
**Colorado Association of Local Public Health Officials
(CALPHO)**

**COVID-19 Pandemic Situational Awareness
and Implications for Public Health in Colorado**

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Colorado Local Public Health Situational Awareness

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in an extraordinary local public health response and implementation of mitigation strategies such as:

- Planning, hiring, and training staff for case investigation, contact tracing, and testing activities
- Local response to outbreaks and outbreak reporting
- Planning and staffing vaccination (clinics, mobile units, off-site locations), and vaccine promotional activities
- Plan and conduct necessary quarantine and isolation measures
- Plan and consult on infection prevention efforts in health care, school, recreation, restaurant and other settings
- Conduct health equity activities around all COVID-19 mitigation strategies
- Provide case/contact support and resource connections, e.g., health and mental health care & social supports

Colorado Local Public Health Situational Awareness

Prevention

- How do we get the general population to understand prevention?
- Local Public Health (LPH) works behind the scenes to prevent disease.
- COVID-19 suppression took LPH off our prevention work such as:
 - environmental health inspections
 - youth substance youth prevention
 - vaccinations
 - communicable disease investigations



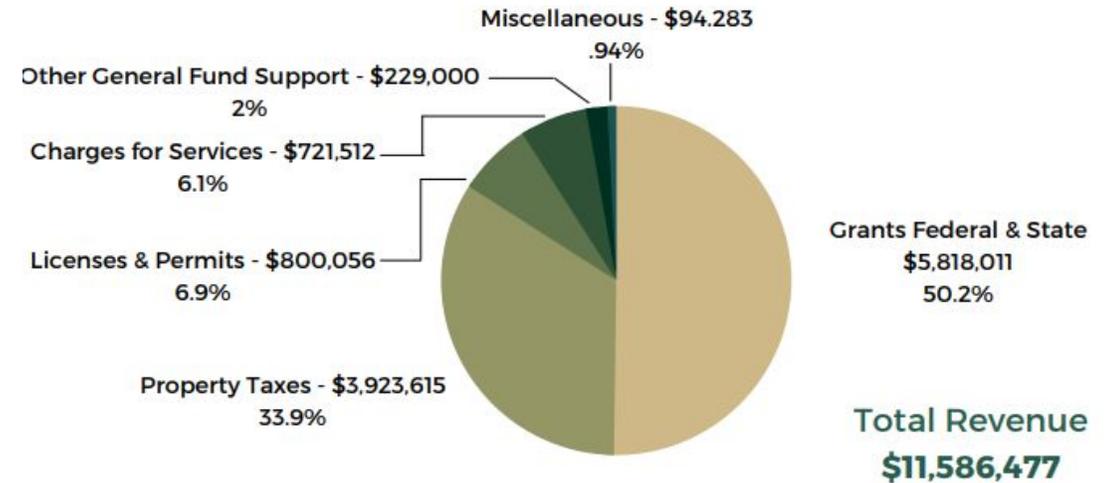
Public Health

Colorado Local Public Health Situational Awareness

Challenge 1: Chronic Underfunding & Categorical Funding

- Funding for COVID-19 does not cover many long-needed infrastructure investments
- Categorical & emergency funding on top of inadequate infrastructure is less effective
- Most LPHA funding is short term and inflexible, inhibiting adaptability and efforts that require a long-term, strategic approach, like addressing increasing rates of chronic disease

2020 Revenue



*Larimer County Public Health

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Challenge 2: Public Health Workforce Shortages and Depletion

- Public health departments have been understaffed and have lost over 66,000 jobs nationally over the last decade
- 22 of 53 (42%) Local Public Health Directors have left their positions during the pandemic mostly due to burnout, threats, and harassment
- Due to workforce and other resource shortages, local public health staff who have not left have continued to work with little or no time off for 20 months
- LPHAs face difficulties with recruitment and retention due to low pay and competition from other sectors, as well as fear of violent, anti-public health movements
- Due to these and other stressors, we will lose a workforce that is now more cross-trained in crisis response, risk communications, and leadership than before the pandemic

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Challenge 3: Vocal opposition to public health science, policy, systems, and measures among a minority of policymakers and the public

- Over 80% of Colorado's local public health directors report they have been harassed or threatened regarding public health orders and other COVID-19 mitigation strategies
- CALPHO developed, advocated for, and implemented HB21-1107 Protections for Public Health Workers
- Violent protests and doxxing of public health workers has continued
- There is a need for education of law enforcement regarding protections for public health workers and the legitimacy of public health orders
- Vaccine misinformation has resulted in thousands of preventable deaths; push-back against public health authority and leadership (e.g., firings of leadership; legislative and legal challenges to health officer and gubernatorial emergency powers and measures)
- Outdated public health statutes have hindered some efforts to protect public health during challenging times

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Challenge 4: Obsolete and sometimes non-existent public health infrastructural data and information systems

- Fragmented exchange of data between public health and health care, that significantly hampers the ability to identify and address public health threats in a timely and effective manner.
- Disparities in health outcomes among different population groups, as evidenced by those most affected by COVID-19 as well as ongoing differences in average life expectancy by ZIP code.

