

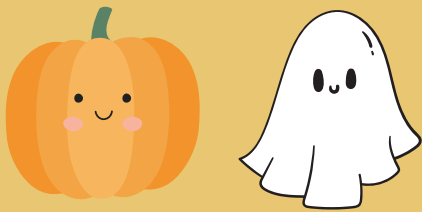
2025 Release
(Q1: July- Sept. 2025)



Rio Grande Prevention Program



Rio Grande County Public Health
October 2025



Vision
Healthy Children,
Families,
Communities,
Schools and
Cultures.



Welcome!

By Chelsea McNeerney-Martinez,
Rio Grande County Public Health (RGCPH) Prevention Coordinator

Welcome to the Rio Grande Prevention Program and Rio Grande Prevention Partners newsletter! This quarterly newsletter recaps our prevention efforts and highlights opportunities for community participation in our prevention efforts!

The first quarter of the new fiscal year has been busy juggling a multitude of projects and sustainability efforts. RGCPH has submitted three new grant applications, two staff attended the annual Public Health in the Rockies Conference, we started two new Life Skills Training cohorts with school districts (Del Norte and Center), and we attended several community events to promote and recruit for our prevention and cessation efforts.

This quarter, you'll find our whole agency has been busy maximizing our impact on the community!

We are continuing our work in the spirit of collaboration with our community partners and coalition members to accomplish our mission and vision!

COALITION WORK THIS QUARTER

This quarter, the Rio Grande Prevention Partners/SLV Tobacco Champions coalition met July 18, August 15 and September 12. If you would like to see any of the agendas or minutes for these meetings, please reach out to Chelsea at chelseamm@riograndecounty.org.

Overall, coalition members are encouraged to keep up recruitment efforts for missing sectors in our coalition and in the SLV Teen Prevention Coalition (SLVTPC), including law enforcement, parents, media and faith community members.

July:

- This meeting reviewed the recent change from the Colorado Crisis Line to 988 Colorado, reviewed plans for prevention programs to be offered in local schools in the next academic year and reviewed a new nicotine product and the changing tobacco/nicotine landscape.

Mission

Partnering to create a county-wide environment conducive to safe, healthy and productive living through education, awareness and community support.

August:

- Following the conclusion of the RGCPH PROSPER program, attendees reviewed the annual reports and discussed the impact of the Life Skills Training (LST) and Strengthening Families 10-14 Program (SFP) cohorts. Attendees and facilitators requested reporting in the future that encapsulates the additional cultural components they have been able to integrate into this work.
- We reviewed efforts by Alamosa Public Health to find efficient and affordable means of establishing ENDS waste disposal processes in the SLV. RGCPH partnering on this efforts. Several roadblocks were discussed, including safe and compliant storage of devices and cost for companies to travel to our rural area from the front range or other locations.

September:

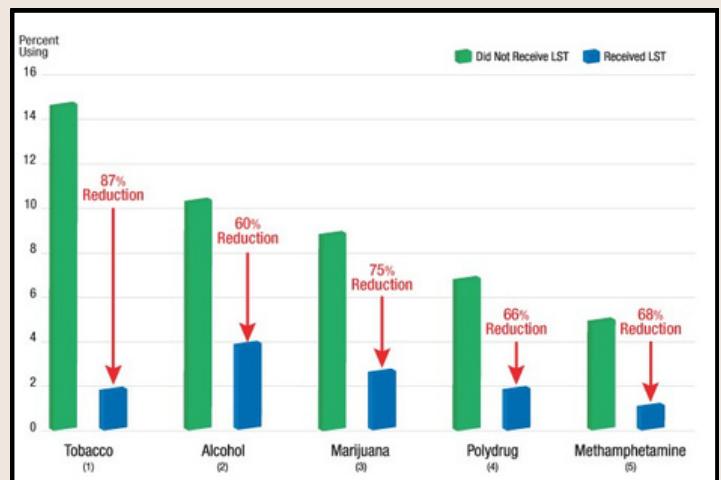
- Ashley Maestas with the Attainment Network gave attendees an update on their first year of work including reporting on the number of students who have taken advantage of their Upskill program and their Internships, benefiting individuals interested in or already working in the local medical field and our regional healthcare system as a whole.

