No other word describes the Health District’s experience in 2020 quite as well as whirlwind. From the moment COVID-19 was first discovered in Colorado on March 5, like so many other organizations, our staff sprang into action to create new ways to help protect our community’s health.

We have assisted in many disasters before, but never had any of us experienced a threat so serious—one that could, if immediate action wasn’t taken, spread major illness and death like the wildfires we also experienced last year—and one that impacted the entire community, and lasted so long.

As the reality set in that in order to save lives, people would have to distance from one another, that individual’s incomes would be impacted, that this was no time for people to be without health insurance, and that anxiety would grow, we recognized that our services would be critical. Yet we would have to provide them in entirely new ways. And we soon learned that things would change constantly—requiring constant flexibility.

Almost immediately it became apparent that COVID was even more of a risk to some—calling for us to help develop new services. It is impossible to ‘shelter at home’ if you have no home. While consulting with the amazing organizations moving at lightning speed to set up a temporary, safer shelter for people experiencing homelessness—helping to create health and hygiene practices—we suddenly discovered a critically important gap.

There was no place for those who were unhoused and experiencing COVID-like symptoms to isolate (or to quarantine due to exposure). It was not safe or humane for the individual, nor was it safe for the community. By mid-March, our employees were pouring themselves into creating and staffing safe locations for Isolation/Recovery and Quarantine for those experiencing homelessness—helping to create health and hygiene practices—we suddenly discovered a critically important gap.

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Equally important was our work to swiftly expand the availability of our Connections Program—connecting people to mental health and substance use services—into the community’s COVID emotional support line. And we expanded outreach to those who now needed health insurance more than ever so Larimer Health Connect could help them find affordable options. Our Family Dental Clinic services also adapted to a whole new model of safely providing care.

Never have I been so grateful—for the rapid action, flexibility, self-sacrifice, dedication, and truly colossal heart that our staff has shown in helping to protect our community’s health from COVID and its impacts. The gratitude extends to the multitude of other individuals and community organizations also responding to the pandemic.

As I write this, it is truly tragic that COVID has killed 250 people in Larimer County. Yet the efforts of every person in our community who worked to help others and to slow down the spread of the virus prevented a tragedy of far greater scope. To each of you, I offer my most heartfelt thanks.

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Some Health District staff began 2020 doing the jobs they were trained for only to end up serving the community in ways they never could have imagined as they helped respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Among those were staff from several different programs who helped make sure that one of the community’s most vulnerable populations was not forgotten in the midst of the pandemic.

The Health District team joined partners from Homeward Alliance and other community groups in the day-to-day operation of a temporary shelter for people experiencing homelessness that was established at Northside Aztlan Community Center. They oversaw separate areas where visitors could isolate, recover, or quarantine (IRQ), depending on their COVID-19 status. Plans and tasks changed frequently as needs evolved, covering everything from screening for symptoms to organizing hand-washing stations.

“There were no manuals for this. There was no chapter in a textbook that any of us got during our education that told us how to do what we were doing,” says Health District Medical Director James Stewart, who, along with Community Impact Team Director Brian Ferrans, oversaw medical operations at the shelter and subsequent IRQ locations.

Isolation, recovery, and quarantine care later moved to a residential facility where up to 25 people could be accommodated at one time. As COVID cases surged in December, efforts shifted yet again, this time to a Loveland hotel that provided greater capacity. Each change in venue brought new challenges, but staff never lost sight of how important their work was for the people in their care.

“The alternative was that they could be sick with COVID out on the street,” Ferrans says.

Another group of Health District staff redeployed to help the community in different ways after the pandemic put a sudden halt to their in-person services. Nurses from Heart Health Promotion joined with staff from Research and Evaluation to assist the Larimer County Department of Health and Environment with COVID-19 contact tracing.

Finally, the Research and Evaluation team seized an opportunity to help the community better understand local impacts of the pandemic. Staff contacted respondents from its recently completed Community Health Survey and asked how COVID-19 had affected them. More than 1,500 county residents responded, offering insights into how the pandemic was affecting their work, income, emotional health, substance use, and other factors. (See results at healthdistrict.org/2020-covid-19-supplemental-survey.)

Connections offers answers, options, and support to help individuals take the next step—the right step—toward mental health and freedom from substance misuse. Connections includes a team called Child, Adolescent, and Young Adult Connections (CAYAC) that works specifically with ages 0-24 and their families. Connections served over 4,500 individuals in 2020, many with more severe symptoms than seen in previous years—and staff reported an increase in whole families needing support.

Shifting to telehealth and working remotely meant a new process for delivering therapy and other services that was secure, HIPAA-compliant, and confidential. The last piece was probably the toughest since two-thirds of the team are parents with kids doing remote schooling, so finding a quiet spot with no disruptions wasn’t always easy, says Michelle Clark, Connections clinical supervisor and a mom.

