
**KITTITAS COUNTY
PUBLIC HEALTH
DEPARTMENT**

ANNUAL REPORT

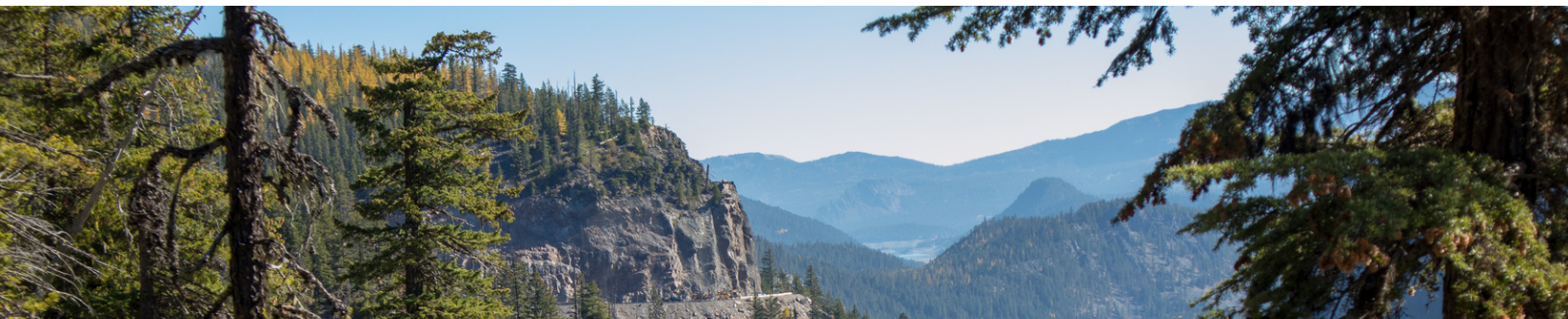
2020/2021

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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Tristen Lamb

The Kittitas County Public Health Department provides a range of public health efforts in our community. It feels surreal that in 2019 the Kittitas County Public Health Department (KCPHD) had just started using social media, and a single community member's exposure to measles was our greatest communicable disease challenge. As we wrap up 2021, it is difficult to remember what life was like in 2019. Now, it is somehow difficult to imagine life without COVID-19.

While KCPHD is required by law to maintain certain areas of work, our department has been inundated with COVID-19 response since early 2020. From policy to messaging, testing to treatment, and now vaccines to boosters, everyone in this department was asked to go above and beyond the call of duty – and to do so for months on end. Everyone at KCPHD has certainly stepped up to help this community and I am incredibly grateful for this team.

I am proud of KCPHD staff. I am proud of our community partnerships. I am empathetic to the struggles of our many residents, and like others I wish COVID-19 would go away for good. Nevertheless, KCPHD will continue to respond and our priorities will remain.

I started my career in public health as an Environmental Health Specialist inspecting food establishments. I had the opportunity to grow within this department, moving to Health Promotion and then Environmental Health Supervisor before my current position as Director in 2018. I'm saddened to acknowledge that this report will be my last with KCPHD, as I am moving on to new adventures in 2022. KCPHD will continue to be staffed by people who live here and truly care about this county. We have a work culture of professional development and growth from within the department and local community. When we provide technical assistance or best practice policies to other agencies, we start that work by modeling public health here at the department first.

KCPHD's mission is to protect and promote the health and the environment of the people of Kittitas County now, in 2022, and for years to come.

Sincerely,

Tristen Lamb, Public Health Director



PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE

COVID-19 response brought attention to how local public health jurisdictions are overseen, how local public health regulations are implemented, and who has regulatory authority.

The Kittitas County Public Health Department (KCPHD) is a health department and not a health district. This means that KCPHD is overseen by the Kittitas County Board of Commissioners (BOCC) for day-to-day operations.

In addition, all health jurisdictions in Washington State have a local board of health and a local health officer. In Kittitas County, our Board of Health (BOH) is comprised of BOCC and additional community members in our county including RN DeDe Utley and Dr. John Asriel. Dr. Mark Larson is our Health Officer.

Vacancy on county board of health

For the DAILY RECORD

The Kittitas County Board of Health (BOH) is seeking a community representative to fill a vacancy on the board, according to a news release from Kittitas County.

