

2025

Community Health Improvement Plan



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Our Community

Two Rivers Public Health is situated in the heart of the state, where each county has its unique qualities and strengths that enrich our community.

Buffalo County is known for its beautiful mix of farmland, gentle hills, and the Platte River. This river not only offers fun recreational activities but also helps local farmers with irrigation.

Dawson County presents a charming blend of scenic countryside and a friendly small-town feel. It's a wonderful spot for those who appreciate the peacefulness of rural life, while still having access to urban conveniences and a rich history.

Franklin County is filled with several small towns and unincorporated communities, all contributing to its warm and welcoming atmosphere. The area showcases lovely rolling hills and open fields, perfect for outdoor activities.

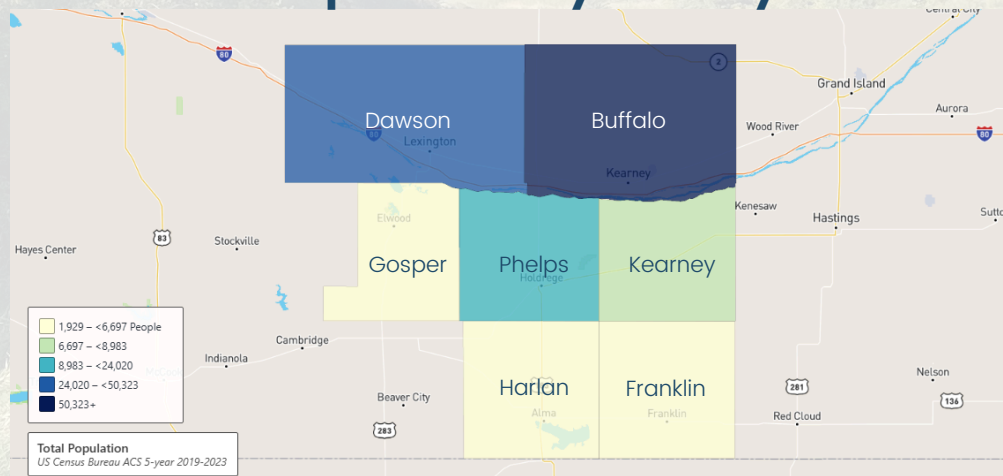
Gosper County offers rolling hills, farmland, and natural areas, creating a scenic environment. The county hosts various events celebrating its agricultural heritage and fostering community spirit, embodying a laid-back rural lifestyle.

Harlan County captivates with its natural beauty and tranquil small-town vibe, making it a great choice for anyone looking for a quiet place to live.

Kearney County is famous for its strong agricultural production and is home to numerous parks and recreational areas. It also proudly carries the title of Christmas Town, adding a festive charm to the area.

Phelps County maintains a solid farming base and provides plenty of opportunities for outdoor fun, like hunting and fishing in its lakes and rivers.

Population by County



Executive Summary

The Two Rivers Public Health Department (TRPHD) promotes public health in Nebraska's Buffalo, Dawson, Franklin, Gosper, Harlan, Kearney, and Phelps Counties, addressing diverse public health needs. The district spans approximately 4,663 square miles. The Republican River flows through the southern part of the district, while the Platte River and South Loup rivers are the northern landmarks. The central area is primarily agricultural land, and both the northern and southern sections of the district are mainly used for mixed agriculture.

A community health assessment (CHA) was conducted from May to December 2024, surveying over 2400 residents and involving local partners like the University of Nebraska Kearney and four hospital systems.

Key findings include:

- Predominantly female respondents (85%), mostly with college degrees (80%)
- Health concerns: affordability, accessibility, mental health, lack of physical activity, and substance misuse
- Women prioritized mental health services; men focused on physical inactivity and environmental issues
- Childcare access and affordable housing emerged as pressing non-healthcare issues
- Modest COVID-19 vaccination rates (60% fully vaccinated)
- Healthcare providers and educators viewed as trusted health information sources

The CHA informed strategies to address significant health challenges in the community by providing data from secondary sources regarding the health of our community, analysis of structured focus group conversations, and a survey assessing health attitudes and priorities of the district. The Community Health Improvement Planning committee identified key priorities for TRPHD to address.

Introduction

Our community is at a critical juncture to prioritize the health of all members. Acknowledging that health is influenced by social, economic, and environmental factors, this plan adopts a holistic approach. By engaging local health agencies, organizations, residents, and policymakers, we aim to create a vision for a healthier future, addressing disparities, and promoting equitable access to healthcare.

TRPHD commits to transparency and inclusivity as we outline our goals, objectives, and outcomes. This Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) serves as a roadmap for health initiatives and community empowerment, striving to cultivate a thriving community where everyone can achieve their full health potential.