LIFE SKILLS TRAINING UPDATE

This quarter, three RGCPH staff started providing the middle school Life Skills Training (LST) program to two school districts (Del Norte & Center). This program consists of 15 sessions each, focusing on preventing substance use and improving the self-image, decision-making/analytical skills and social skills of youth.

Health Equity Specialist/Community Health Worker Dolores Atencio and Prevention Coordinator Chelsea have been facilitating the program twice a week to seventh graders at the Upper Rio Grande School District in Del Norte. Roberta Marquez, Health Equity Specialist/Community Health Worker, has been facilitating the program to seventh and eighth graders in Center.

Both of these cohorts wrapped up in October! Roberta and Dolores are in the planning phases for a new Elementary cohort at Bill Metz in Monte Vista!





Safer Streets program making progress with community involvement

RGCPH's Safer Streets program continues to make progress in Rio Grande County! Our Youth Outreach Specialists began their Resource Evaluation presentations to the community and launched research into mentorship programs!

South Fork Neighborhood Watch met twice this quarter, including a presentation on off-road vehicles, safety and regulations at the federal/state/municipal levels in July and the first presentation of the Youth Resource Evaluation in August. Community members had positive feedback for both presentations, including expressing appreciation for the depth of research and information included in the Youth Resource Evaluation.

The Prevention Coordinator also participated in South Fork's National Night Out celebration at Rickel Park in August, which brought together citizens/community members, law enforcement, emergency response, healthcare and other agencies to learn about the many ways to support the overall well-being of the community.

In Monte Vista, Neighborhood Watch meetings were held on July 16, August 20 and Sept. 17. Residents discussed the impact of summer events on municipal and county crime rates, learned about Monte Vista PD's Tactical EMS program and asked several questions about law enforcement operations and personal property rights.

On August 27, Youth Outreach staff and the Prevention Coordinator attended the MVPD Community Night Out and met with lots of community members to promote the Neighborhood Watch program and provide public health resources. Several other agencies attended and the event was a success for MVPD and their partners.

In the next quarter, the Youth Outreach Specialists will continue presenting the Resource Evaluation and will expand their work in developing mentorship opportunities.



Due to scheduling conflicts following Veterans' Day, South Fork Neighborhood Watch will be one day later than normal: Thursday, November 13th - 6pm.



**October 25,
2025**

**10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
DEATakeBack.com**



In the Police Department Parking lot 100
Silver Thread Lane South Fork CO.

**DON'T BE THE
DEALER**



Upcoming Neighborhood Watch meetings

South Fork:

- Oct. 8
- Nov. 13
- Dec. 10

Monte Vista:

- Oct. 15
- Nov. 19
- Dec. 17

Check out these
Halloween
Safety tips from
Safekids.org !



Roberta Marquez and Dolores Atencio, RGCPH's Health Equity Specialists, have been hard at work over the last several months obtaining their Community Health Worker/Patient Navigator certifications and will be finalizing testing in the next quarter. Once they're certified, they can provide more 1:1 services with patients in Rio Grande County, helping them meet their healthcare needs through coordination of care and motivation to address risk factors, like chronic disease diagnoses, for example.

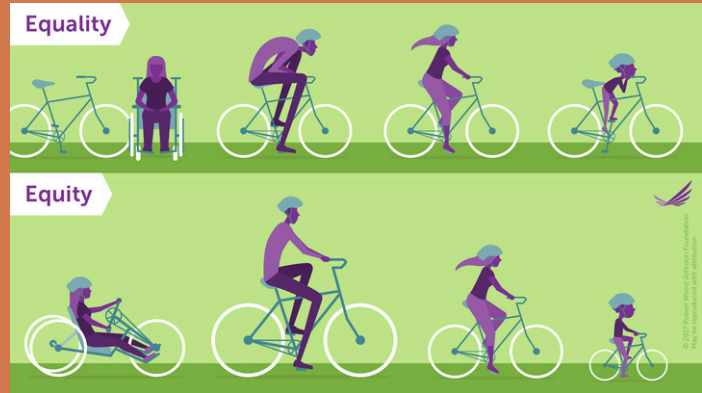
They've also been facilitating Life Skills Training cohorts, attending events connecting agricultural workers to health resources and tracking/responding to COVID-19 cases in Rio Grande County. You have probably seen them providing resources and doing outreach at several community and school events this quarter!