BOH is the local board of health, which has the authority to develop local rules and regulations. Board meetings are held at 10 a.m. every third Thursday of the month. Applications are available at the Kittitas County Public Health Department (KCPHD) or at the Kittitas County Commissioners' Office and must be submitted by Oct. 30. The application is also available online at <https://www.co.kittitas.wa.us/boc/boards/documents/AppointmentApplication.pdf>.

The candidate for the community representative for BOH must be a consumer of public health, which includes Kittitas County residents who have self-identified as having faced significant health inequities or as having lived experiences with public-health related programs.

The most recent Community Health Assessment (CHA) identifies examples of who in our community experiences poorer health or health inequities. According to the assessment there are several groups who may experience poorer health

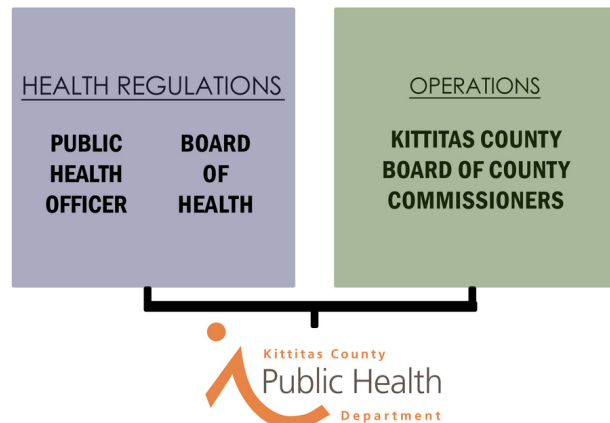
The BOH vacancy information is available via public notice at www.co.kittitas.wa.us

Hispanic population, single parent families, Medicare population, veterans, children in poverty, people with a disability, LGBTQ, and disconnected youth. More information can be found online at <https://www.co.kittitas.wa.us/uploads/documents/health/assessment/2018-Kittitas-County-Community-Health-Assessment.pdf>

Additionally, applicants should have experience, knowledge, and interest beneficial to public health including the environmental and personal public health needs of Kittitas County.

The Board of Health works in collaboration with the county health officer, public health department management, and community members to ensure that the core public health functions are implemented and maintained. More information about BOH can be found online at <https://www.co.kittitas.wa.us/health/board.aspx>

The BOH vacancy information is available via public notice at www.co.kittitas.wa.us and any questions regarding the vacancy can be directed to KCPHD at 509-962-7515 or email at publichealth@co.kittitas.wa.us



HOUSE BILL 1152

House Bill 1152 changed the composition of some local boards of health. Specifically, the bill regulates who is serving on local boards of health. The bill requires boards of health to have members who are not elected officials such as health care providers, representatives from community organizations, and people who have faced health inequities.

Per House Bill 1152, Kittitas County is required to recruit a consumer of public health and/or someone who has faced health inequities. Recruitment started at the end of 2021.

**34/38 STAFF
REMAIN
THROUGH THE
PANDEMIC**

513 INDIVIDUALS VOLUNTEERED

KCPHD coordinated with emergency management in processing 513 volunteer applications for COVID-19 vaccine response. Volunteers were crucial to the success of our county!

**KITTITAS
COUNTY MAKES
NATIONAL
NEWS**

**COVID-19 RESPONSE MAKES
NATIONAL NEWS!**

CNN.com published an article about Kittitas County's efforts around COVID-19 vaccine distribution.

Kittitas County in Washington state is lapping the field in COVID-19 vaccine distribution - CNN

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION

"My division ended up overseeing case investigation and contact tracing and I felt strongly that schools should remain open. Our county schools have been functioning for two years and working hard with us to keep schools open.

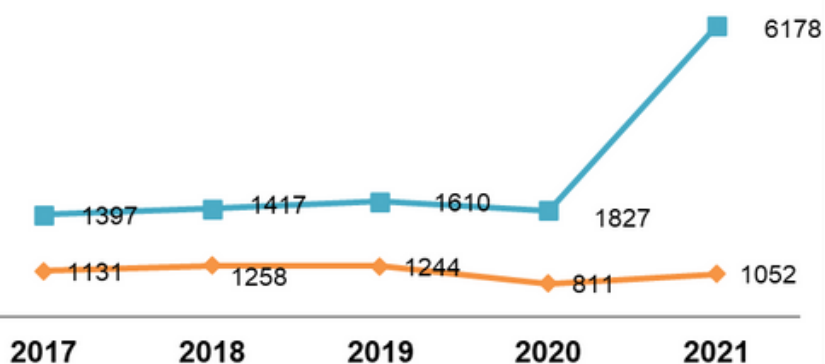
I think each county should implement what works for them, locally. I heard stories from across the state about schools being closed for outbreaks. Our schools working with us, meant that we had a very different story during the pandemic." ~Candi Blackford



KCPHD Administrative Staff continued operating through the front window of the Morris Sorensen building.

