



San Juan County Public Health Improvement Plan 2024-2029

Submitted to:

San Juan County Board of Health and County Commissioners
and
Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment

Prepared by:

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COLORADO
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Partners

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The following list outlines the work groups from San Juan County who contributed to this plan.

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Introduction

In 2022, San Juan County Public Health Service (SJCPHS) completed a Community Health Assessment (CHA) that identified three main priorities for improving the health of the community. These priorities include:

1. Access to Care
2. Behavioral Health
3. Healthy Living

In the CHA process, issues specific to seniors and youth remained crosscutting and Social Determinants of Health (SDoH) surfaced as important for addressing these priorities. Needs for Spanish speaking residents also surfaced. The CHA included qualitative and quantitative data on San Juan County health metrics and can be found [here](#). The 2022 San Juan County CHA includes data on health status and risk factors for San Juan County.

To develop our Public Health Improvement Plan, SJCPHS focused on these priorities in particular and identified specific areas for improvement. Recognizing that many different stakeholders influence these priorities, we convened a variety of work groups to identify the top long-term and short term priorities. The narrative below outlines the community profile, the process, SJCPHS capacity, and the San Juan County Public Health Improvement Plan (PHIP).

Community Profile

San Juan County is a rural, remote county situated in the heart of the San Juan Mountain range in southwest Colorado. The vast majority of San Juan County's (approximately) 740 year-round residents live within the Town of Silverton, the county's only municipality, situated at 9,318 feet elevation.^{1,2} The county is in a rugged, mountainous area and most of its 389 square miles consists of federally managed land. With less than 2 people per square mile, it is the least populated county in Colorado. Services and amenities are limited. For Silverton residents, the nearest hospital, urgent care, pharmacy, airport, and full-service grocery store is 50 miles to the south in Durango or 60 miles to the north in Montrose. US Highway 550, or the Million Dollar Highway, is the only road in and out of Silverton; crosses multiple high mountain passes; and is vulnerable to closures due to rock and mudslides, avalanches and snowstorms, car accidents, and other causes. Residents also experience internet, power and cell phone service disruption due to environmental events. Since completing the Community Health Assessment, an additional primary care clinic now serves the county and residents can access primary care two days a week through Silverton Clinic and Innovation Medical Group. The Public Health Service and Emergency Medical Service are the only other entities who offer limited local healthcare.

¹ US Census Bureau – Population Estimates Program. Colorado Health Information Dataset (COHID), Population Estimates, <https://cohealthviz.dphe.state.co.us/t/HealthInformaticsPublic/views/ColoradoPopulationEstimates/PopulationEstimates>. Accessed 8/31/22.

² The assessment will refer to both San Juan County and Silverton somewhat interchangeably since nearly all of county residents live in Silverton.

Population and demographics. San Juan County’s population has aged in the last decade, with its 2019 median age increasing from 45 years in 2014 to 51 years in 2019.³ According to the local Area Agency on Aging representative, nearly one-third of residents in town are over the age of 60.⁴ The number of families with children increased between 2010 and 2019.⁵ Females make up 47 percent of the population and males account for 53 percent. Ninety-four percent of residents identify as White and 3 percent identify with two or more races. Fourteen percent of county residents claim Hispanic origin ethnicity and twenty-eight percent of residents over the age of five speak a language other than English at home.⁶

San Juan County demographics

- 740 year-round residents
- Aging population: Median age increased to 51 years and 30 percent of residents with 60 years or older
- Fourteen percent Hispanic
- Twenty-eight percent of residents speak Spanish at home
- Median household income below state levels (\$67,000 versus \$87,000)

The poverty rate decreased, though it remains higher than surrounding areas; the US Census Bureau now estimates 11.3 percent of persons are in poverty in San Juan County (compared to 9.5 percent for Durango, 6.7 percent for Ouray or 12 percent nationwide).⁷ Many San Juan County residents used to work in the mining industry – now tourism is the main economic driver. Median household income in San Juan County is \$67,000/year (compared to \$87,000 for the state of Colorado) with the majority of residents employed in the retail and accommodation/food services sector.⁸ According to a Housing Needs Assessment and the American Community Survey from the Census Bureau, San Juan County’s median household income increased significantly between 2010 and 2019 (48 percent).⁹

³ Region 9 Dashboard, Data Source: US Census American Community Survey, Table B01001 5-Year Estimates. <https://www.region9edd.org/dashboards>. Accessed 3/12/2024.

