



**Waco-McLennan
Public Health**

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



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Dear Waco-McLennan County Community

The dedicated and hardworking public health professionals, at the Waco-McLennan County Public Health District spent 2023, with one focus in mind... telling the story of public health to the community. I am proud to say that this year's annual report reflects the amazing stories told across the county, state, country, and even internationally of the outstanding work being done right here in our Waco-McLennan County community.

I would like to thank the City of Waco Marketing and Communications Department, specifically Clare Paul and Austin Reynoso, for assisting us in telling our story. Without them, we would not have been able to capture such special moments in the Health District's history, such as the WIC Reopening Event, images from the screening of the documentary Birthing Justice, and the inaugural Plug into Equity Conference held in November of 2023. Thank you both for all you do.

For those of you who would like to assist the Health District as a volunteer, the Medical Reserve Corps, Healthy Women and Children Coalition, and the Live Well Waco Coalition offer community members a way to be involved in the work and program development of the Health District. Please feel free to email us at HealthDistrict@wacotx.gov if you are interested or for more information.

While 2023 was a great year for the Health District, we know that we still have work to do to "make the healthy choice, the easy choice," for our families, friends, and community members we serve daily. I wish you all health and wellness for years to come and look forward to helping make McLennan County the healthiest county, to live, play and work, in Texas.

LaShonda Malrey-Horne, MPH, MCHES®
Director of Public Health



LASHONDA MALREY-HORNE, MPH, MCHES
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH

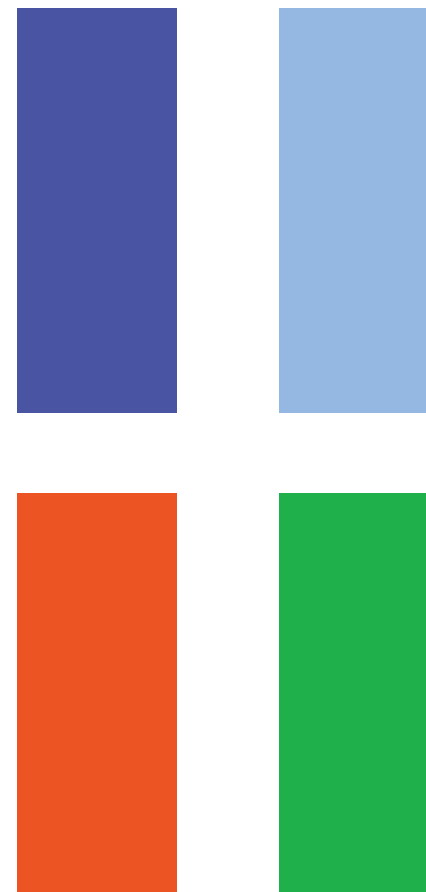
Health District of the Year



The Texas Association of City & County Health Officials (TACCHO) named the Waco-McLennan County Public Health District the 2023-2024 Health Department of the Year at its annual conference in Houston. TACCHO is the premier member organization serving both Texas local public health officials and the departments they lead. Their goal is to enhance local public health practices in Texas to improve the health of Texans and the communities in which they live.

Regardless of size, local health departments in Texas strive to realize this goal through disease prevention and the promotion and protection of the health of all those who reside in Texas. The TACCHO Local Health Department (LHD) of the Year Award was established to honor these efforts performed by LHDs in Texas.

LaShonda Malrey-Horne, Health District Director, accepted the award along with several other Health District staff members attending the conference.



Mission

To improve the health and well-being of the citizens and environment of our county.

Vision

Create the healthiest county in Texas where all people can live, work, play, and thrive.

77,761

COVID-19
VACCINES ADMINISTERED
2020-2023

803

COVID-19
VACCINES CLINICS
2020-2023

Women Infants and Children



The Women Infants and Children (WIC) Program has been at the forefront of community engagement, orchestrating a series of impactful events that not only marked significant milestones but also showcased the WIC Program's commitment to the health and well-being of the community.