Vital Records Activity

Birth Certificates Death Certificates



KCPHD has seen a drastic increase in vital records. The increase is due to out-of-county agencies specifically using KCPHD because of our customer service and quick turn around time.

COMMUNITY HEALTH

For over a decade, KCPHD's community health program held medical clinical services. Due to reduced funding services offered to the residents of Kittitas County decreased. However, with the onslaught of COVID 19, it has become evident that KCPHD must maintain community health services in order to fill community gaps when it comes to public health care, preventive care, and education.

Currently, community health services are leading the community with the pandemic response. This includes case and contacting of COVID-19 positive patients and exposures community education, and ensuring state guidelines are being met and followed. Kate Johnson, BSN, RN is our Public Health Nurse our Communicable Disease Division Supervisor. KCPHD is providing COVID-19 vaccinations for pediatric patients with plan to begin bringing back scheduled childhood immunizations, COVID-19 booster shots for adults, and other health services as needed.

Community Health services will include areas of need that are currently not addressed in Kittitas County such as detailed travel consultations and immunizations for specific travel destinations, providing partner treatment for sexually transmitted infections, and Tuberculosis (TB) screening testing with a tool known as the Purified protein derivative (PPD) skin test. The goal is to fill the existing gaps and requirements in our community and continue to be responsive to the ever-changing and dynamic healthcare in our county.

KITTITAS COUNTY COVID-19 CURRENT RISK OF SPREAD BASED ON 7-DAY CASE AVERAGE

GREEN - LOW

- No community spread in the last 72 hours

YELLOW - LIMITED

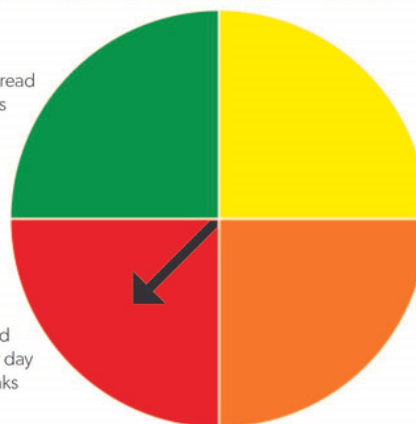
- Limited community spread not greater than 1 case per day
- No outbreaks

RED - HIGH

- Community spread greater than 2 per day
- 2 or more outbreaks

ORANGE - MODERATE

- Community spread not greater than 2 cases per day on average
- 1 outbreak



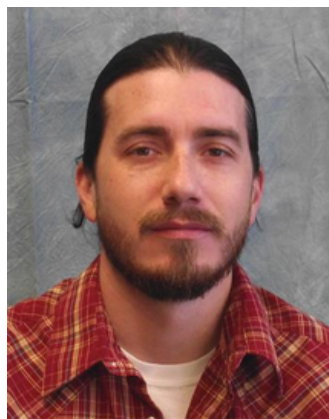
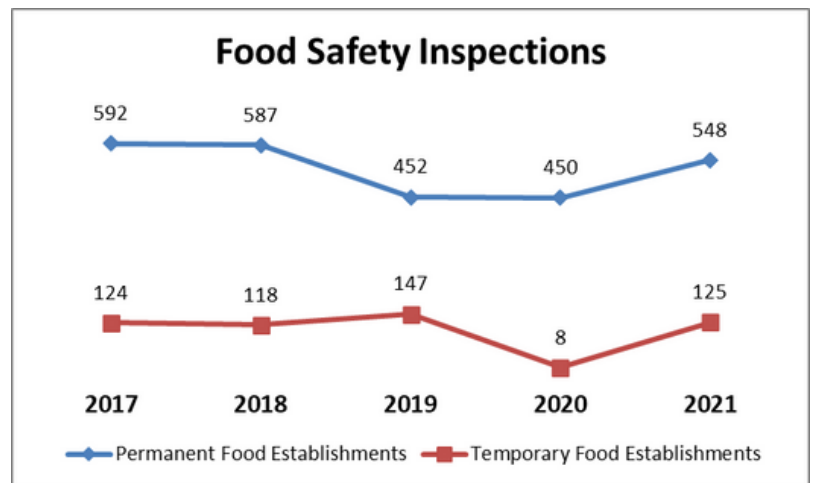
COVID-19 Patients Served - 2020: 1868 individuals - 2021: 4349 individuals



