

Its Toxicology and Risk Assessment Program works with other environmental and public health programs at CDPHE and with local public health agencies to identify sources of concern in the environment, identify potential health impacts, and inform projects and policy decisions. The office's work includes environmental public health tracking, the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, the Oil and Gas Health Information and Response Program, and the Toxicology and Risk Assessment Program.

Hazardous Materials and Waste Management Division

The Hazardous Materials and Waste Management Division regulates hazardous waste management and environmental cleanup, including for federal Superfund sites. It addresses health concerns related to radiation, x-ray machines, and radon. It also oversees waste disposal, including landfills, composting, and transfer stations.

Health Facilities and Emergency Medical Services Division

The Health Facilities and Emergency Medical Services Division regulates a variety of health facilities, including hospitals, clinics, long-term care facilities, and emergency medical service providers. It also oversees emergency medical responder registration, provides grants for emergency medical and trauma services, and collects data on emergency services.

This division also encompasses the states various contaminated site cleanups and remediation programs. These programs address contaminated properties and hazardous site requiring cleanup or long-term remediation.

Prevention Services Division

The Prevention Services Division offers information and screening services for a variety of health topics, including infants, chronic diseases, tobacco and smoking, cannabis and other drugs,

sexual and reproductive health, women's health, suicide prevention, and gun violence prevention.[5]

The Chronic Disease Prevention Program is the largest component of this division, and supports statewide efforts to reduce or prevent the burden of chronic diseases and related health conditions. The program also administers significant grant funding to local government, health organizations, and community partners, which support administration of prevention programs at the local level.

Water Quality Control Division

The Water Quality Control Division monitors and reports on water quality for surface water, groundwater, and drinking water systems.[6] It issues discharge permits, inspects water systems, and enforces compliance with state and federal water quality standards. The division also administers the Drinking Water Program which protects public drinking-water supplies through regulatory oversight and technical assistance to public water systems.

Office of Communications

The Office of Communications oversees all communications for CDPHE related to Colorado's environment and the health and safety of Coloradans. The office serves as the department's central communications function, coordinating public information across CDPHE's divisions and ensuring that information about public health risks, environmental conditions, regulations, emergencies, and department programs is communicated clearly and consistently. It develops and distributes information through a range of media, including news releases, digital and social networks, the department's website, and public outreach initiatives.

Office of Emergency Preparedness and Response

The Office of Emergency Preparedness and Response works with local public health agencies, health care systems, emergency managers, and state and federal partners to plan, train, and respond to emergencies. During natural disasters, disease outbreaks, and human-caused incidents, it represents the department at the State Emergency Operations Center and ensures public health and environmental priorities are included in statewide response decisions.

[5] Section 25-20.5-103, C.R.S.

[6] Section 25-8-103, C.R.S.

Office of Environmental Justice

The Office of Environmental Justice was established in 2021 to promote environmental justice across all four CDPHE Environmental Divisions.[7] Its mission is to protect communities in Colorado that are disproportionately impacted by environmental injustices, pollution, and climate change. It awards grants in disproportionately impacted communities, addresses pollution-related complaints, and administers supplemental environmental projects, which are performed or funded by polluters as part of an enforcement action. The office also houses Colorado EnviroScreen, a collaboration with Colorado State University and the University of Colorado, which provides detailed maps of environmental health data at the community scale.

Office of Health Equity

The Office of Health Equity works to build partnerships to within communities and across organizations to promote health equity and environmental justice.[8] The office collaborates with community members, local organizations, public agencies, and other partners to identify and address the social, economic, and environmental factors that contribute to health disparities.

The Health Equity Commission provides guidance and recommendations to the Office of Health Equity and the Department on issues related to health equity and environmental justice. The Commission brings together diverse perspectives and community experiences to help inform policies, programs, and initiatives.

Office of Public Health Practice, Planning, and Local Partnerships

The Office of Public Health Practice, Planning, and Local Partnerships supports public health throughout Colorado by promoting collaborations, partnerships, and planning with other state, local, and national organizations. The office helps connect local public health agencies to each other and to state and national entities; and provides consultation and technical assistance. The office also helps build and maintain partnerships that strengthen the capacity of local public health agencies to identify community needs, plan for emerging public health challenges, and implement effective programs and services.

[7] Section 25-1-133.5, C.R.S.

[8] Section 25-4-2204, C.R.S.