WIC Grand Reopening

In celebrating the reopening after the expiration of COVID-waivers, the WIC Program organized a vibrant and inclusive Welcome Back Kickoff. This community event, featuring various activities such as food, face painting, an obstacle course, and an exciting tour of a real fire truck, drew the participation of nearly **250 parents and children**. Beyond the festivities, the event fostered community connections and celebrations, contributing to a positive and supportive atmosphere.

Birthing Justice

Breaking new ground in community health, the WIC Program hosted its **first-ever Black Breastfeeding Week event** at the Mayborn Museum. This groundbreaking initiative not only premiered the "**Birthing Justice**" documentary but also brought together a local expert panel to delve into the nuanced challenges of breastfeeding among minority mothers in Waco and McLennan County. The event provided a unique opportunity for education, open dialogue, and community support, fostering a sense of inclusivity and understanding.



Boo Bash

In the spirit of Halloween, the WIC Program organized its inaugural Boo Bash, a festive event that garnered the attendance of over **500 parents and children**. Beyond the traditional festivities, parents had the opportunity to learn about healthy, fun, grab-and-go snacks tailored for Halloween, such as Jack-o-lantern tangerines, pretzel mozzarella witches' brooms, and Boo-nanas. This creative approach to nutrition education not only added an educational element to the event but also contributed to promoting healthy habits in a fun and engaging manner.



Mart ISD Health Fair

Additionally, the WIC Program actively participated in the Mart ISD Health Fair, reaching out to over **200 attendees**. This strategic outreach effort provided an excellent opportunity to share valuable information and resources, reinforcing the WIC Program's commitment to contributing actively to the community's health and well-being.

These diverse and impactful events collectively emphasize the WIC Program's dedication to fostering community engagement, promoting **health awareness**, and creating spaces for education and support. As WIC continues to innovate and collaborate, the program's goal remains unchanged - to be a **beacon of health** and well-being for all community members.

Five Star Service Award

Waco-McLennan Public Health's Vital Statistics Division received the **2023 Five-Star Service Award**, a significant achievement that is a testament to the Division's commitment to excellence in vital records services.

Five Star Criteria

The award was granted based on the following Five-Star criteria:

1. Local Recognition Engagement: Demonstrated by attendance at either the 2023 Summer Conference or the 2022 Annual Conference, completion of Birth Registrar Certification (BRC), and regular attendance at monthly LR webinars (at least 75% participation).
2. Local Registration: Achieving a remarkable **96% registration rate of both birth and death records** in the Local Acceptance Queue within one business day between January 1, 2023, and September 30, 2023.
3. Oversight: Fulfillment of oversight responsibilities, including the submission of a completed local registrar self-assessment survey provided by the Vital Statistics Section electronically no later than April 30, 2023, as mandated by HSC 191.022 (g).
4. TxEVER Maintenance: Maintaining an optimal user to local administrator ratio of **20%, ensuring efficient TxEVER system management.**

Scanning Project

In addition to this achievement, the Vital Statistics team has **resumed a crucial scanning project**. Once completed, all birth records filed in the Waco-McLennan Public Health building will be stored as digital copies, contributing to enhanced accessibility and efficiency.



Statistics

In 2023, the Vital Statistics team demonstrated its capabilities by issuing **14,777 certified birth records to a logged count of 13,837 applicants**. Moreover, the Vital Statistics team filed and registered **4,350 births and 2,060 deaths** within the Waco city limits during the same year.

These accomplishments showcase our dedication to providing high-quality vital records services, embracing technological advancements, and ensuring prompt and accurate registration of vital events within our community.

HIV Testing Day

On June 30, 2023, the Division recognized National HIV Testing Day by hosting a testing event. With an initial goal of testing 100 individuals for HIV, the HIV/AIDS and STI Clinic exceeded expectations by successfully **testing 115 people**. This event not only contributed to the early detection of HIV but also served as a platform to raise awareness about the importance of regular testing and prevention.

Peer Program

In a groundbreaking move, the Division introduced a **pilot program for HIV case management Peer Navigator**. This innovative initiative showcases the Division's commitment to enhancing the support and care infrastructure for individuals affected by HIV. By integrating peer support into case management, the Division aims to provide a **more holistic and personalized approach** to those navigating the challenges associated with HIV.