Connections also expanded its hours from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays to 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., 7 days a week, with callers connected to SummitStone Health Partners’ crisis line at night.

As the pandemic dragged on, immediate emotional support was seen as critical to those struggling with fears of getting sick, social isolation, loss of employment, juggling online schooling, concerns about increased substance use, and more. So Connections worked with local partners to create, market, and fund a “warm line” available 24/7 for callers throughout Larimer County who needed someone to listen and offer emotional support.

“The team rallied and did whatever was required at any given time to meet the community’s needs,” Clark says.
A year filled with layoffs and fears about the spread of COVID-19, having health insurance coverage became an urgent need for many people in Larimer County. The Larimer Health Connect team rose to the challenge, using virtual appointments to help hundreds of people enroll in an affordable plan and ease their minds.

Larimer Health Connect is a free service that helps people find the best options for health insurance to meet their family’s needs and budget. Trained staff provide impartial assistance with new, free, and lower-cost health insurance plans—including plans from the Connect for Health Marketplace, Health First Colorado (Medicaid), and CHP+.

While staff met remotely with most customers over video, individuals without a computer or internet access were offered in-person appointments, following proper protocols to ensure safety.

The team saw a big increase in people who had experienced a job loss or loss of income due to shutdowns and were looking for budget-friendly insurance plans that would still provide the healthcare coverage they needed during uncertain times. The program served 1,937 households in 4,556 encounters in 2020, including many repeat customers during Open Enrollment.

The rapid spread of the virus also led some who were without insurance to seek assistance. “We had several calls from people who said their motivation to apply for health insurance was the potential need for COVID-19 testing and treatment and that close friends or family had tested positive,” says Rosie Duran, Larimer Health Connect program coordinator.

Adding to the crisis for some was the inability to pay for their prescriptions. Prescription Assistance is an arm of Larimer Health Connect that helps those with limited incomes fill their prescriptions through vouchers, manufacturer assistance programs, and navigating lower-cost sources. More people reached out with immediate needs compared to past years, and many of them were between coverage plans and experiencing homelessness, says Ann Martin, program lead for Prescription Assistance.

Let us help you get covered!
Throughout 2020, improving the health of our community required fortitude and perseverance, as well as strengthened existing and new partnerships centered on a commitment to helping others. It’s with profound gratitude that we recognize our donors and partners who advanced our mission and those that supported services to address increased and unforeseen community health needs due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Together, we touched the lives of over 10,337 individuals by:

- Ensuring that those experiencing homelessness in our community had a safe place to isolate, quarantine, and recover from COVID-19
- Providing children, adolescents, families, and adults with emotional support when they needed it most, helping them to find answers, options, and resources for mental health and substance use challenges
- Supporting individuals and families to enroll in health insurance programs at a time when so many people in our community faced employment challenges
- Ensuring safe access to dental care services for individuals living on low incomes and/or living with disabilities
- Helping people to find affordable prescription options
- Helping individuals to understand, complete, and share their advance care directives, specifying medical treatment and health-care decision-makers if they were to become seriously ill or injured
- Helping people to quit tobacco and control their blood pressure, both risk factors for severe COVID complications

### Programs

#### Connections
Answers, options, and support for adult mental health and substance use.
425 W. Mulberry, #101 • 970-221-5551

Child, Adolescent, and Young Adult Connections (CAYAC) Team
A service of the Connections program that focuses on answers, options, and support for youth and families. Early identification of areas of concern, assessment, and guidance for counseling, or other treatment of mental health and substance use for youth and families.
425 W. Mulberry, #112 • 970-221-3308

#### Community Impact Team
Organizes community efforts to make long-term, systemic changes that will significantly improve the health of the community, with a focus on mental health. • 970-224-5209

#### Family Dental Clinic
Dental services for adults and children.
202 Bristlecone • 970-416-5331

#### HealthInfoSource
Your source for mental health and substance use resources and information in Larimer County.

#### Heart Health Promotion
Nurse screening and consultation for cholesterol, blood pressure, and glucose. The Improving Blood Pressure Program offers sessions with an RN to learn self-monitoring techniques and how to discuss results with a medical provider. • 970-224-5209

#### Integrated Primary Care/Mental Health Program
Providing behavioral health care in safety net clinics.
970-224-5209

#### Larimer Advance Care Planning Team
Free assistance and support to help people complete and share their advance care directives.
120 Bristlecone • 970-482-1909

#### Larimer Health Connect
Helping people find the best options for health insurance to meet their family’s health needs and budget; prescription assistance.
144 N. Mason, Unit 7 • 970-472-0444

#### Quit Tobacco Program
Support and resources to quit smoking, vaping, and/or chewing with the help of certified Tobacco Treatment Specialists.
120 Bristlecone • 970-224-5209

### 2020 Financial Summary

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2020 Revenues</th>
<th>2020 Expenditures</th>
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<td>Capital Outlay</td>
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</table>

*Property & Specific Ownership Taxes: 7.42%*