

LAWRENCE-DOUGLAS COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

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Letter from the Executive Director

At Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health, collaboration isn't just a value, it's how we move forward. In 2024, that spirit came to life through a simple but powerful question we asked often: Why not?

Why not build new partnerships? Why not lead boldly in the face of complex challenges? Why not rethink how we deliver services to our community? Why not bring more people into the work of creating a healthier community?

That mindset sparked a year of meaningful progress. We launched the 2024–2029 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), shaped from community insights and shared aspirations, addressing gaps and advancing our collective goals. We brought the idea of Wellness Wednesday to life by developing a way to bring care to vulnerable populations. We spent time building trust and planning new partnerships across behavioral health, housing, and emergency response, laying the groundwork for future partnerships. We expanded WIC access to communities across all of Douglas County, ensuring more families benefit from essential nutrition support. We continued to guide and support Douglas County families every step of the way, from pregnancy through early childhood through our Family Support Programs.

We also stepped into a leadership role in the countywide Zero Suicide initiative, helping to align efforts around one of our community's most urgent challenges.

All of this happened because we leaned into collaboration with our partners, our community, and each other. And because we kept asking: Why not?

Lastly, this work wouldn't be possible without our talented team. Their openness to new ideas and willingness to embrace change turned bold questions into meaningful progress. I hope you enjoy this report, which reflects a year of collaboration, integrity, impact, and service, brought to you by a team committed to building a healthier Douglas County, for everyone.

Thank you!

Sincerely,



Jonathan Smith, MPH
Executive Director,
Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health



Health Board



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City Appointee
2023-2026



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County Appointee
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2022-2025



MAREN BRADLEY, PharmD
City Appointee
2024-2027



DR. JOHN NALBANDIAN
City Appointee
2022-2025

Letter from the Health Board Chair, Erica Hill

It has been an honor to serve as the chair of the board for Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health over the past year.

In our 2024 annual report, we share accomplishments that have enhanced the health of our community, such as Wellness Wednesday, expanding access to the WIC program to families in need and the implementation of the 2024–2029 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP).

Our progress on addressing difficult community health issues has been made possible, in large part, by our dedicated staff and the dynamic partnerships we have cultivated over the years. By joining forces with community leaders and partners we will continue to increase the collective impact on our community.

Thank you to my fellow board members for their passion and dedication to LDCPH. And on behalf of the board of directors I want to express my deep gratitude to Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health staff and leadership for their outstanding work in building a healthier community.

With appreciation,

Erica

Health Equity Advisory Board (HEAB)

Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health is deeply committed to advancing health equity and ensuring that all residents have the opportunity to live healthy, thriving lives. Central to this commitment is the Health Equity Advisory Board (HEAB), a group of community members who identify as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color and have intersections with other populations experiencing inequitable conditions for health. HEAB serves as an advisory body to LDCPH, providing critical insight, accountability, and guidance to ensure that equity remains at the forefront of the department's work.

HEAB members bring invaluable perspectives to LDCPH's strategic planning, policy review, and community engagement efforts. Over the past year and beyond, the group has helped guide the selection of strategic plan priorities and contributed to the review of internal policies. HEAB meets monthly and works from a collaboratively developed agenda, with members compensated for their time and contributions. Their work continues to strengthen LDCPH's ability to serve all residents of Douglas County with integrity, inclusivity, and accountability.



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BEVERLY VICTORIANO



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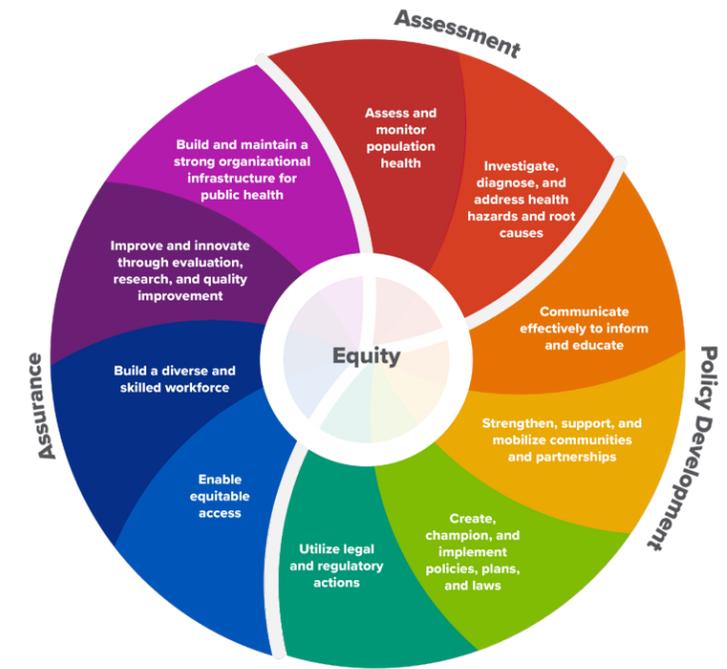
LAURA CANELOS



