Following the release of the 2011 Health of Denver community health assessment, Denver Environmental Health (DEH) and Denver Public Health (DPH) convened a diverse group of partners to form Be Healthy Denver (BHD), Denver’s community health assessment (CHA) and improvement planning (CHIP) initiative to help create the City & County of Denver’s first public health improvement plan.

Health assessment and improvement planning are inextricably linked; assessments produce baseline information that is used to frame improvement planning activities and target resources. Improvement plans use health issues and disparities identified in the assessment to address Denver’s greatest health needs.

While the CHIP framework is based on the assessment data, there are various internal and external factors to the health environment that may influence the ability to successfully address a health priority. Additionally, as data are collected and reviewed, the priorities and focus may shift to align with the needs and demands of the community.
Based on the findings from the CHA, Denver developed its first formal CHIP in 2013 that included strategies to be implemented through 2018. An outreach effort to Denver residents identified two priority areas: access to care and healthy eating active living (HEAL). In each priority area, the following goals were identified.

**BY DECEMBER OF 2018:**

- **at least 95%** of Denver residents will have access to primary medical care, measured by those reporting insurance coverage.
- **+5%** increase of children ages 2-17 years at a healthy weight, increase from 69% to 74% by December 2018.

The **CHIP Report** described the process for selecting priorities and goals, while **annual reports** have tracked strategy-level processes and outcomes throughout the implementation. **This report was developed to summarize progress to date and chart a course for the remaining two years.**

**WHAT HAS BEEN DONE? HAVE WE MADE PROGRESS TOWARD OUR GOALS?**

BHD set two aggressive goals: achieving a 5 percent increase in child healthy weight and a roughly 15 percent increase in access to health care in five years. While ambitious, the goals are intended to set the tone of systems change with community partners. In the first three years, BHD has achieved significant progress and remains committed to these goals.
ACCESS TO CARE

Significant progress has been made in achieving the access to care goal, which has focused on two areas:

1) Creating a health alliance to address access issues across sectors
2) Supporting the expansion of Colorado's Medicaid program and health insurance exchange

The Mile High Health Alliance (MHHA) was initially convened in 2013 to lead BHD's access to care activities and formally launched in January of 2015.

Three workgroups were convened to focus on an individual's first access to care, high utilizers and specialty care access.

- The First Access to Care Workgroup set an aggressive goal to enroll 40,000 uninsured Denver residents in Medicaid.
- The High Utilizer Workgroup leads metro-wide efforts to better serve the needs of high utilizers of the health care system, such as residents who frequently use emergency departments and are readmitted to hospitals.
- The Specialty Care Access Workgroup addresses barriers to accessing specialty care for low-income residents in Denver.

According to the Colorado Medicaid Agency reports from January of 2017, the Denver Medicaid caseload grew steadily following the Medicaid expansion from 127,579 Medicaid members in December 2013 to 210,783 Medicaid members, a 65 percent increase. The Colorado Health Access Survey estimated that the percentage of uninsured Denver residents dropped from 18.4 percent in 2013 to 9.5 percent in 2015, a 48 percent drop. Despite remarkable reductions in the number of uninsured, some Denver residents still struggle to gain insurance coverage and access care.
HEALTHY EATING, ACTIVE LIVING (HEAL)

• BHD’s initial HEAL work plan spanned a broad continuum of prevention strategies and interventions. Subsequently, the group reframed its focus in 2016 to three key HEAL domains: increasing healthy food and beverage environments, improving the healthfulness of the built environment and creating consistent HEAL messaging. Denver set a goal to increase the number of healthy food and beverage policy and practice changes adopted by public venues and retailers. Progress towards this goal includes 33 policy/practice changes adopted reaching more than 5 million visitors, customers and employees annually at these locations. As part of this effort, 13 childcare centers caring for a total of 173 children received technical assistance to review internal food and beverage and physical activity policies and identify opportunities to incorporate best practices.

• In January 2017, a Hidden Sugar campaign was launched and promoted on TV, radio and billboards throughout metro Denver communities as well as online. Progress towards this goal will be tracked by evaluating website traffic, social media metrics, media mentions and the number of people who pledge to drink fewer sugary beverages on the campaign’s website.

• In the years leading up to 2014, Denver’s childhood obesity prevalence had been progressively increasing, especially among children under five years of age. During the three years of BHD activities, Denver’s childhood obesity prevalence has remained flat at 16 percent. While the percentage of school-aged children (2-17 years) at a healthy weight has remained static at 64 percent, the absence of annual obesity prevalence gains is a promising trend. The decline in obesity prevalence among young children is a positive sign; obesity prevalence dropped from 11 percent in 2012 to 9 percent in 2016 in children 2-5 years of age.

FUTURE STRUCTURE OF BE HEALTHY DENVER

In 2016, the BHD revisited the operational structure of the group and proposed a modified structure to more effectively engage community partnerships and leverage existing coalitions. Following this re-organization, it was determined that the advisory council had fulfilled its initial goals and was no longer needed in the same capacity moving forward.

The new structure was implemented (See diagram on page 5) in 2017 and is led by a core team of DEH and DPH staff, overseen by the directors of both agencies. While MHHA continues to successfully lead Denver’s access to care activities, BHD efforts will focus on the HEAL interventions to increase the percent of children at a healthy weight.

As part of this effort, Denver launched a governmental interagency workgroup in 2016 with the goal of ensuring the integration of health in all policies across city agencies. In 2017, a BHD representative will work to identify existing community coalitions and workgroups to ensure that BHD work is aligned with other efforts in the community. Members of the core team will chair or represent BHD on both workgroups and will share updates at monthly core team meetings. Subject matter experts in data, communication, and evaluation at DEH and DPH will be engaged as needed to support activities in their respective domains.
FUTURE IMPROVEMENT PLANNING ACTIVITIES

Moving forward, the MHHA will target activities that increase access to specialty care for low-income populations and develop focused interventions that better served the needs of high utilizers of the health system. MHHA has hired a Regional Health Connector for Health Statistics Region 20 of the City & County of Denver, through the State Innovation Model project that will connect providers to behavioral and cardiovascular community resources and social services.

Over the next two years, BHD’s HEAL effort will continue to improve access to healthy food and the built environment in Denver. The City & County of Denver will provide technical assistance to 25 Denver sites including childcare centers, museums, schools, community organizations, hospitals, government buildings, retailers and the Denver Zoo to increase healthy food and beverage environments.

- The **Hidden Sugar Campaign**, a three-year-long effort to educate parents and caregivers on the health risks of sugary drinks, will continue through 2018.
- Denver’s **Safe Routes To School (SRTS)** program will complete 10 walking plans and infrastructure projects to improve the ability for children to safely walk and bicycle to school.
- The **Denver Community Active Living Coalition (CALC)** will conduct outreach to engage communities around built environment and active living issues in their community including documenting resident experiences about what it is like to live, work, learn, play, commute and more in Denver neighborhoods.

For more information about Be Healthy Denver, or Denver’s health initiatives, visit [www.behealthyDenver.org](http://www.behealthyDenver.org).