

“The Colorado General Assembly considered many bills related to public health this legislative session over multiple subject matters including mental health, environmental health, and health in the education system.”

Vaccines

Senate Bill 23-260 prohibits practitioners from requiring individuals to pay or provide identification and health insurance information to receive a publicly funded vaccine. If this information is requested from the individual, the practitioner must disclose through notices provided by the Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) that the vaccine will be provided regardless of whether the information is provided or not. It clarifies that practitioners may charge vaccine administration fees for publicly funded vaccines to an individual or their insurance provider, except those receiving services through Medicaid. The bill also clarifies that independent pharmacies may charge administration fees and not provide public funded vaccines, however they must provide those individuals who are unable to pay with a list of CDPHE practitioners who will provide the vaccine.

Mental Health

House Bill 23-1003 creates the “Sixth Through Twelfth Grade Mental Health Screening Act” administered by the Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) to identify risks and provide resources and referrals related to student mental and emotional health. Participating schools are required to provide written notice to the parents of students within the first two weeks of the school year in order to allow parents to opt their child out of the program. Mental health screenings must be conducted by a screener selected through a request for proposals process. The screener is required to notify the parents if it is determined that additional mental health services are needed based on the student’s screening results.

Senate Bill 23-014 establishes the disordered eating prevention program in CDPHE within the prevention services division. The division is required to:

- create and maintain an external resource that is updated annually to include key information about disordered eating;
- collaborate with the office of suicide prevention and other programs within the division to align work on disordered eating, facilitate public outreach, and increase awareness regarding disordered eating prevention and care with a focus on impacted community;

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- partner with the Department of Education to inform teachers, administrators, school staff, students, and parents on disordered eating prevention; and
- coordinate the disordered eating prevention research grant program.

The act created the disordered eating prevention research grant program to provide financial assistance to eligible applicants to research root causes of disordered eating and examine risk factors for and protective factors against.

[Senate Bill 23-176](#) prohibits Medicaid and health insurance plans from using body mass index, ideal body weight, or any achieved weight standard to determine medical need or the level of care for individuals with certain types of disordered eating. The bill prohibits retail establishments from selling over-the-counter diet pills to individuals under 18 years old without prescriptions beginning July 1, 2024, with rules to be created by the Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA) and failure to comply constituting a deceptive trade practice.

[House Bill 23-1031](#) exempts mental health professionals from the existing requirement to report specified information on individuals who test positive for sexually transmitted infections to CDPHE or local public health agencies. This exemption only applies when the mental health professional is not engaged in the testing, diagnosing, or treating of the individual with the sexually transmitted infection.

Education

[House Bill 23-1244](#) continues the Regional Health Connector Program in the Colorado Department of Higher Education (DHE) and relocates it to CDPHE. Under the program, regional health connectors receive funding to coordinate health care across organizations. The responsible department is required to contract with a third-party entity to distribute funding to regional health connectors' host organizations. The bill repeals the Regional Health Connector Workforce Program in the University Of Colorado School Of Medicine.

[Senate Bill 23-299](#) requires institutes of higher education to acquire and stock a supply of epinephrine auto-injectors. Institutions are encouraged to place epinephrine auto-injectors in sufficient quantities in emergency public access stations to ensure reasonable availability. Institutions are encouraged to accept a donation of a supply of epinephrine auto-injectors that meets standard established by the federal food and drug administration and to accept gifts, grants, and donations designated for obtaining a supply of epinephrine auto-injectors. Institutions are required to adopt a policy concerning the placement of epinephrine auto-injectors that focuses on areas where students are gathered in the largest volumes. The act provides immunity for any person who acts reasonably and in good faith to furnish or administer an epinephrine auto-injector to an individual the person reasonably believes is experiencing anaphylaxis.



Public Health

House Bill 23-1298 advances the date for when CDPHE can begin providing reimbursements to middle schools for costs associated with testing their drinking water for lead from March 15, 2024 to June 1, 2023.

Environment

The Health Equity Commission created in the Office of Health Equity within CDPHE was scheduled to repeal September 1, 2023.

Senate Bill 23-151 extends the repeal date to September 1, 2029 at the recommendation of the Department of Regulatory Agencies' sunset review and report.

Senate Bill 23-274 makes multiple changes to the administration of water quality fees assessed by CDPHE. The bill requires the commission, after engaging with stakeholders, to set the fees by October 31, 2025. Existing fees remain in place until January 1, 2026 unless the commission adopts rules to phase-in new fees earlier. Other than drinking water fees, fee revenue subject to the new rules accrues to the new Clean Water Cash Fund. CDPHE must submit an annual report to the General Assembly on its water quality control programs including additional information on fees collected, rules adopted, funding sources, expenditures, and regulatory activities conducted until October 1, 2025. The bill updates the membership of the existing Water Quality Control Commission by requiring specific experience and no more than five of its nine members to be affiliated with the same political party. The bill repeals CDPHE's regulatory authority over the disposal of radioactive waste.

