

A person wearing a red long-sleeved shirt and black shorts is running on a dirt trail. The background features rolling hills with sparse vegetation under a clear blue sky. The text "HEALTH & WELLNESS" is overlaid in white on the right side of the image.

# HEALTH & WELLNESS

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## INTRODUCTION

Health and wellness is an important aspect of environmental sustainability, as a healthy environment often equates to a healthy population. Providing access to local food production and a variety of transportation choices creates greater opportunities for our residents to engage in healthy eating and active living. Furthermore, environmental issues such as air and water pollution and climate change can have a direct impact on the well-being of our residents. Thus, linking public health to environmental health is critical.

Boulder County generally enjoys the reputation of being a prosperous and healthy place and holds itself to a high standard of health, wellness and quality of life. However, a closer look through an equity lens reveals many concerns and challenges in terms of poverty, obesity, mental health, substance abuse and food access. Most Boulder County residents would undoubtedly be surprised to learn that nearly 20% of our children live in poverty, that our binge drinking rates are among the highest in the nation, and that child obesity has made alarming inroads in our community.

Our high expectations are fueled by national “best of” lists that tout our Olympic-caliber athletes, locally grown “foodie” culture, and convenient bike paths. We treasure our landscape

of rolling plains, foothills and the Rocky Mountains and our climate that promises 300-plus days of sunshine per year. Many assume that all Boulder County residents are naturally drawn toward outdoor recreation. Health status data for the overall county population does reflect our high expectations: In general, we smoke less, have lower Body Mass Index (BMI), eat more healthy foods, exercise more intensively and have lower rates of chronic disease than the nation as a whole. Yet, at Boulder County Public Health (BCPH), we understand that terms like “overall” and “general” can lull us into complacency.

With a mission to “protect, promote, and enhance the health and well-being of all people and the environment in Boulder County,” BCPH is charged with looking deeper into the data to understand and act upon the additional health burden faced by populations with fewer opportunities for a healthy life. These health disparities are largely preventable differences and are not acceptable in our community. BCPH seeks to work with organizational partners and community members to bring all Boulder County residents to a high standard of health and wellness. To ensure that a healthy and equitable life is available to every Boulder County resident, BCPH has determined areas of greatest health need and is committed to improving them over the next five years and into the future.



# HEALTH & WELLNESS

## HEALTH GOAL

Work to protect, promote and enhance the health and well-being of all people and the environment in Boulder County

## INTERNAL

### TARGET 1

Develop a strategic public health plan to improve overall health within Boulder County

## SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES

### STRATEGY 1

Conduct assessments of the following health sectors to determine which areas have the greatest potential for improving overall health within Boulder County:

- Community Health Assessment
- Core Services Assessment
- Local Public Health System Assessment

### STRATEGY 2

Develop measureable health outcome strategies, goals and objectives for each program within Public Health

## LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

### STRATEGY 3

Implement strategic plan for health and wellness

## INTERNAL

### TARGET 2

Achieve Public Health Improvement Plan objectives by 2017

## INTERNAL

### TARGET 3

Increase local capacity to respond to the potential impacts of climate change, such as increased heat emergencies and vector borne diseases\*

\*Vector-borne disease is the term commonly used to describe an illness caused by an infectious microbe that is transmitted to people by blood-sucking insects.

## SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES

### STRATEGY 1

Increase healthy eating and active living within Boulder County

### STRATEGY 2

Improve the mental health of Boulder County residents

### STRATEGY 3:

Reduce substance abuse within Boulder County

> For more detail, please see *Public Health Improvement Plan, HealthyBoulderCounty.org*

## SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES

### STRATEGY 1

Establish locally relevant conditions of what constitutes a heat emergency

### STRATEGY 2

Monitor weather trends for incidences of prolonged extreme heat events

### STRATEGY 3

Identify the location of high-risk populations (elderly and mobility challenged)

### STRATEGY 4

Develop a response plan for heat emergencies

- Establish partnerships with aid organizations
- Determine locations for cooling shelters

### STRATEGY 5

Implement a vector disease surveillance and response program

### STRATEGY 6

Monitor trends related to increased vector activity due to climate change

>See "Climate" section for more information on *Climate Change Preparedness Targets*.