ROBERTO GONZALEZ

The 10 Essential Public Health Services

The 10 Essential Public Health Services is a framework aimed at describing and guiding the work of public health. Equity is at the center of the 10 Essential Public Health Services to actively promote policies, systems, and overall community conditions that enable optimal health for all. Centering equity involves recognizing that different populations experience health outcomes differently due to social, economic, and environmental factors that are often both preventable and beyond the control of those experiencing the outcomes and taking action to address those factors to ensure that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be healthy. This requires understanding and addressing the social determinants of health, such as poverty, discrimination, housing, education, and access to healthcare. It involves engaging and empowering communities to participate in decision-making and to advocate for their own health and wellbeing. It involves creating and implementing policies, programs, and practices that are tailored to the specific needs and priorities of different populations and addressing the root causes of health disparities.



The essential public health services are split into three core functions.

Assessment

Assessment includes efforts to describe and understand the health of a population and an investigation into issues that could lead to possible future negative public health outcomes.

Policy Development

Policy Development is looking at the impacts of local laws and regulations and how changes to those policies may improve possible future public health outcomes. The essential services in this domain also include efforts to develop and maintain partnerships to support public health efforts and communication approaches aimed at educating stakeholders and community members about important public health topics.

Assurance

Assurance is the act of reviewing impact and accessibility to make sure that the delivery of services is achieving the intended public health outcomes. The work of assurance also includes assuring a strong, competent workforce and exercising fiscal and administrative stewardship.



Community Health

Our community health team is made possible by our partnership with the University of Kansas School of Medicine, Department of Population Health. Our community health team provides leadership for the community health improvement process which includes completion of a community health assessment and community health improvement plan. Our community health assessment is a process which identifies health needs and issues specific to Douglas County through systematic, comprehensive data collection and analysis. The community health assessment leads to the creation of our community health plan, which is a long term, systematic effort to address the public health issues that were identified in the community health assessment. In late 2024, the community health team worked with partners to launch the new community health improvement plan (CHIP). The 2024-2029 CHIP includes goals, measurable objectives, and critical strategies for making progress on six issues: access to health services, anti-poverty, behavioral health, birth outcomes, food security, and safe and affordable housing. The CHIP serves a strategic plan for health and well-being, and was created through the dedicated effort of dozens of community members and organizations committed to creating change in our community.



Additionally, our community health team leads our policy efforts, through key activities like conducting health impact assessments on emerging policy efforts and advancing LDCPH’s policy agenda. The team also supports grant driven approaches to reduce chronic disease by focusing on three key behaviors - tobacco use, physical activity, and healthy eating. Efforts to improve walking, biking, and rolling to and from school and reduce youth access to tobacco are central features of this work.

The Community Health team works collaboratively with partners to promote Safe Routes to School. The team engaged with City of Lawrence staff to promote changes to routes in light of school closures. We worked with school staff to pilot a new signage approach to promote walking/biking around specific Bike/Walk to School days twice a year. Every school year, we partner with three school districts in Douglas County to measure the number of students walking or biking to school in order to support better understanding of the extent to which students are engaged in active transportation. In fall of 2024, 18.2% of area students reported walking or biking, which is very close to the City’s goal of 20%.



In October 2024, the Community Health, Informatics, and Communications staff worked together to launch a new series of events called Public Health After Dark. The purpose of these events is to elevate community conversation about important and emerging public health issues by convening speakers who provide up-to-date, clear information about how the public health topic is having an impact on people living in Douglas County and describe community efforts to address the issue. The first Public Health After Dark session focused on the topic of opioid use. Dr. Dee Kinard presented detailed information about what is known about opioid use, overdose, and fatality. Community partners from Douglas County, DCCCA, Heartland Community Health Center, and LMH Health presented on the many strategies they are implementing. The event was well-received and Public Health After Dark continues into 2025.