⁴ Another data source is the US Census, which reports that 25 percent of the population is between the ages of 60 and 69.

⁵ Town Of Silverton, Housing Needs Assessment, Prepared by: Root Policy Research 2021. <https://townofsilverton.colorado.gov/sites/townofsilverton/files/San%20Juan%20and%20Silverton%20Housing%20Needs%20Assessment%20August%202021.pdf>. Access 3/12/2024. Data Source: 2010 and 2019 5-year ACS estimate.

⁶ United States Census. QuickFacts. San Juan County Colorado. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/sanjuancountycolorado/IPE120220#IPE120220>. Accessed 3/12/2024.

⁷ United States Census. QuickFacts. San Juan County Colorado. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/sanjuancountycolorado/IPE120220#IPE120220>. Accessed 3/12/2024.

⁸ Region 9 Dashboard, Data Source: US Census American Community Survey, Table B01001 5-Year Estimates. <https://www.region9edd.org/dashboards>. Accessed 3/12/2024.

⁹ Town Of Silverton, Housing Needs Assessment, Prepared by: Root Policy Research 2021. <https://townofsilverton.colorado.gov/sites/townofsilverton/files/San%20Juan%20and%20Silverton%20Housing%20Needs%20Assessment%20August%202021.pdf>. Access 3/12/2024. Data Source: 2010 and 2019 5-year ACS estimate.

Prioritization Process

The prioritization process largely occurred during the development of the [2022 San Juan County Community Health Assessment](#), in which SJCPHS solicited feedback from community members and key stakeholders on the top health priorities in San Juan County. We asked respondents to recount if the priorities from the previous assessment in 2015 had changed. As mentioned previously, the top health priorities for San Juan County that emerged from the Community Health Assessment process included:

1. *Access to Care*
2. *Behavioral Health*
3. *Healthy Living*

As mentioned earlier, themes specific to seniors and youth were cross-cutting across these priorities and Social Determinants of Health featured prominently in discussions on impacts to health. To determine capacity and prioritization, we convened work groups to discuss the priorities and objectives. The work groups included:

- Health Care Taskforce
- Behavioral Health Work Group
- Resource Work Group
- Social Support Work Group

During 2023, we also led several health equity discussions with community members and leaders to help identify top priorities among our Spanish speaking community members. We used the guiding question below and also facilitated an open discussion to finalize the high-level objectives that the work groups thought we could impact.

Sample Guiding Questions

1. What are the top priorities in this area? (goals)
2. What are we already doing (strengths)
3. What else can we do (needs/gaps/opportunities)
4. What is our ability to impact this priority (capacity)
5. What are the barriers to impacting this priority (weaknesses/threats)
6. Who is responsible?
7. What are the next steps?

Based on input from the work groups and internal brainstorming, we refined the priorities to focus on three areas and include high-level objectives that San Juan Public Health Service could work with partners to impact. We also utilized feedback from planning calls with other local health departments, which encouraged us to keep the Public Health Improvement Plan (PHIP) priorities narrow and focused. Our work groups and community engagement process aligned with the “Collaborate” section of the [CHAPS Community Engagement Spectrum](#) as community participants and leaders outside of San Juan County Public Health Service helped define and identify the top priorities for the San Juan County PHIP, both through the Community Health Assessment process and the PHIP prioritization process.

Capacity Assessment

San Juan County Public Health Service increased capacity significantly in the last few years due to COVID funding. For a small community, we are fortunate to have local staff who have significantly increased

our capacity (e.g., behavioral health specialists, public health professional, care coordinator, Cultural Ambassador). We invested in behavioral health services, health planning, community health programming, interpretation/Language Justice, and other programs to address Social Determinants of Health and health equity. Many of these programs and services depend on recent increases in public health funding. It is unclear how long these important programs and staffing can continue due to fluctuating funding allocations at the state and federal levels.

The tables below outline our capacity assessment according to Core Public Health Services (CPHS): Foundational Services and Core Public Health Services (CPHS): Foundational Capabilities. Our areas of strength and the capacity ranking are very dependent on funding. For example, we have made significant progress in a variety of areas, but this progress is highly dependent on sustaining our current funding.