Office of STI/HIV/VH

The Office of STI/HIV/VH works to ensure that medically accurate prevention, care, and treatment services for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), and viral hepatitis (VH) are available to all people in Colorado. Functions include public health surveillance of these conditions; follow-up on people newly diagnosed to ensure adequate treatment and referrals to care; access to care, partner services, and treatment as appropriate; developing comprehensive prevention programs; and conducting program evaluations of these efforts.

Office of Strategy, Performance, and Innovation

The Office of Strategy, Performance, and Innovation is the strategic planning arm of CDPHE, while also addressing digital accessibility.

Local Public Health Agencies

Colorado has a state-supervised, county-administered model for public heath under which the CDPHE establishes standards for public health services, provides funding, and performs oversight, while local public health agencies (LPHAs) deliver direct services.

State Board of Health rule requires health departments in Colorado to ensure provision of seven "foundational capabilities" and five "foundational services." [9]

Foundational Capabilities

- **Assessment and Planning.** Monitor and investigate community health problems using epidemiology, surveillance, and data analysis to inform planning and policy decisions.
- **Communications.** Serve as a trusted, transparent source of accurate health information using equitable, multi-directional communication strategies.
- **Policy Development and Support.** Develop and implement policies that eliminate health disparities, reduce death and disability, and improve environmental and health outcomes for all Coloradans.
- **Partnerships.** Build and sustain strategic partnerships with community members, cross-sector organizations, and agencies to advance public health goals.

[9] 6 CCR 1014-7.

- **Organizational Competencies.** Maintain a high-functioning system through accountability, quality improvement, qualified workforce, legal and financial management, information technology infrastructure, and strong leadership.
- **Emergency Preparedness and Response.** Coordinate with federal, state, and local partners to prepare for, respond to, and recover from health and environmental emergencies.
- **Health Equity/Social Determinants of Health.** Address systemic inequities, racism, and social disadvantage to ensure all Coloradans have the opportunity to achieve their highest possible level of health.

Foundational Services

- **Communicable Disease Prevention, Investigation and Control.** Conduct surveillance, investigation, and laboratory testing to monitor and reduce the spread of communicable diseases, including vaccine-preventable, foodborne, sexually transmitted, and emerging threats, in coordination with national, state, and local partners.
- **Environmental Health.** Use evidence-informed practices to protect community and ecological health by monitoring air, water, land, and food safety, and addressing current and emerging environmental health risks in coordination with federal, state, and local agencies.
- **Maternal, Child, Adolescent and Family Health.** Develop and evaluate strategies to improve health and wellbeing, reduce adverse outcomes, and advance health equity across all life stages through evidence-informed, multigenerational approaches and community partnerships.
- **Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention and Behavioral Health Promotion.** Use policy, systems, and environmental change strategies to address root causes of poor health outcomes in areas such as nutrition, physical activity, oral health, injury prevention, mental health, and substance use.
- **Access to/Linkage with Clinical Health Care.** Coordinate governmental and community partners to connect all Coloradans with essential health care services, including primary, maternal, oral, specialty, and mental health care.

Specifically, LPHAs provide a wide array of public health services, which include, but are not limited to:

- animal shelters;
- behavioral health services;
- data collection and planning;

- disease prevention and immunizations;
- environmental quality;
- emergency preparedness and response;
- health education;
- health equity;
- food service inspections;
- maternal and child health; and
- vital records.

Visit the CDPHE website to find your local public health agency.

Boards, Commissions, and Enterprises

Table 1 lists CDPHE boards, commissions, and enterprises established in state statute that have major regulatory or programmatic duties within the department. Other advisory boards, commissions, and panels are outlined in the bulleted list below.

Table 1
Statutory Boards, Commissions, and Enterprises within CDPHE

Body	Statutory Authority	Charge
Air Quality Control Commission	24-1-119 (7)(a), C.R.S.	The commission adopts and oversees the state's air quality management program to promote clean and healthy air and protect Colorado's natural resources.
Air Quality Enterprise	24-1-119 (17), C.R.S.	The enterprise conducts air quality modeling, monitoring, assessment, data analysis, and research, and provides data to fee payers and state regulators
Child Fatality Prevention System State Review Team	25-20.5-406, C.R.S.	The state review team examines child deaths in Colorado, collects and examines data, and makes recommendations on prevention and interventions that can reduce child fatalities.
Clean Fleet Enterprise	24-1-119 (13), C.R.S.	The enterprise supports the use of electric motor vehicles and other clean fleet technologies by owners and operators of motor vehicle fleets.

