

## Board of Health gets update on public health improvement plan

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Board of Health members received an update on the Northeast Colorado Health Department's progress in developing their new public health improvement plan.

According to Dr. Tony Cappello, NCHD's district public health administrator, the agency has wrapped up several tiers of data collection, including gathering health statistics and data for the region, conversations and priorities from key community partners and the community health survey that was distributed during the summer.

"My staff has put an enormous amount of effort into this process, and we're finally starting to see some of that work come together," said Cappello. "Looking through the data and hearing what our community members and our stakeholders think about the health and environment in this region has been educational for us in local public health. Some of the issues that have risen were expected, but we've also learned some new things about the communities we serve and the issues that affect them."

After crunching all of the data, NCHD narrowed down the top health concerns to three—nutrition, physical activity and healthy weight as one issue, mental health and oral health. Those issues will now be the focus of a region-wide capacity assessment that will help ascertain what other organizations are doing now in regards to those issues, how they can help with them in the future, as well as pinpoint effective strategies to address them.

Once the capacity assessment is complete, NCHD will choose which issue, or issues, will become the focus of their strategic plan for the next five years.

"I feel we've been very lucky with the amount of feedback we've received from this process," said Cappello. "This is the first time this agency has taken such an in-depth look into what the needs are of the public we serve, comparing community and stakeholder concerns side by side with hard data. It was difficult to narrow the field to three issues, but I think that will make for a more manageable capacity assessment and allow us to better focus the resources of the region."

The public health improvement plan was just one of the requirements for local public health

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agencies with the passage of the Public Health Revitalization Act in 2008. According to Cappello, the plan is slated to be completed in June 2013. The data collected so far will be published online and available on NCHD's website by the beginning of January.

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