Environmental Health

Environmental health is one part of LDCPH’s regulatory services. In 2024, our environmental health department completed 485 inspections including septic, pool, cereal malt beverage (CMB), and water testing. Our environmental health team enforced environmental health and safety regulations throughout Douglas County to protect environmental quality to promote the health and safety of the Douglas County community. The services provided by our environmental health team include onsite sewage management (septic systems) permits and inspections, private water supply (well) permits and inspections, well water sample screenings, public swimming pool and spa inspections, cereal malt beverage inspections, septic hauling equipment permits and inspections, responding to resident complaints regarding environmental health issues, and tobacco retail licensing.

In 2024, the Community and Environmental Health teams worked together to develop and launch the tobacco retail licensing program. The environmental health team licensed 78 tobacco retail locations and conducted 119 tobacco compliance checks in 2024. This led to the detection of 17 violations in which retailers sold to underage buyers. This effort yielded important information about youth access to tobacco and ongoing trends in tobacco products (e.g., the increased sales of tobacco toothpicks at cash registers) in Lawrence. Preventing youth access is a critical strategy for preventing initiation and lifelong use of cancer-causing substances.

Clinic Services

In 2024, our clinic remained steadfast in our mission to create abundant and equitable opportunities for good health by delivering accessible, inclusive clinical services such as immunizations, physical examinations, tuberculosis screenings, and testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections. Guided by our vision of leading change to advance health for all, we made measurable progress in aligning our services with community needs and reducing barriers to care.

A key milestone this year was the expansion of our clinical offerings to include physical examinations, which allowed us to serve as a vital bridge into primary care. We recognized that many community members lacked timely access to a primary care provider while managing ongoing health concerns. In response, we implemented short-term, transitional care services that helped individuals take control of their health while connecting them to long-term providers. This innovative approach demonstrated our commitment to service and integrity, ensuring people receive care when and where they need it most.

Another major achievement in 2024 was the successful launch and growth of Wellness Wednesday, a collaborative outreach initiative developed in partnership with the Lawrence Community Shelter and expanded to include several other community organizations. Through the use of our mobile clinic unit, we brought essential health services directly to people experiencing homelessness. This effort exemplifies our value of collaboration and our focus on impact by meeting people where they are and strengthening our relationships with underserved populations.

These accomplishments would not have been possible without the trust of our community and the shared commitment of our partners. By working together, we maximized our collective strengths and expanded our reach throughout Douglas County.

As we reflect on the past year, we are proud of the meaningful change we have driven and remain deeply committed to our mission, vision, and values. Together, we will continue to build a healthier, more equitable future for all.



Wellness Wednesday

Wellness Wednesday is a collaborative initiative between Lawrence Douglas County Public Health and the Lawrence Community Shelter, created to bring essential health services directly to people experiencing homelessness. By intentionally removing common barriers such as transportation, cost, and stigma, this program makes healthcare more accessible, equitable, and person-centered.

Rather than asking people to come to us, we meet them where they are, both physically and emotionally. This approach has fostered trust, built relationships, and allowed providers to offer care that is not only immediate but also more personal and consistent.

Over the past year, Wellness Wednesday has grown significantly through the support and engagement of community partners. Organizations now regularly participating include Heartland Community Health Center, The Willow Domestic Violence Center, DCCCA, the Lawrence Public Library, the Lawrence Humane Society, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Heartland RADAC, Bert Nash Community Mental Health Center, and The Sexual Trauma and Abuse Care Center. Their involvement has increased the range of services available during each monthly event and has strengthened the overall impact of our outreach.

Beyond the services provided, the personal stories speak volumes. One such story is that of **Douglas Keslar**, who has given us permission to share his name and journey. Douglas first accessed shelter services while experiencing homelessness. He later progressed through the 90 day program and the Village housing initiative, and he now lives independently. Through Wellness Wednesday, Douglas was connected to primary care services at Heartland Community Health Center, which has played a vital role in supporting his ongoing health and well-being. He continues to attend Wellness Wednesday events to stay connected, offer encouragement to others, and advocate for the value of the program. Douglas's experience reflects the vision of this initiative—providing stability, dignity, and long term wellness for all individuals.

Wellness Wednesday demonstrates what is possible when public health and community partners come together with a shared commitment to equity, compassion, and inclusion. We remain focused on helping more individuals achieve improved health and housing outcomes through consistent, community-based care.