What is a community health improvement plan?

Community health improvement plans are long-term, structured strategies to address public health issues. This Community Health Improvement Plan is a collaborative effort to assess health needs, identify improvement areas, and develop actionable strategies to enhance overall well-being.



Input from our community

TRPHD gathered input from the community through a survey process and through community focus groups. This information allowed TRPHD and the Community Health Improvement Planning Team to name priorities based on both community input and objective data sources.



Overview of Process

In May 2024, Two Rivers Public Health Department collaborated with CHI Health Good Samaritan, Bryan Health Kearney Regional Medical Center, Kearney County Health Systems, Gothenburg Memorial Health, Harlan County Health System, Buffalo County Community Partners, Kearney YMCA, and United Way of the Kearney Area to conduct a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) and a Community Health Improvement Process (CHIP). The planning utilized the Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) Process, a community-driven strategic planning process developed by [NACCHO](#) to improve community health.

Overview of Community Health Improvement Process

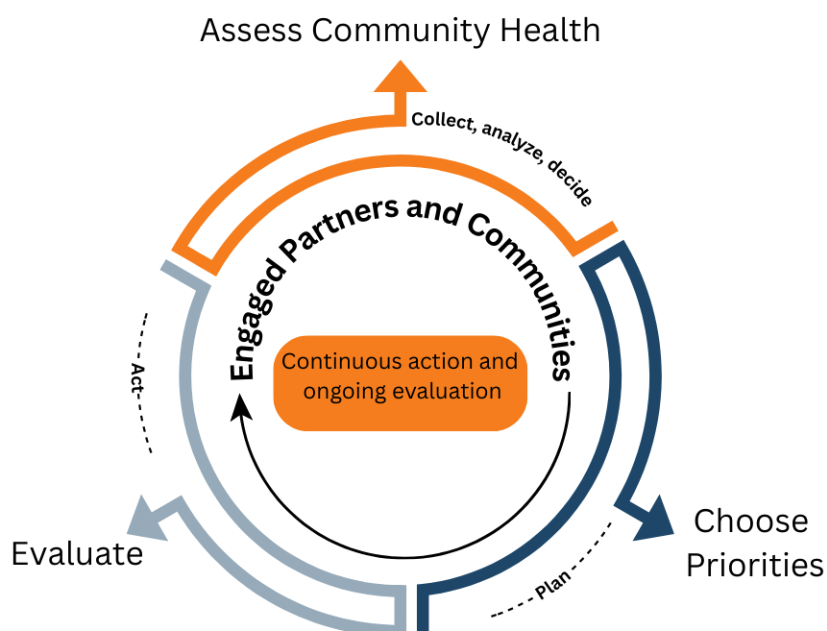
This community health improvement process was a systematic approach aimed at enhancing the health and well-being of our community. It involved engaging community members, health organizations, and stakeholders in identifying health needs, setting priorities, and implementing solutions.

The process began with a comprehensive assessment of the community's health status. Followed by community members prioritizing the most pressing health issues based on the assessment findings.

Once priorities were set, stakeholders developed an action plan outlining specific goals, strategies, timelines, and methods for measuring progress. Implementation will involve collaboration among community organizations, healthcare providers, and local governments, with a focus on effective communication to ensure community participation.

TRPHD will complete ongoing evaluation to assess the effectiveness of interventions, measure outcomes, and identify areas for improvement. This dynamic process will incorporate feedback to refine strategies, promoting a collaborative environment that aims to enhance health equity and improve quality of life for all community members.

Visual of CHIP Process



Overview of Community Health Assessment

Between May and December 2024, a community health assessment (CHA) was conducted in the Two Rivers Public Health Department's (TRPHD's) seven-county district to evaluate healthcare knowledge, attitudes, and practices. TRPHD collaborated with the University of Nebraska Kearney and local hospital systems to administer a survey, hold focus groups, and analyze secondary data.

Over 2000 residents participated, with a majority being women and well-educated. The assessment identified strengths like high life expectancy and employment rates, alongside challenges such as housing affordability and access to healthcare services. Various health indicators were analyzed, focusing on disparities among low-income and rural populations, and prioritized based on local relevance and potential for public health interventions.