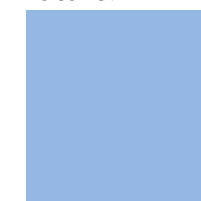
Syphilis Reduction and Community Engagement Grant

Recognition of our dedication to community health resulted in being awarded as one of six national grantees for the National Association of County and City Health Officials **Syphilis Reduction and Community Engagement grant**. This esteemed acknowledgment highlights the HIV/AIDS and STI Clinic's significant contributions to community health, particularly in syphilis reduction and community engagement.

World AIDS Day

On December 1, 2023, World AIDS Day, the HIV/AIDS and STI Clinic once again offered **free HIV testing**, bolstering our commitment to public health and emphasizing the importance of regular testing, awareness, and community engagement in the ongoing fight against HIV/AIDS.

These diverse and impactful initiatives reinforce the clinic's commitment to making a positive and lasting impact on the health and well-being of Waco-McLennan County. Through innovation, community engagement, and a dedication to awareness, the HIV/AIDS and STI Clinic strives to build a healthier and more informed community for the future.



Homeless Coalition

In line with Waco-McLennan Public Health's mission to improve community health and well-being, the HIV/AIDS and STI Clinic actively participated in the **Heart of Texas Homeless Coalition**. In January and July, the clinic actively participated in the coalition to offer quick and confidential HIV/AIDS testing. Through these collaborative efforts, our clinic can provide testing access, allowing us to serve Waco-McLennan County.



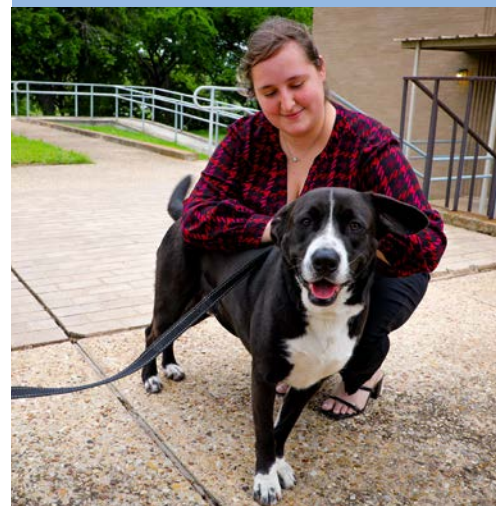
Health Equity, Promotion and Prevention

HEALTH EDUCATION

The Health Education initiatives for 2023 have been instrumental in promoting wellness and empowering individuals with the knowledge to make informed choices about their health. Hosting **25 nutrition and physical wellness classes** has provided valuable opportunities for community members to learn about healthy eating habits and physical activity.

The Health Education team's dedicated engagement efforts have seen them spending over **951 hours actively reaching out** to diverse populations within the community, spreading health awareness and education.

Furthermore, the Health Education team's commitment to professional development and knowledge-sharing is exemplified through the delivery of **three professional presentations**, where the Health Education team shared their expertise and insights with peers and stakeholders, contributing to advancing public health discourse. These collective endeavors mark the Health Equity, Promotion and Prevention's consistent dedication to fostering health literacy, promoting wellness, and empowering communities to embrace healthier lifestyles.



EPIDEMIOLOGY

The Epidemiology team has been at the forefront of identifying and managing health threats within Waco-McLennan County. Over the past year, the Epidemiology team has **investigated 39 outbreaks**, demonstrating a steady commitment to safeguarding public health and ensuring prompt and effective responses to emerging infectious diseases and other health concerns. Through thorough surveillance and analysis, the Epidemiology team has worked tirelessly to contain outbreaks, mitigate risks, and protect the well-being of Waco-McLennan County community members. The Epidemiology team's efforts show dedication to epidemiological excellence and our ongoing mission to prevent disease transmission within our community.



PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Emergency Response

In response to the Lacy Lakeview apartment fire, the Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) team collaborated with Emergency Management for shelter operation and safety assessments.