"I enjoy working for the Kittitas County Public Health Department because of our amazing group of team members who all share the same goal in keeping our community healthy and safe. The cohesiveness that we have as a team is something truly special and certainly plays a critical role in achieving the best care and support for the residents of Kittitas County. During these times and ever-changing guidelines with COVID-19, it has been a challenge when it comes to ensuring all other illness and diseases (besides COVID-19) are managed and reported. I look forward to leading and contributing to the development of policies that protect, promote, and improve Public Health in Kittitas County." ~Kate Johnson

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

"Environmental Health (EH) has assisted in COVID-19 response when requested, which included business re-opening plan review and logistics with isolation and quarantine. Throughout the agency's response, EH has maintained our required regulatory work to pre COVID-19 levels. I believe local response is the best response, since we work closely with residents on a daily basis. In fact, I distinctly recall telling an employee not to use the term *essential* when talking to local business owners. I know that residents here take great pride in being self-sufficient and being able to take care of themselves, their families, and their business." ~Jesse Cox (pictured right)



In 2021, the EH Supervisor implemented internal quality inspections to review performance, volume of work, and timeliness for each EH program area

EH goals include sustainability, professional development, and continuity of business. Every position within EH is a generalist position, where employees can work across the different programs including on-site septic, drinking water, camps and parks, and food safety. Within the division, personnel have specific professional development tasks such as: training oversight, inventory tracking, budget development and tracking, and equipment maintenance. Additionally, each program will have program manuals to ensure continuity of operations, regardless of staffing levels.

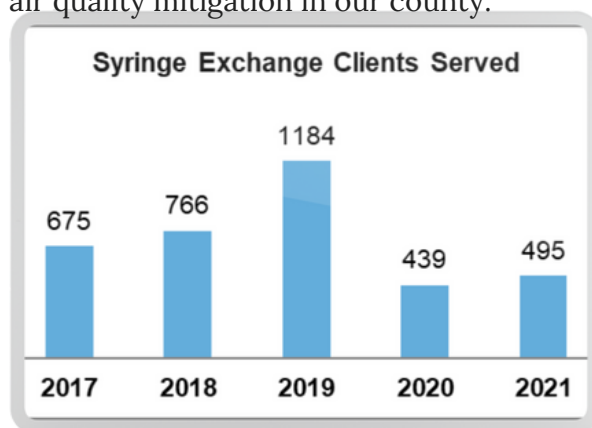
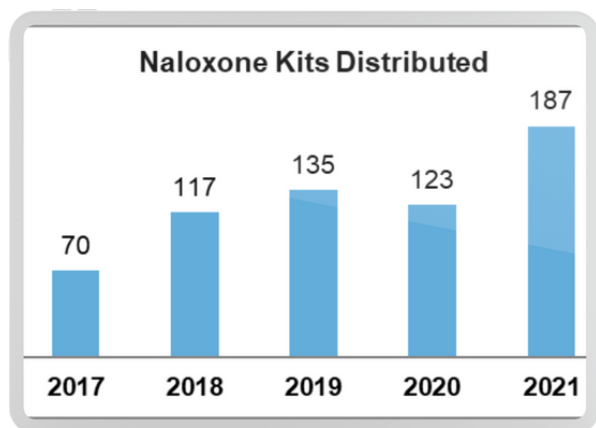
HEALTH PROMOTION

Access to Baby and Child Dentistry, Food Access, Harm Reduction, Health Insurance Enrollment, Local Strategies for Physical Activity and Nutrition, Marijuana Prevention, Maternal and Child Health Block Grant, Tobacco Prevention, childhood injury prevention, and COVID-19 vaccine outreach and rural health equity.

The Needle Exchange Utilization Survey or NEXUS is a part of a national survey and assessment for people who use intravenous drugs (PWID). Kittitas County was chosen randomly to participate in this national project that will be used to target prevention activities and evaluate program effectiveness for PWID. It is an opportunity for KCPHD and our partners to highlight what a rural syringe service program looks like.