Heart Disease

Is a leading cause of death in all 7 counties

22.6%

of survey respondents identified housing as an issue



76+

TRPHD district residents' life expectancy is over 76 years old

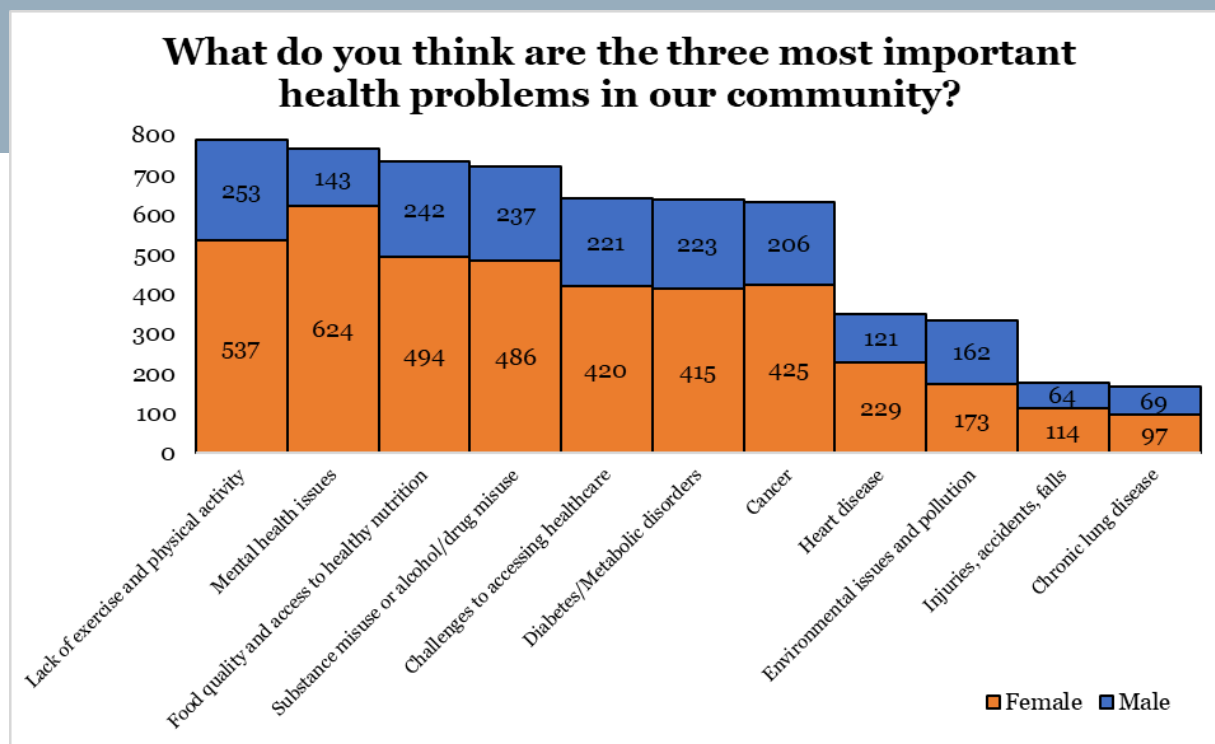
100%

of the counties in the TRPHD district have a shortage of specialty care.

Overview of Community Health Assessment

Below is a visualization of the survey question asking to identify the 3 most important general problems in the community: the top three challenges listed were housing problems, childcare challenges, and healthcare concerns.

In the following list, what do you think are the three (3) most important GENERAL problems in our community?							
	Buffalo	Dawson	Franklin	Gosper	Harlan	Kearney	Phelps
Transportation Issues	9.4%	15.4%	8.5%	7.1%	7.3%	8.5%	4.7%
Housing Problems	26.3%	26.7%	19.9%	15.7%	16.1%	15.1%	18.8%
Childcare Challenges	23.3%	23.8%	13.8%	16.1%	18.3%	19.2%	18.2%
Healthcare Concerns	12.2%	7.0%	13.0%	13.7%	14.0%	14.8%	13.5%
Education Difficulties	7.4%	6.1%	14.2%	12.9%	13.2%	11.7%	10.4%
Employment Issues	5.2%	6.5%	18.3%	15.3%	16.7%	10.7%	17.2%
Public Safety Concerns	3.1%	2.3%	4.9%	12.2%	9.7%	10.2%	10.9%
Environmental Problems	1.0%	1.6%	4.9%	5.5%	3.2%	5.6%	4.2%
Drug and Alcohol Misuse	12.2%	10.6%	2.4%	1.6%	1.6%	4.1%	2.1%



Above is a visualization of the survey question asking to identify the 3 most important health problems in the community: the top three challenges listed were lack of exercise and physical activity, mental health issues, and food quality and access to healthy nutrition.

Next Steps

Four priorities were identified, by the Community Health Improvement Planning Team, through data from the community health assessment and information from focus groups.