Childcare Licensing

Our childcare licensing team works with childcare providers to reduce the risk of predictable harm to children while in out-of-home settings by providing education to those who are interested in becoming licensed childcare providers, conducting initial inspection visits of day care home or center to verify compliance with state regulations, conducting on-site annual evaluations of licensed facilities, providing consultation visits and investigating complaints.

Our childcare licensing specialists are committed to working with all area providers offering expert subject matter support and providing necessary feedback, with the goal of maintaining and increasing quality childcare availability in our area. While the number of facilities can fluctuate year to year, the overarching trend is stability. In 2024, there were 127 licensed childcare facilities in Douglas County. The availability of quality childcare is well known to impact community's economic outcomes and a variety of individual outcomes for children and parents that can influence the desirability of a city for young families.



WIC

In 2024, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) continued to play a vital role in supporting the health of families in Douglas County. WIC is a federally supported program administered by the USDA and operated locally by Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health. In 2024, approximately 1,200 participants actively engaged with the WIC program each month. The program provided income-eligible pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, as well as infants and children under five, with access to nutritious foods, individualized nutrition education from registered dietitians, breastfeeding support, and referrals to essential health and social services. Benefits were used to purchase nutrient-rich foods including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and dairy products, contributing to improved health outcomes and food security in the community.

To expand accessibility, WIC launched outreach clinics in Eudora through a new initiative called Wednesdays with WIC. The program also deepened its partnership with Heartland Community Health Center, serving 137 clients who received dental education and fluoride treatments from a registered dental hygienist. WIC contributed significantly to the local economy, with over \$1 million in benefits redeemed at the 12 grocery stores in Douglas County that accept WIC. A key development in 2024 was the hiring of a bilingual breastfeeding peer counselor, enhancing the program's inclusivity and ensuring more families could access culturally and linguistically appropriate support. This year marked continued growth in both the program's impact and its financial contribution to the community.



Family Support Programs

Family Support Programs include Healthy Families Douglas County (HFDC), Baby Steps, and Mi Apoyo Prenatal, each designed to support pregnant individuals and families with young children.

HFDC is an evidence-based home visiting program that partners with caregivers facing multiple life stressors. Home Visitors support child development, health care access, goal setting, and connections to community resources.

Baby Steps offers case management for teen parents from pregnancy through toddlerhood, with visits conducted at home, in community spaces, or virtually to meet families' needs.

Mi Apoyo Prenatal serves pregnant individuals ineligible for health insurance by connecting them to prenatal care, case management, interpretation services, and prenatal education. Support continues through the fourth trimester.

In 2024, the Mi Apoyo Prenatal program continued offering Becoming a Mom®/ Comenzando Bien® prenatal classes, developed by KDHE and the March of Dimes. Each eight-session cohort provided participants with education and supportive gifts, and 25 individuals successfully completed the program this year. Healthy Families Douglas County and Baby Steps hosted monthly family events designed to foster parent-child interaction, strengthen peer connections, and introduce families to local resources. Memorable gatherings included summer fun at the Lawrence Splash Pad, pumpkin picking at Schaake's Pumpkin Patch, and a holiday celebration with Santa, cookies, and crafts.

The program was also awarded the Pregnancy Maintenance Initiative grant through KDHE, which expanded its ability to provide case management for pregnant individuals and improve access to timely prenatal care, supporting better health outcomes for parents and babies. Finally, staff were recognized for their excellence, with Home Visitor Kelli Raney receiving the Home Visitor of the Year award for Kansas maternal child health programs. This honor reflects her longstanding dedication and the meaningful impact she has had on families through her compassionate care and consistent support.

One Mi Apoyo Prenatal client initially ineligible for services was referred to A Compass Project to explore ACA insurance options. When premiums proved unaffordable and income decreased, the client was re-screened and approved for services by Mi Apoyo Prenatal demonstrating the value of strong community collaboration.

Another family enrolled in HFDC in 2022 has shown remarkable progress. The mother has maintained sobriety, accessed mental health support, and both parents have been highly engaged in their child's early intervention services. The child is now developmentally on track, and the family is preparing for a cross-state move as the mother completes her doctorate and begins a new university role.



Informatics

Informatics is the science of how to use data, information, and knowledge to improve human health and the delivery of healthcare services. It is having the right information in the right place at the right time so that we can make more relevant and quicker interventions. Informatics monitors health status to identify health disparities and factors that contribute to such disparities. This information is then used to develop strategies to achieve equity. We turn data into information and actionable knowledge to monitor health status, identify patterns, and evaluate interventions.