Body	Statutory Authority	Charge
Colorado Circular Communities Enterprise	24-1-119 (18), C.R.S.	The enterprise provides support for Colorado communities, businesses, nonprofits, schools, institutions of higher learning, and tribes to advance the state's transition to a circular economy and promote recycling and similar efforts.
Colorado Coroners Standards and Training Board	24-1-119 (15), C.R.S.	The board establishes and maintains standards for coroner education, training and certification in Colorado.
Emergency Medical Practice Advisory Council	24-1-119 (16), C.R.S.	The council advises the department about the appropriate scope of practice for emergency medical services providers, including reviewing waivers to the standard scope of practice and setting criteria for physicians to serve as EMS medical directors.
Nursing Home Innovations Grant Board	24-1-119 (14), C.R.S.	The board makes recommendations for the approval of grants, funded by Civil Money Penalty funds, that benefit residents of nursing homes.
Solid and Hazardous Waste Commission	24-1-119 (8), C.R.S.	The commission sets rules for solid and hazardous waste; establishes fees; and issues rulings and manages appeals regarding hazardous waste violations and penalties.
State Board of Health	24-1-119 (2), C.R.S.	The board promulgates rules related to Colorado public health, approves funding for public health grants, appoints members to specific department committees, and advises the executive director as appropriate.
Waste Tire Management Enterprise	30-20-1403 (1.5), C.R.S.	The enterprise manages a fee-based program to manage waste tires in the state through financial incentives for recycling waste tires into end-use tire-derived products.
Water and Wastewater Facility Operators Certification Board	24-1-119 (6)(d), C.R.S.	The board oversees the certification program for operators of water treatment plants, municipal and industrial wastewater treatment plants, water distribution systems, and wastewater collection systems.
Water Quality Control Commission	24-1-119 (3), C.R.S.	The commission is the administrative agency responsible for developing water quality policy in Colorado, in a manner that implements the broader policies set forth by the Colorado Water Quality Control Act.

Other Boards, Commissions, Committees, and Advisory Panels

Other internal boards, commissions, and other bodies have been created by the CDPHE or in state law to advise the department on programs, policies, priorities, and other issues as defined by their respective enabling documents.

- Assisted Living Advisory Committee
- Behavioral Health Entity Implementation and Advisory Committee
- Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening Program Advisory Board
- Cancer, Cardiovascular and Chronic Pulmonary Disease Grant Program Review Committee
- Closed Landfill Remediation Grant Program Advisory Committee
- Colorado Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund
- Colorado Chemical Demilitarization Citizens' Advisory Committee
- Community Advisory Board
- Dialysis Treatment Clinic Advisory Committee
- Emergency Preparedness and Response Public Health and Medical Advisory Committee
- Environmental Justice Advisory Board
- Governor's Expert Emergency Epidemic Response Committee
- HB 1294 Stakeholder Forum
- Health Care Associated Infections Advisory Committee
- Health Equity Commission
- HIV and AIDS community involvement, committees, and groups
- Long-Term Care Advisory Committee
- Medical Marijuana Scientific Advisory Council
- Pollution Prevention Advisory Board
- Radiation Advisory Committee
- Rare Disease Advisory Council
- Regional Emergency Medical and Trauma Advisory Councils
- Retail Marijuana Public Health Advisory Committee
- Small Business Assistance Program Compliance Advisory Panel
- State Emergency Assistance Program Compliance Advisory Panel
- Stroke Advisory Board
- Suicide Prevention Commission
- Tobacco Grant Program Review Committee
- Youth Partnership in Health

Additional Publications

Legislative Council Staff has prepared additional publications on public health and environmental policy topics under the purview of the CDPHE. Recent publications are linked below.

Public Health Publications

- Air Pollution Regulation in Colorado
- Colorado Clean Indoor Air Act
- Colorado's Involvement in National and Global Public Health Networks
- Data Center Impacts on the Environment, Public Health, and Energy Costs
- Glossary of Common Public Health Terms
- Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza
- Implications of Social Media Use on Adolescent Mental Health and Policy Framework
- Raw Milk and Public Health
- Social Determinants of Health
- Understanding the Hierarchy of Evidence: A Framework for Health Research
- Vaccinations for School-Aged Children

Environmental Publications

- Climate Action Plan Data
- Data Center Impacts on the Environment, Public Health, and Energy Costs
- Overview of Ground-Level Ozone in Colorado
- Regulatory Framework for Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Single-Use Plastics Legislation
- State Climate Superfund Laws
- The Role of Colorado's Forests in Greenhouse Gas Mitigation
- Wildfire-related Funding in Colorado