Health Promotion (HP) and EH have been working together on separate air quality projects. HP recently worked with state partners to pilot an indoor air quality project. Qualifying households received air cleaning equipment, which provided data during wildfire smoke and air quality mitigation efforts.

EH is working with HP, federal partners, and local school districts to mitigate air quality in local school district buildings. Information sharing is ongoing to increase air quality mitigation in our county.

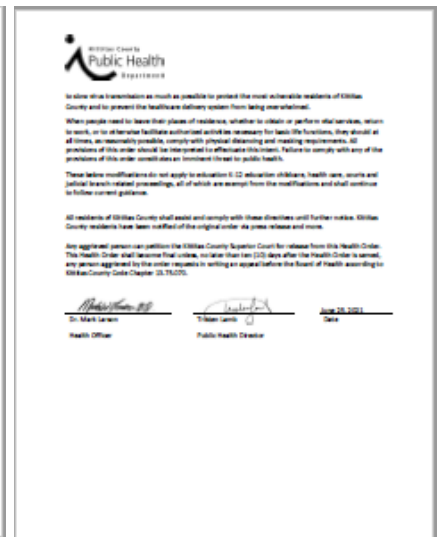


"Historically, KCPHD has always worked closely with partners in health promotion, but because of COVID-19 many partners did not have the capacity to work with us. It was a struggle to keep projects moving forward that were not related to COVID-19. Health concerns unrelated to COVID-19 did not stop and we still had work to do such as marijuana and tobacco use prevention or issues around food access, access to health insurance, or access to dental care." ~ Chelsey Loeffers



HEALTH ORDERS

Throughout most of the pandemic, Kittitas County maintained a regularly updated health order. This provided an efficient process for local control.



Other health orders in 2020-2021 included a septic system in Cle Elum, a septic system in Ellensburg, and excessive waste in Cle Elum.

“Kittitas County is a leader in how to effectively use a health order. The health order is used as a tool to prevent, maintain, and enforce public health laws. During the pandemic, multiple counties requested training on how we use our health orders in our county.” ~ Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Stephanie Hartung.



EMERGENCY RESPONSE PARTNERS

The Kittitas County Public Health Department (KCPHD) has participated in local emergency planning for well over a decade. Our county has a culture of working together when it comes to emergency response. We are very thankful to all of our emergency response partners, especially during COVID-19 response.

KCPHD personnel spent months in an emergency operation center, which was filled with our partners from the rest of the county (Sheriff, CDS, Auditor), Kittitas Valley Healthcare, Kittitas Valley Fire and Rescue, and more.

KCPHD is grateful for our relationships with local media, local healthcare facilities, and the numerous volunteer agencies and individuals who assisted over the last two years.



NEW BOARD OF HEALTH MEMBER DEDE UTLEY

Dede Utley, Director of Emergency Services at Kittitas Valley Healthcare, is the newest member of the Kittitas County Board of Health. Ms. Utley joined BOH in 2020. She has 25 years of experience in the medical field.

RURAL SYRINGE SERVICES

KCPHD has operated a syringe service for 13 years. The Never Share Syringe Exchange has been in operation since July of 2008. Never Share Syringe Exchange is one of twenty three exchanges operating in Washington State. (Nasen.org)

RURAL HEALTH NETWORK PARTNERSHIP

KCPHD works closely with the Kittitas County Health Network, which is considered a rural health network. The partnership provides additional funding opportunities and increased partnerships with other agencies across various sectors within the public health field.

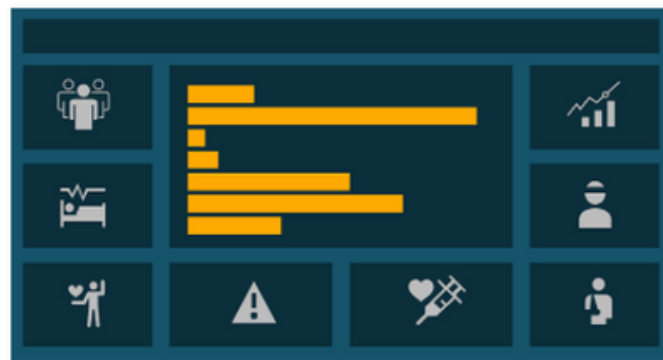
ASSESSMENT

Assessment supports data driven solutions for public health problems. Ensuring proper data is collected and reported is important for health and policy decisions on both departmental and local levels.