Epidemiology

Epidemiology plays a vital role in investigating suspected or confirmed health threats by identifying emerging health issues, monitoring disease trends, and guiding the containment and mitigation of outbreaks. Through systematic data collection and analysis, epidemiologists help determine the source, spread, and impact of health problems, enabling timely and effective public health interventions. In emergency situations, this work becomes especially critical. As the lead agency for Emergency Support Function (ESF) #8 — Public Health and Medical Services — the Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health (LDCPH) department is responsible for coordinating the local public health response. This includes managing disease surveillance, directing medical and public health resources, and leading risk communication efforts to ensure the public and stakeholders are informed and protected.

In the 2024-25 flu season, the Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health Epidemiology Coordinator released 38 consecutive weekly reports combining respiratory illness syndromic surveillance and wastewater data specifically for COVID-19, influenza (flu), and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) through our website and social media platforms. These reports served as an early warning system for healthcare providers—forecasting potential increases in emergency department visits—and kept the public informed about the level of infectious disease activity in the community.

The inclusion of wastewater data, which detects viral shedding from individuals before they may seek medical care, offers a powerful, non-invasive tool for monitoring disease trends. This consistent, real-time information helped guide clinical decision-making, supported public health messaging, and empowered community members to take preventive actions—such as staying home when sick, masking, or getting vaccinated—based on local trends in viral transmission.

Quality Improvement and Performance Management

At LDCPH, our Quality Improvement (QI) and Performance Management (PM) efforts are focused on building and sustaining a culture of quality across the organization. As part of the Informatics team, QI and PM support continuous improvement and accountability by helping programs use data to inform decisions and strengthen performance. Through our performance management system, we track progress, identify areas for improvement, and guide decision-making with meaningful data. Quality improvement projects are then used to enhance how we deliver programs and services.

Ultimately, this work helps improve public health outcomes by ensuring our services are effective, equitable, and responsive to the needs of our community. From evaluating internal processes to shaping how we engage with the community, our QI and PM efforts ensure that what we do is not only efficient—but truly impactful, in support of LDCPH's mission to advance the health and well-being of all people in Lawrence and Douglas County.