Training

The Incident Response Team underwent Surge Team Training and partnered with the Waco Police Department for Active Threat Training, enhancing overall community safety.

The Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) prioritized training, conducting monthly sessions and a shelter operations exercise, enrolling **34 members** in the Texas disaster volunteer registry, with **10 awaiting** official status. The PHEP team facilitated quarterly Response Team Trainings, participated in exercises such as the Waco airport crash, and conducted staff call-down drills. December 2023 drills showed improvements, with **75% acknowledgment within 15 minutes** and **82% overall acknowledgment**, reflecting the PHEP team's effective communication and response-ability. Among the staff able to report, **76%** stated they could assemble within one hour.

MENTAL HEALTH ACCESS PROGRAM

In April, the Mental Health Provider Directory was launched in collaboration with the San Antonio Community Resource Directory. The Directory established a centralized database encompassing a comprehensive list of mental and behavioral health resources available in McLennan County. Currently, the database boasts **25 providers offering 70 programs**.

Recognizing the importance of mental health education, Waco-McLennan Public Health provided Mental Health First Aid training to staff members, complemented by Ask About Suicide training. Staff members are equipped with the knowledge of using the Columbia Suicide Screener and are provided with a comprehensive resource guide. This training empowers staff to support individuals in crisis effectively. This work aligns with Waco-McLennan Public Health's commitment to delivering crucial care for our community, particularly in the context of healing from the trauma of the pandemic.



WACO MCLENNAN COUNTY
PUBLIC HEALTH DISTRICT

Mental Health Support
How you feel matters.

Mental Health...

- Affects how we think, feel, and act.
- Determines how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices.

For Mental Healthcare Resources & Services in Waco-McLennan County:

Scan Here!
[HTTP://BIT.LY/3NQZ4TI](http://bit.ly/3NQZ4TI)



Students concluded the experience with mock interviews for a CHW role. The students and their instructor received this activity well.

Each student wrote an evaluation letter to discuss their experience and what can be improved the following year. Students overwhelmingly appreciated the opportunity and learned about new career fields. They also advised for activities to consider in the future, like walking breaks, mindful minutes, and shadowing the day-to-day activities of different staff. The second cohort began in Spring 2024, implementing some of these recommendations.

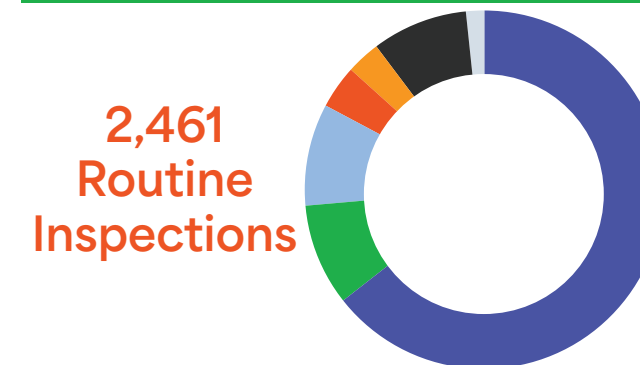
HEALTH SCIENCE PRACTICUM

Supporting future workforce development and innovative approaches, Waco-McLennan Public Health partnered with the Greater Waco Advanced Health Care Academy (GWAHCA) to provide a unique hands-on learning opportunity for Community Health Worker (CHW) students. The High School Health Science Practicum Program is designed to enhance the preparation of students for career and college opportunities. There are four primary components to the Health Science Practicum: (1) **college and career preparation**, (2) **leadership development**, (3) **shadowing and observations**, and (4) **simulation and experimentation**. The Health Science Practicum aims to prepare high school juniors and seniors for health careers, educate them on the various opportunities across the public health field, and develop interpersonal skills.

The first cohort had two classes that came once a week, with **18 total students**. Each session began with various icebreaker activities to support leadership and communication development. Each Division of the health district had the opportunity to lead a session with the students.