In 2021, KCPHD conducted a COVID-19 Vaccine Community Survey. The survey was a tool used to identify attitudes, beliefs, and barriers regarding the COVID-19 vaccine. It also provided information about gaps in knowledge, barriers or misinformation.

382 responses were needed. We received 1,601 responses.

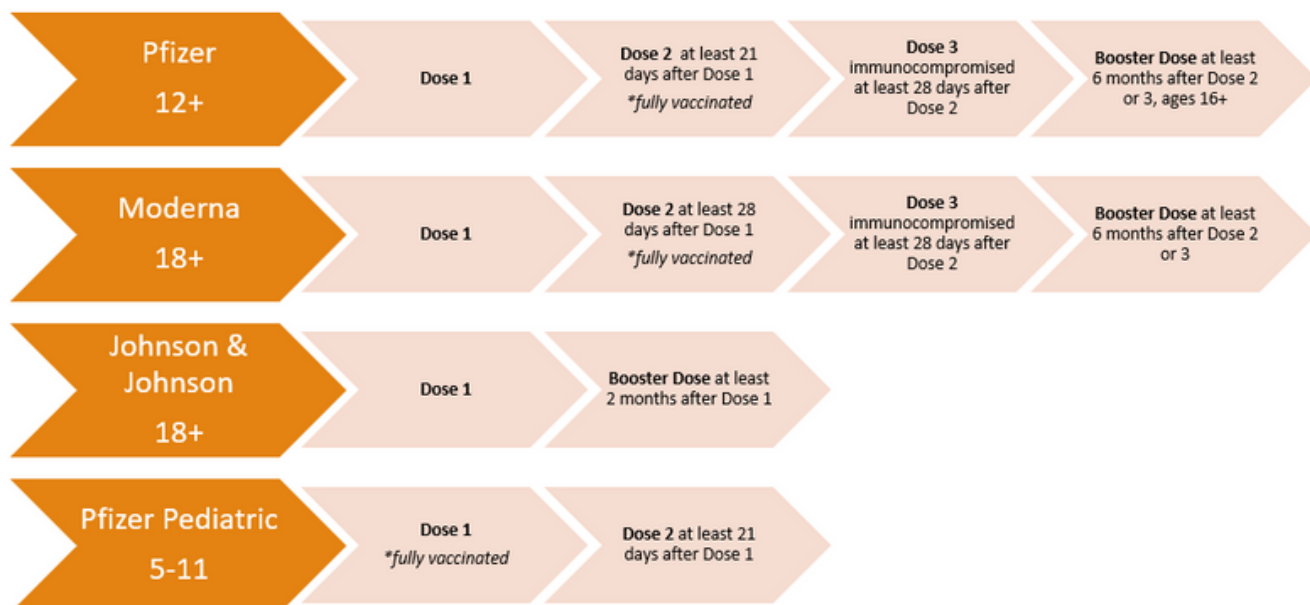
The majority of responses show a trust in healthcare providers. The top three ways to receive vaccine information were doctor, nurse or clinic followed by the CDC and then the local public health department.