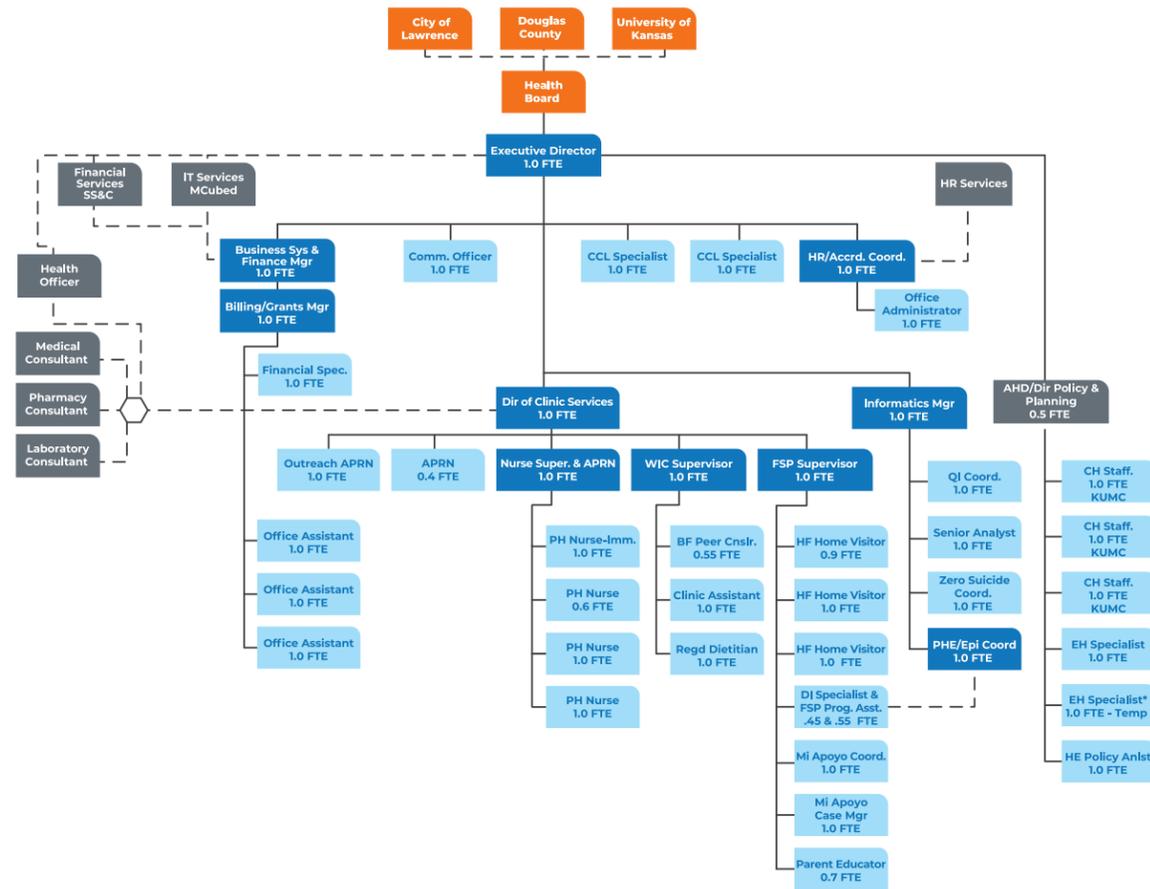
Preparedness

Public health plays a critical role in emergency preparedness by planning for, responding to, and recovering from health threats and disasters that impact communities. This includes natural disasters, infectious disease outbreaks, bioterrorism, and other public health emergencies. Public health agencies develop emergency response plans, coordinate with local and national partners, conduct risk assessments, and ensure timely communication with the public. They also play a key role in mobilizing resources, distributing medical supplies, and providing guidance to healthcare providers and the public. Through training, surveillance, and rapid response, public health helps protect populations, minimize harm, and build resilience before, during, and after emergencies.

Zero Suicide

In 2024, LDCPH became the first health department in Kansas to implement the Zero Suicide Program. Zero Suicide is a systematic, evidence-based approach to improve suicide care within healthcare, behavioral health, and other community-based services. It provides a framework for developing leadership and fostering an organizational culture that supports competent, compassionate care. The approach emphasizes ongoing data collection to assess suicide risk, enhance protective factors, and refer clients to a higher level of care when necessary. At its core, Zero Suicide is a quality improvement initiative focused on continuously enhancing care and outcomes over time. By strengthening the capacity of local systems to identify and respond to individuals at risk for suicide, this effort helps create a safer, more connected community. It promotes collaboration across sectors, reduces gaps in care, and supports the overall wellbeing of individuals and families across Douglas County.

Org Chart



Funding Sources

2024 Actual Revenue



2024 Actual Expense



2024 Finance Report

Operating Fund

Beginning Balance \$2,938,392

Revenues

Federal	\$1,132,899
County	\$863,116
City	\$832,000
Fees	\$759,513
State	\$708,632
Other	\$10,500
Total Revenues	\$4,306,660

Expenditures

Salaries and Wages	\$2,014,555
Payroll Related Expenses	\$622,474
Commodities	\$263,212
Contractual	\$1,002,621
Total Expenditures	\$3,902,862

Net Revenue over Expenditures \$403,798

Transfers

Transfers In	\$0
Transfers Out	\$2,143,986

Net Charge in Fund Balance (\$1,740,188)

Ending Balance \$1,198,204

Reserve Fund

Beginning Balance \$2,365,964

Revenues

Interest Income	\$46
Total Revenues	\$46

Expenditures

Total Expenditures \$0

Net Revenue over Expenditures \$46

Transfers

Transfers In	\$2,091,702
Transfers Out	\$0

Net Charge in Fund Balance \$2,091,748

Ending Balance \$4,457,712

Funded Depreciation Fund

Beginning Balance \$463,758

Revenues

Interest Income	\$337
Total Revenues	\$337

Expenditures

Board approved initiatives	\$216,379
Total Expenditures	\$216,379

Net Revenue over Expenditures (\$216,042)

Transfers

Transfers In	\$52,284
Transfers Out	\$0

Net Charge in Fund Balance (\$163,758)

Ending Balance \$300,000

Total

Beginning Balance \$5,768,114

Revenues

Interest Income	\$0
Transfer from Operating Fund	\$0

Expenditures

Total Expenditures \$4,119,241

Net Revenue over Expenditures \$187,802

Transfers

Transfers In	\$2,143,986
Transfers Out	\$2,143,986

Net Charge in Fund Balance \$187,802

Ending Balance \$5,955,916