Environmental Health

FOOD ESTABLISHMENT INSPECTIONS



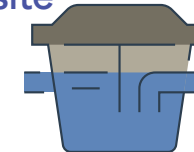
- 1,590 Food Establishment Permits
- 227 Mobile Food Vendors
- 226 Temporary Food Permits
- 90 Childcare/Daycare Facilities
- 81 Foster Home & Adoption Homes



- 208 Public Swimming Pools
- 38 Public Spas

On Site Sewage Facility

489 on-site sewage facilities permits



In Waco-McLennan Public Health's ongoing efforts to enhance community health and safety, the Environmental Health Division has actively protected public health and safety.

Recognizing the importance of inclusivity, the Environmental Health Division has translated food establishment handouts from English to Spanish, ensuring that critical information reaches a broader audience. This step reflects the Environmental Health Division's commitment to accessibility and communication across communities throughout McLennan County.

Permits

Environment Health's sanitarians have been diligently overseeing various permits, with a total of **1,590 Food Establishment Permits**, **227 Mobile Food Vendors**, **226 Temporary Food Permits**, **90 Childcare/Daycare facilities**, **81 Foster Home and Adoption Homes**, and **208 Public Swimming Pools**, along with **39 Public Spas**. This regulation is vital to maintaining high standards in food safety, childcare, and public recreational facilities.

Outbreaks

The Environmental Health Division collaborated with the Epidemiology team to **manage a Salmonella and Legionella outbreak**. This multi-faceted response exemplifies both Division's commitment to public health crisis management and ensuring the community's welfare during challenging situations.

OSSF

The On-Site Sewage Facilities (OSSF) Program **issued 489 permits** contributing to environmental safety and health. This dedication to public health reflects OSSF's reliability in regulating and monitoring the installation of on-site sewage facilities.



Public Health Nursing

The Public Health Nursing Division comprises two key programs at Waco-McLennan Public Health: the Immunizations Clinic Outreach Program and Tuberculosis Prevention and Care Clinic. Both programs made strides to improve the quality and reach of their services offered to McLennan County.

The Tuberculosis Prevention and Care Clinic initiated an N95 Fit Testing Program, offering affordable quantitative respirator fit testing for the local healthcare workforce and the broader community.

Recognizing some residents' challenges, the Immunizations Clinic established a Homebound COVID-19 Vaccine Program for individuals in McLennan County who lack transportation or have mobility issues. This program ensures that everyone in Waco-McLennan County can access vital vaccination services.

The Immunizations Outreach Program and Clinic's commitment to community well-being was further demonstrated through active participation in health fairs and presentations to raise awareness about immunizations and promote the utilization of ImmTrac—The Texas Immunization Registry.



Immunizations Clinic

Clinic Work

The Immunizations Clinic made significant progress in the preventing and protecting McLennan County citizens, helping **8,191 patients** and conducting **440 tuberculosis (TB) tests**.

Emphasizing the importance of preventative care outside the clinic, immunization services were extended with the clinic's flu shot program, providing immunizations to community partners, local businesses, and other local employers.

Health Fairs

Our Immunizations Outreach team actively engaged with the community through participation in various health fairs and back-to-school events. Events such as the Waco Police Department Richland Mall Back to School Bash, WISD Family Fun Fest, and Mart ISD Back to School Bash provided platforms to administer child vaccinations. In the period from January to November 2023, the Immunization Clinic administered a total of 7,639 vaccines, contributing significantly to the health and well-being of the community.

Outreach & Collaboration

Our Immunizations Outreach team reached over **50 daycares** to reach the younger population, providing valuable resources and education about vaccines and the ImmTrac program. Strengthening our partnerships, the Immunizations Outreach team successfully enrolled three new providers into the Texas Vaccine for Children Program, ensuring a broader network for vaccine accessibility. Collaborating closely with Waco Independent School District (WISD), the outreach team addressed the needs of children who were delinquent in their vaccinations, working diligently to help them catch up on their immunization schedules.

To maintain and enhance the quality of immunization services, the outreach team conducted **45 provider quality assessment visits** related to ImmTrac. These efforts highlight the Immunizations Outreach team's dedication to providing healthcare services and actively engaging with the community to promote an environment of health and wellness.