San Juan County CPHS Capacity Assessment Matrix

	Core Public Health Services: Foundational Capabilities						
	Assessment and Planning	Communications	Policy Development and Support	Partnerships	Emergency Preparedness and Response	Organizational Competencies	Health Equity and the Social Determinants of Health
Personnel and FTE*	0.25	.125	.125	.5	.5	.125	.5
Total funding	\$18,000	\$5,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$30,000	\$10,000	\$35,000
Areas of Strength	Dedicated Health Planner position who is connected with many facets/organizations/roles in the Silverton community	Well-connected staff in the community Chamber of Commerce director also PIO	Dedicated part-time tobacco prevention coordinator, Health Planner and Director assisting in coordination and policy recommendations	Rural community with strong connections Dedicated Health Planner position to maintain and build regional relationships	Emergency Response Coordinator serves as the Emergency Management Director	Director is an RN Office manager also trains as tobacco prevention coordinator as well as COVID tester, vaccine coordinator	Health Planner and Director very focused on improving access to multiple populations who will benefit from access to care. Implementing programs to support health equity. Cultural Broker works in the school, connected with many families.
Areas of Challenge	Funding is limited and not guaranteed	Funding is limited and not guaranteed	Funding is limited and not guaranteed	Funding is limited and not guaranteed	Funding is limited and not guaranteed	Funding is limited and not guaranteed	Funding is limited and not guaranteed
Capacity Ranking	Moderate to High	Moderate to High	Basic	Moderate to High	Moderate	Basic	Moderate to High

	Core Public Health Services: Foundational Services				
	Communicable Disease Prevention and Control	Environmental Public Health	Maternal, Child, Adolescent, and Family Health	Chronic Disease, Injury Prevention, and Behavioral Health Promotion	Access to and Linkage with Health Care
Personnel and FTE*	.75	.03125	1	1.5	.25
Total funding	\$70,000	\$1000	\$55,000	\$70,000	\$20,000
Areas of Strength	The 2 FTE's are both cross trained in testing and CI/CT	We can only offer Radon testing; all other services come through CDPHE and LPCPH	Connections of staff with the school, childcare and a strong immunization program	Offer free Behavioral health sessions in English and Spanish through CDC grant funding	Recently added another clinic to the Silverton Community through partnerships and planning
Areas of Challenge	Funding is limited and not guaranteed	Funding is limited and not guaranteed	Funding is limited and not guaranteed	Funding is limited and not guaranteed	Funding is limited and not guaranteed
Capacity Ranking	Moderate to High	Basic	Moderate to High	High	Moderate to High

PHIP Priorities

Based on the 2023 Community Health Assessment, the capacity assessment, and work sessions with our work groups and internal team, San Juan County Public Health Service developed the following Public Health Improvement Plan for 2024-2029. The data that supports these priorities is found in the [2022 San Juan County Community Health Assessment](#).

INCREASE ACCESS TO PRIMARY, ORAL, VISION, AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE FOR SAN JUAN COUNTY RESIDENTS

1. OBJECTIVE: Establish plan for local health care delivery
 - a. Establish Health Care Task Force to promote coordination of care and strategic planning
 - b. Identify partners and providers for local health care delivery
 - c. Implement models for improving local access to care
2. OBJECTIVE: Establish regular in-town screening and check-ups
 - a. Implement semi-yearly health/resource fair
 - b. Create partnerships for mobile/local screenings (esp., oral health, cancer screenings, etc.)
 - c. Continue school-based health services
3. OBJECTIVE: Increase awareness of local and regional primary, oral and behavioral health services
 - a. Establish resource groups/coalitions for sharing information and collaborating
 - b. Establish and maintain connections with local and regional partners

INCREASE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES AND UTILIZATION FOR SAN JUAN COUNTY RESIDENTS

1. OBJECTIVE: Retain local behavioral health providers
 - a. Secure funding for local (community and school-based) behavioral health services
2. OBJECTIVE: Promote behavioral health services and resources
 - a. Establish behavioral health coalition and platform for sharing resources and promoting services
3. OBJECTIVE: Implement harm reduction strategies for target populations
 - a. Identify and implement annual harm reduction campaigns for target populations

INCREASE ACCESS TO PROGRAMS/SERVICES FOR PRIORITY POPULATIONS: ADULTS AGE 60+, YOUTH/FAMILIES, LATINO RESIDENTS

1. OBJECTIVE: Target events and resources for adults age 60+, youth/families, Latino residents
 - a. Implement Community Health Worker/Care Coordinator program to support priority populations
 - b. Support events and programs that address social determinant of health for priority populations
 - c. Increase access to interpretation services to ensure equitable access and outcomes (Language Justice)
 - d. Identify options to address transportation barriers for adults age 60+ to access medical and pharmacy services

Partnerships to Address Priorities

Partnerships are critical to addressing the priorities, goals, and strategies identified in the SJCPHS PHIP. These goals and strategies were developed through a collaborative process with community members, key stakeholders and partners, beginning with the CHA and throughout the PHIP prioritization process. To impact our priorities, we depend on partners outside of SJCPHS and we have focused on close collaboration through working groups, regular updates and coordination to solidify the goals and affect change over the next five years. As a small community, we are able to get the key stakeholders together to work on measurable progress.