Access to Care

- Access to healthcare
- Addressing language barriers
- Access to childcare



Environmental Health

- Lack of access to housing
- Housing insecurity



Chronic Disease

- Diabetes/Metabolic disorders
- Stroke
- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Access to physical activity/healthy food



Behavioral Health

- Mental Health
- Substance Use Disorder

Access to Care

The CHIP planning group recognized access to care as a top priority based on survey responses highlighting the lack of access to quality childcare, food, nutrition, exercise, and physical activity. Focus groups pinpointed chronic diseases, including diabetes and dementia, as significant concerns. Additionally, chronic diseases emerged as crucial findings due to their notably high prevalence rates.



Key Area	Activity / Project	Expected Outcome
Access to Childcare	TRPHD will address the underlying social and economic factors that contribute to health disparities among children.	By December 2025, TRPHD will identify social and economic factors contributing to lack of access to childcare through a data report
Access to Healthcare	TRPHD will work in coordination with local health clinics and systems to ensure access to healthcare.	TRPHD will assess the locations of every clinic and hospital in the district by December 2025.
Addressing Language Barriers	TRPHD will increase the availability of written and spoken information in various languages.	TRPHD will release monthly health information topics in various languages

Anticipated Partnerships to complete work:

CHI Health Good Samaritan, Kearney Regional Medical Center, Buffalo County Community Partners, Kearney County Health System, Gothenburg Health, Harlan County Health System

Environmental Health

The TRPHD district is actively uncovering critical housing challenges through surveys and empirical data. The community health survey has shown high housing insecurities in our communities. The CHIP planning group has recognized environmental health as a key priority within the district.



Key Indicator	Activity / Project	Outcome
Safe housing	TRPHD will seek additional funding for housing repairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TRPHD will identify grants that assist aging populations and apply by December 2026. • TRPHD will advocate for local ordinance changes.
Housing Insecurity	TRPHD will implement or increase collaboration with local entities addressing housing insecurity due to the social determinants of health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TRPHD will work in coordination with other entities to address housing concerns through environmental expertise and community health workers • TRPHD will advocate for local ordinance changes for unoccupied houses.

Anticipated Partnerships to complete work:

CHI Health Good Samaritan, Kearney Regional Medical Center, Buffalo County Community Partners, Kearney County Health System, Gothenburg Health, Harlan County Health System, South Central Economic Development District, Local Housing Authorities, Local Government, Mid Nebraska Community Action Partnership, Dawson County Family Partners, local social workers, 6 Regions One Nebraska

Chronic Disease

The CHIP planning group has recognized Chronic Disease as a priority area based on empirical data highlighting stroke, high blood pressure, and diabetes as significant concerns. Additionally, focus groups and the community health survey have underscored aging and diabetes as major health issues.



Key Indicator	Activity / Project	Outcome
Chronic Disease Programming	TRPHD will seek funding for diabetes/metabolic disorders, stroke, high blood pressure, or heart disease.	TRPHD will obtain chronic disease grant funding by December 2026.
Local Collaboration	TRPHD will renew or implement partnerships with local entities providing chronic disease education	TRPHD will complete one chronic disease program in collaboration with another entity by December 2025
Access to Physical Activity and Healthy Food	TRPHD will share information to the public encouraging access to physical activity an healthy food.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TRPHD will create a report detailing all grocery stores, farmer's markets, fitness centers, and outdoor recreation centers. • TRPHD will release a comprehensive educational campaign by December 2025.

Anticipated Partnerships to complete work:

CHI Health Good Samaritan, Kearney Regional Medical Center, Buffalo County Community Partners, Kearney County Health System, Gothenburg Health, Harlan County Health System, Kearney YMCA

Behavioral Health

Focus groups highlighted access to behavioral health services, suicide rates, and the prolonged nature of mental health issues as significant indicators. Survey results showed that behavioral health is a community priority. Empirical data revealed a lack of specialty providers such as anesthesiology, oncology, ophthalmology, and psychiatry in the district. Consequently, the CHIP planning team recognized behavioral health as a top priority.



Key Indicator	Activity / Project	Outcome
Behavioral Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TRPHD will maintain the CredibleMind Platform • TRPHD will seek additional funding for Mental Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TRPHD will increase the number of users on the platform by December 2025 • TRPHD will apply for a grant by June 2026
Substance Use Disorder	TRPHD will maintain current harm reduction programming and seek additional programming	TRPHD will continue to educate the public on how to access naloxone, and will seek additional funding by December 2026.