> For a full list of strategies and descriptions of these strategies, please see *Boulder County Public Health website, BoulderCounty.org/dept/publichealth*

BOULDER

LEADS THE WAY

COUNTY

Boulder County Public Health (BCPH) is partnering with LiveWell Longmont and the City of Longmont to create a new healthy eating and active living chapter for the Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan, to bring attention to how the city's codes and regulations can support a healthier community. Adoption of this new chapter will lead to further policy and environmental changes that support healthy eating and active living choices. Key concepts proposed in this chapter include:

- Increasing access to healthy eating and active living choices
- Providing a variety of transportation choices
- Integrating land use and transportation, so that physical activity can be easily incorporated into people's daily lives

- Promoting access to healthy food
- Supporting the local food system

Boulder County Public Health's Youth Corps Team has worked on projects that improve healthy eating and active living in our community. Through neighborhood walkability and bikability assessments, bike parking audits, bike counts, and gardening in Longmont YMCA's demonstration farm, we are gathering critical data that will support improvements in public health as well as future grant writing efforts. BCPH's Food Safety program has collaborated with partners to promote healthy, safe and local foods within the community, at local farmers markets, and on Food Day. Visit [FoodDayBoulderCounty.org](http://FoodDayBoulderCounty.org) to learn more.



### **Building a Caring and Livable Community for All**

Implementing a livable community blueprint involves all sectors of the community and supports understanding of the interconnectedness between natural, economic and cultural resources. It impacts not only where we live, but how we live. In Boulder County, livability depends on engaging the full range of values and resources linking together economic, social and environmental sustainability. Values influencing transportation, water and air quality, local food, and other areas also influence social sustainability—strong local partnerships, a coordinated approach, public participation and an appreciation of interrelationship between systems.

The Boulder County Human Services Strategic Plan is a community blueprint focusing on social sustainability in Boulder County. Successful implementation of the plan will result in a coordinated safety net for Boulder County’s most vulnerable residents that is supportive, empowering and responsive to emerging needs through:

- Integrating and coordinating delivery of human services
- Prioritizing inclusiveness in service delivery and decision making
- Coordinating human services with educational opportunities
- Striving to meet basic needs such as food and shelter
- Improving access to health care
- Promoting economic well-being and self-sufficiency
- Supporting safe and stable communities

The Building Caring and Livable Communities for All blueprint can be found at:

**[BuildingLivableCommunities.org](http://BuildingLivableCommunities.org)**

## POLICY PRIORITIES

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*Support Local Involvement in the Implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act*

Boulder County supports a collaborative effort between state agencies and counties for implementing the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. As the entities responsible for front-line implementation of public health and human service benefits, and public and community based health programs in Colorado, counties bring a crucial perspective to the implementation of healthcare reform. Together, Boulder County believes that the state and counties can implement healthcare reform in a manner that will build upon existing assets and improve service delivery for families and individuals across Colorado.

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*Support Full Implementation and Funding of Health Care Reform as Enacted in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010*

Health care reform, as enacted in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) of 2010, will be implemented nationwide by 2014. Boulder County supports full implementation of the ACA and will oppose any attempt to divert the funding called for in the legislation, including but not limited to funds for prevention and public health, high-risk insurance pools, and Medicaid expansions.

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*Support Efforts to Increase Funding for Healthy Eating and Active Living to Decrease Obesity, Diabetes and Other Public Health Issues*

Obesity rates in Colorado are climbing. Although Colorado in the past was one of the healthiest states in the nation, that trend has reversed and rates of obesity for adults and especially children are climbing quickly. Healthy eating and active living will reduce both heart disease and cancer, which are the two leading causes of death in Boulder County. Obesity is the third most important public health priority in Boulder County.

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*Support Efforts That Require Mandatory Vaccinations*

Boulder County's population-based programs focus on delivering services to the entire community. These services are proven to realize a more positive health impact than individual interventions alone, such as vaccination to control against communicable disease. Colorado ranks second in the nation in lowest vaccination rates, and Boulder County has one of the lowest rates in the state. Mandatory vaccinations have been recommended by multiple organizations as a best practice to increase group immunity and therefore improve protection of our population against communicable disease.

## POLICY PRIORITIES CONT.

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*Boulder County Supports the Public Health Act of 2008 and Funding for Local Governments to Implement Improvement Plans to Meet State Goals*

The Public Health Act of 2008 (SB 08-194) required the state and each local public health agency to develop a public health improvement plan by 2010. Priority areas in the Boulder County Public Health Improvement Plan include: Improving mental health (including depression and suicide); reducing substance abuse; and encouraging healthy eating and active living. Supporting and adequately funding the implementation efforts for the improvement plan will provide accountability in the system and assure positive health outcomes.

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*Support Regional Livability and Sustainability Planning Efforts*

In June 2009, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the U.S. Department of Transportation, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced the Partnership for Sustainable Communities in order to help communities realize the following Livability Principles: Provide more transportation choices; promote equitable, af-

fordable housing; enhance economic competitiveness; support existing communities; coordinate policies and leverage investment; and value communities and neighborhoods.

Boulder County is committed to working collaboratively with regional stakeholders to achieve the outcomes envisioned in these federal Livability Principles. Additionally, Boulder County supports establishing an urban revitalization and livable communities program to provide federal grants to eligible local governments for various park and recreation purposes, including grants for rehabilitation and construction, innovation, at-risk youth recreation, and recovery action programs.