Coordination with State and Others

Colorado's Winnable Battles and the 2020-2024 Colorado Public Health Improvement Plan both identify mental health and substance use as top priorities. Recent state and federal public health partners highlight the significant role of Social Determinants of Health and health equity in improving health outcomes for vulnerable populations – SDOH remain one of the three priority areas for Healthy People 2030 and racism as a component of public health appears in the 2020-2024 Colorado Public Health Improvement Plan.^{10 11} The San Juan County PHIP aligns with these state and federal priorities as our community has identified (1) access to behavioral health services and (2) programming to address social determinants of health for target populations as top priorities for our PHIP.

Further, access to oral health, another of Colorado's Winnable Battles, features in our top priority of improving access to care. We see significant opportunities to increase adult access to preventive and screening dental services.

Financial Resources

Several recent funding increases have been instrumental in our ability to meet priorities and address core services.

- First, an increase in core services funding for San Juan County allowed us to better support core public health services and build capacity in our office staff.
- Second, we leveraged a CDC Workforce Grant to support behavioral health services for San Juan County residents. We recruited several behavioral health providers (including a Spanish speaking provider) and have seen increased utilization of behavioral health services in our county.
- Third, funding through the Office of Public Health Practice, Planning, and Local Partnerships supported our Health Planner position, which has been critical for completing the Community Health Assessment process; expanding regional partnerships to address priorities; and developing our Public Health Improvement Plan. We would have been unable to complete this important work without this funding.

As part of our PHIP, we are committed to seeking sustainable funding for our top priorities. We have built partnerships to address core services capacity that we lack and we are exploring additional regional

¹⁰ Social Determinants of Health at CDC; <https://www.cdc.gov/about/sdoh/index.html>; accessed 2/6/2024

¹¹ Colorado's Public Health Improvement Plan; https://drive.google.com/file/d/1upa-dlVzRJOubu1_u5T7_JCWLHFFiE-u/view; accessed 2/6/2024

partnerships to tackle our top priorities. As a small health service, we can effectively utilize small funding increases to promote big progress. We are well-integrated within the community and have leveraged partnerships with local organizations, health partners, and community groups to support Language Justice, health equity, and SDOH programming. We continue to seek funding to support access to health care (primary, oral, behavioral, vision) and programming that supports our priority populations (adults age 60+, youth and families, Latino/a residents) to improve health outcomes for our residents.

Conclusion and Vision

San Juan County experiences unique and exciting challenges and opportunities to address community health outcomes. We are a small, frontier county, bordered by mountain passes and our residents face extreme barriers to access care. Our PHIP priorities have not changed significantly in the past seven years, but our recent accomplishments around our priorities are notable:

1. We expanded local primary care services to two days a week by recruiting an additional provider to offer services in Silverton
2. We increased utilization of behavioral health services by recruiting and funding local behavioral health providers, including a Spanish speaking provider
3. We created partnerships to offer a senior meals program to support nutrition and pro-social needs of adults age 60+
4. We established a pilot care coordination program to support access to care needs for adults age 60+
5. We established a pilot Cultural Ambassador program to support resource sharing, coordination, and interpretation among our Spanish-speaking community members
6. We trained a certified medical interpreter to support medical appointments for Spanish speaking residents
7. We sponsored a Language Justice training to increase capacity and understanding within community organizations about the need for effective community engagement through accessible interpretation, translation and language services
8. We established a variety of local and regional partnerships to support SDOH programming (e.g., access to healthy foods, emergency financial assistance, tax filing support, family resources, etc.)

Through continued core services funding and increased staff capacity, we hope to continue this success and build new opportunities to expand access to health care, promote behavioral health services, and design SDOH programming for our priority populations. Emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, we have renewed partnerships, strong community engagement and we are well-positioned to support the overall health of our community. We know where we want to go and what is important to our community – we need continued funding, partnerships and staff to help us get there.