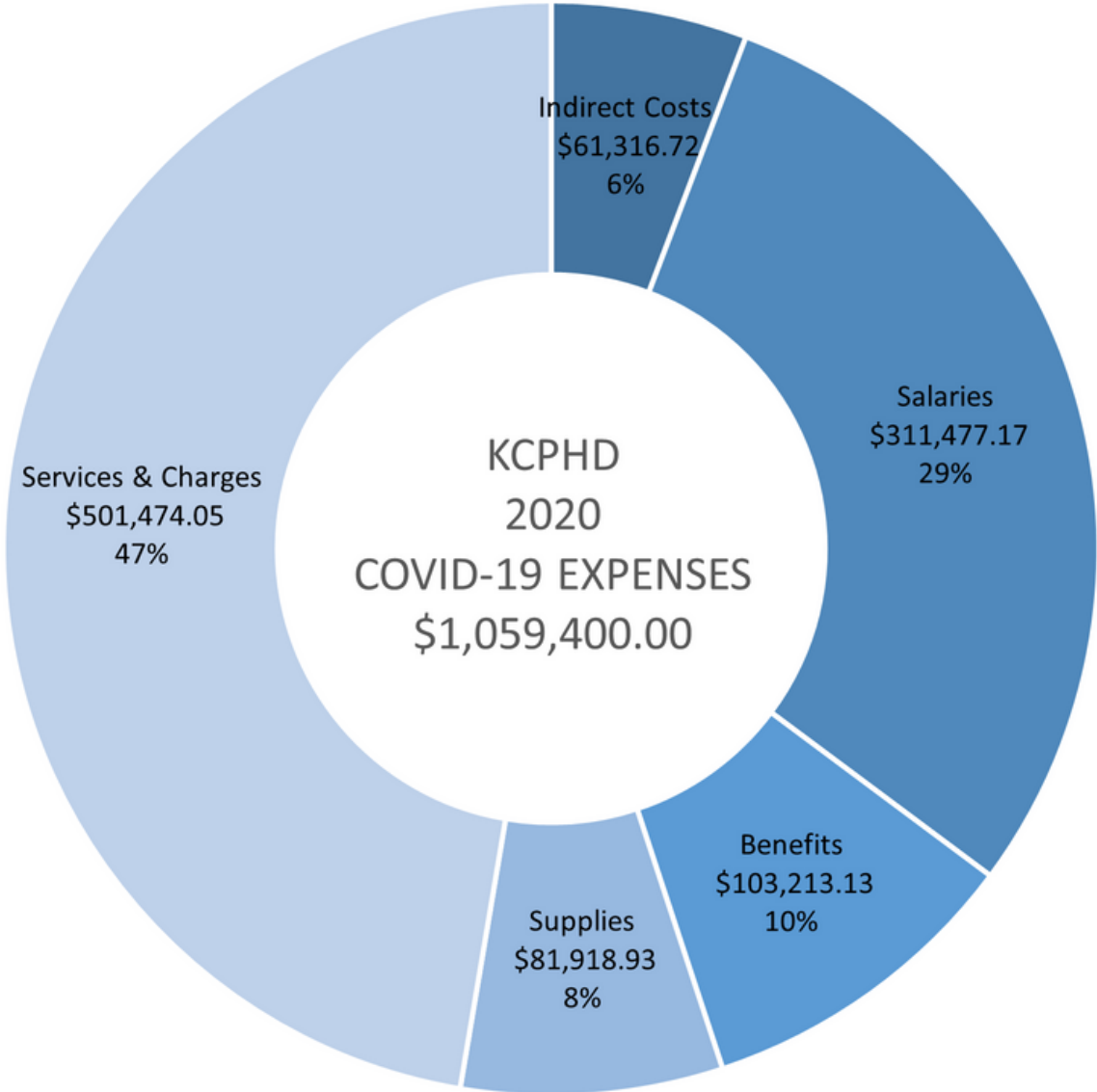
Kittitas County Data

Kittitas County is lucky to have access to GIS support. Because of this support, Kittitas County maintained a data dashboard through 2020 and 2021 with local information.

The local dashboard showed confirmed cases, COVID-19 related deaths, active cases, and new case count for the previous week.