Tuberculosis Clinic

In the past year, the Tuberculosis Prevention and Care Clinic has been dedicated to providing comprehensive tuberculosis (TB) services to the residents of McLennan County. Direct patient care was extended to **seven individuals** diagnosed with active TB disease, alongside **97 residents diagnosed** with latent TB infection. Rigorous investigations **identified 49 contacts**, subsequently screened through TB symptom assessment and blood testing. The TB Clinic also reached **135 high-risk individuals** who underwent TB screening. Collaboration with esteemed partners, including the Heartland National TB Training Center, the Texas Center for Infectious Disease, the Department of State Health Service's Binational Program, and the CDC's CureTB Program, ensured that our clients received essential support for the continuation of TB treatment, even beyond the borders of Texas and the United States.

N95 Fit Testing Program

In response to the community's evolving needs, the Tuberculosis Prevention and Care Clinic launched a **low-cost quantitative N95 respirator Fit Testing Program**, demonstrating our commitment to infection control and preventive measures. Furthermore, Waco-McLennan Public Health was pivotal in disseminating TB education and support. Outreach efforts extended to hospitals, clinics, schools, correctional facilities, and various community organizations throughout McLennan County, fostering an environment of awareness and preparedness. This comprehensive approach reflects the Tuberculosis Prevention and Care Clinic's ongoing dedication to the health and well-being of the community.



Plug Into Equity

The inaugural Plug Into conference was held on November 8, 2023, at the Waco Convention Center. The inaugural theme focused on equity, the Plug Into Equity Conference. An engaging and insightful event that brought together experts, thought leaders, and advocates in equity, diversity, and inclusion. Almost **200 registered** for the conference, and **178 attended**. Most participants were from McLennan County; however, public health professionals from east and west Texas also joined the conference. Attendees rated the conference positively during the evaluation and provided helpful feedback for the next conference.

Diving into race equity, **Dr. Paul Elam**, the keynote speaker, provided a unique perspective on the challenges our community faces and how to overcome them. Additional sessions explored communication strategies, rural health, and strategies for embedding equity into the fabric of your organization. The conference closed with a panel of local leaders discussing how they are approaching equity.



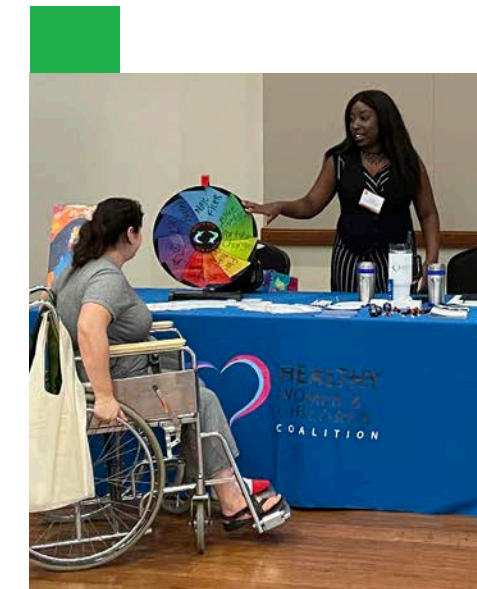
To encourage access to needed resources, organizations were offered the opportunity to setup a table. **Nine local non-profits, coalitions, and organizations** provided valuable information and resources to attendees.



Composting and recycling were made available for the entire conference to plug into environmental equity. Urban Reap supported the collection and disposal of waste. The catering company, Rio Brazos Cuisine, supplied compostable napkins, plates and bowls. In total, **116.55 pounds of waste** was collected from the event, **83% was diverted from the landfill**. About 25 pounds was trash, 6 pounds was recycling, and 85.5 pounds was compost.



The second annual Plug Into conference aims to continue to close the gap between theory and practice, equipping participants with actionable steps to have the hard conversations the community needs. The official theme is **Plug Into Community Conversations** and will be held on **November 6, 2024, from 9 am - 4 pm** at the Waco Convention Center.





Waco-McLennan Public Health