Anticipated Partnerships to complete work:

CHI Health Good Samaritan, Kearney Regional Medical Center, Buffalo County Community Partners, Kearney County Health System, Gothenburg Health, Harlan County Health System, Kearney YMCA, Region 2 Behavioral Health, Region 3 Behavioral Health

Conclusion

This strategic community health improvement process focused on enhancing the overall health and well-being of our community through collaborative efforts and evidence-based interventions. This process began with a comprehensive assessment to identify key health needs and priorities within the community. Stakeholders, including healthcare providers, local government, non-profits, and community members, came together to review data on health outcomes, social determinants of health, and available resources.

As we reflect on the highlights of our efforts, we renew our commitment to pursuing initiatives that enhance our community. By continuing to work together, we can create healthier, more resilient communities for future generations.

Highlight 1

Community Involvement

- Survey and focus groups informed priorities
- Key partners helped guide the process
- Everyone has a role to play to create these outcomes

Highlight 2

2022–2025 TRPHD Strategic Plan Linkages

- Strengthen collaboration and increase service availability
- Improved access to care for underserved populations
- Become a trusted source for local data

Highlight 3

Partnerships

- This work cannot be completed without our partners
- Connected priorities
- Tandem efforts

Our Vision

Our community thrives through partnerships that empower individuals and families to adopt healthy behaviors and enhance their environments, fostering better overall health and wellness in a safe space.

Community Health Assessment Planning Team



Evaluation

TRPHD will conduct an annual review of the priorities and goals outlined in this plan. Each year, we will measure progress toward these goals by asking questions such as:

- Is the program achieving its targeted health outcomes?
- What factors are facilitating or hindering progress?

To evaluate the implementation of programs and activities that address each goal, TRPHD will use process evaluation techniques. TRPHD will survey partners annually to gather qualitative feedback on programming aimed at improving community health priorities. Additionally, TRPHD will identify baseline indicators and provide data reports for each priority by December 2025. A final report summarizing community progress, utilizing both baseline data and process evaluation results, will be released to the public by December 2028.

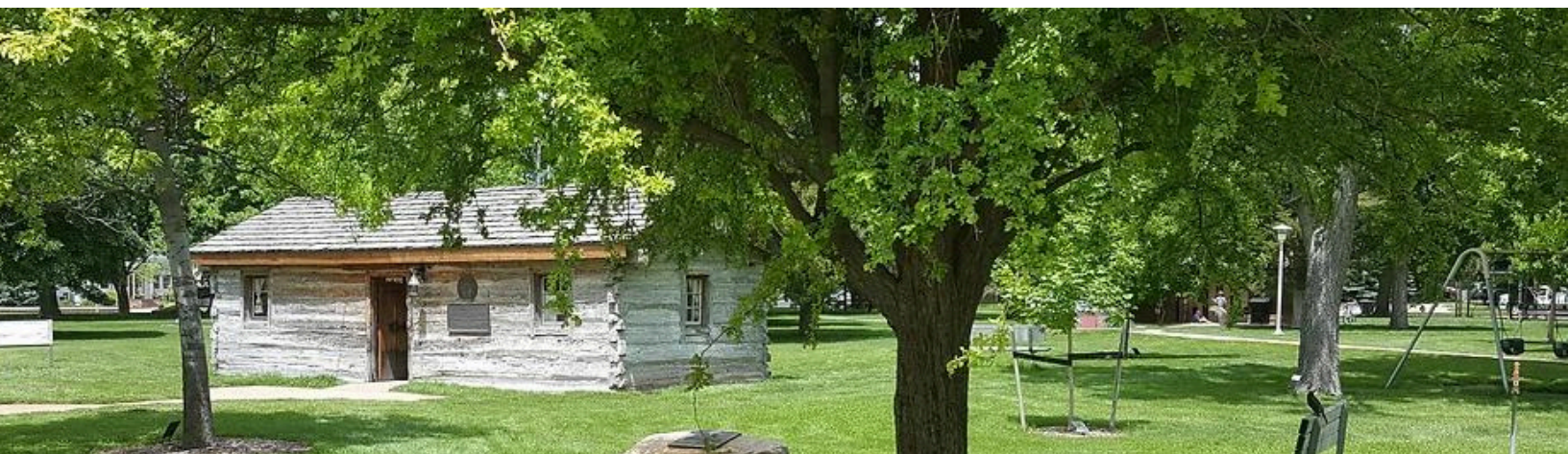


Created by:



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Photos featured in this report:

- Title Page: Cornfield near Kearney, NE
- Table of Contents: Dawson County Courthouse, Lexington,, NE
- Executive Summary: Republican River, Franklin, NE
- Conclusion: Kearney Archway, Kearney, NE
- Created by: Pony Express Station, Gothenburg, NE