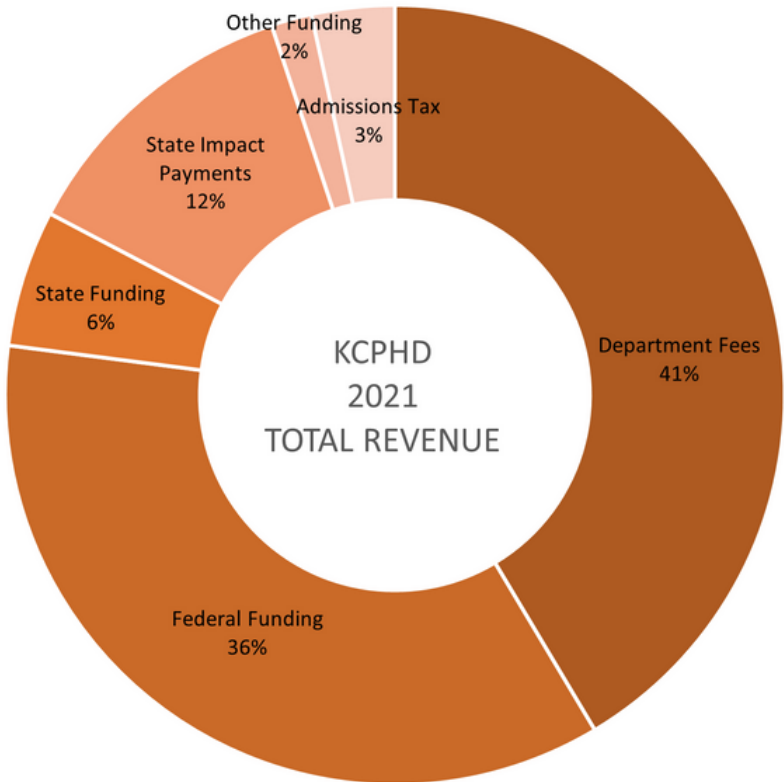


FISCAL SUMMARY



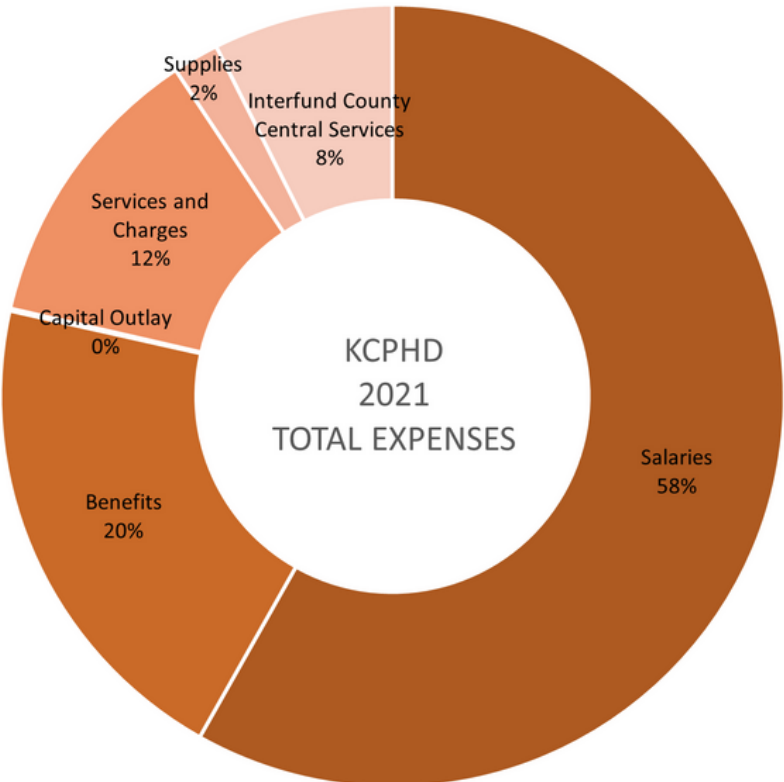
COVID-19 expenses made up 27% of all KCPHD expenses for 2020. The largest expense, Services and Charges, comprised of contract work with many community partners, including Kittitas County Health Network, FISH Community Food Bank, and KVH Hospital.

FISCAL SUMMARY



Department fees are the largest source of revenue for KCPHD.

COVID-19 revenue accounted for 20% of total KCPHD revenue for 2021.



Staff salaries and benefits are the largest expense for KCPHD.

COVID-19 expenses accounted for 28% of total KCPHD expenses for 2021.

LETTER FROM DR. LARSON

KITTITAS COUNTY HEALTH OFFICER

12/22/21

Merry Christmas to all.

The last 22 months have been difficult.

I have been proud of the people of Kittitas County during the Covid-19 pandemic. The community has stood up, volunteering at the food bank, the vaccination clinic, the cold weather shelter, Open Door clinic, Apoyo and many others. People have given to others, have been involved and worked hard to provide education for our children. Our healthcare providers have worked tirelessly. Teachers have been educating our children in a difficult situation for the better part of two school years. Kittitas County residents have looked out for the most vulnerable. This is not a surprise.

We are done with Covid-19, but Covid is not done with us. The Omicron variant is here in WA. It is much more infectious, but vaccinations with a booster provide the protection that we need to keep us out of the hospital and from dying. We have the tools to be safe. They are the Public Health tools that we have been using all along.

There will be many empty chairs this year at our Holiday tables. We have had 60 residents of Kittitas County die of Covid-19. Most of us know someone who has lost a loved one due to Covid. Honor those who we have lost and look out for your neighbors who have experienced loss these last two years.

We are community.

Be Kind. Say thank-you to someone today.

Get vaccinated. Get a booster. Wear a mask. Wash your hands and stay home when you are sick. These are not political things and are not difficult. And remember to get your flu vaccine.

Look out for others.

2022 will be better.

Mark Larson, MD
Health Officer