This quarter, Dolores also connected a community member with a much-needed stroller for their disabled child when this wasn't covered by their current health plan.

Response Coordinator Ida White has been accomplishing a lot for the long-term sustainability of our LPHA in the last quarter. In addition to maintaining data and reporting on the effectiveness of events and strategies in the STEPP, RHSE, CPCI and Health Equity programs, she's been assisting with recruiting and coordinating for more LST and SFP cohorts and maintaining partnerships with vital partner organizations! She has also overseen the response to local outbreaks and health incidents as needed and coordinated effective testing and treatment.

At the August RGPP meeting, Ida gave a recap of her years-long work with the PROSPER Program that ended earlier this summer and presented data on the program's results. Thanks to Ida's dedication and leadership, RGPP coalition participants and other participants in numerous cohorts from the SFP and LST programs rated program effectiveness and sustainability highly. Check out some of the results of the 2024-2025 year to the right.

Through this quarter and into the next, Ida has been developing implementation plans for current programs and completing grant applications, ensuring our department's long-term sustainability.



Graphic courtesy of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Now Recruiting!

STRENGTHENING Families PROGRAM
FOR PARENTS AND YOUTH 10-14



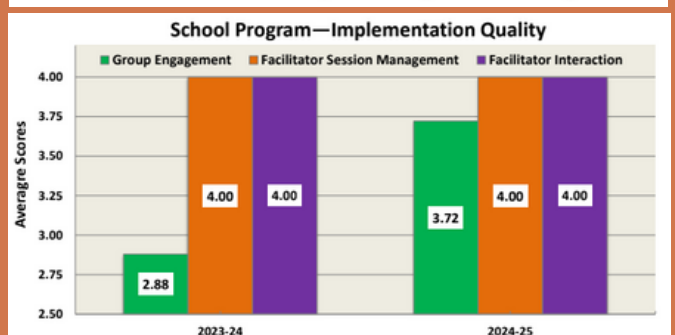
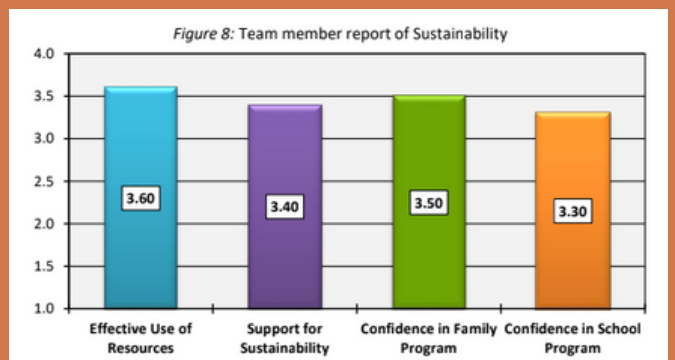
For ALL Families & ALL Youth

All families with children aged 10-14 can benefit from this family-based program. Program outcomes include:

-  Improved attachment & prosocial involvement with parents
-  Reduced youth substance use
-  Reduced youth aggressive behaviors
-  Reduced youth depression
-  Increased youth academic achievement

Contact Ida White for more info:
iwhite@riograndecounty.org
(719) 480-2285







Quarter 1 Around Rio Grande County Public Health....

Operations Manager Logan Montoya and Office Assistant Celbee Gallegos have been busy in the last quarter ensuring RGCPH is maximizing operational efficiency and organizing community outreach events!

Logan has been assisting all staff with maintaining the VMSG platform, our performance management dashboard that tracks all of our short- and long-term metrics and projects to ensure all grant requirements and deadlines are being met. This platform scores staff individually and the team as a whole; these metrics are then provided to the Board of Health to oversee the agency's progress and provide ideas for potential areas of improvement or operational blind spots.

Celbee and Logan have also been organizing, attending and conducting billing for multiple seasonal vaccination clinics across the county, in addition to their usual work answering community questions, scheduling appointments and staff, responding to animal bites and maintaining agency compliance.

Public Health Nurse Dianne Koshak and Travel Nurse Helen Lester have been providing vaccines at numerous seasonal community clinics throughout Rio Grande County. To date, RGCPH has conducted clinics at the Legacy, Tri-County Seniors and the Monte Vista School District in Monte Vista and at the Casas de Rio Grande facility, Upper Rio Grande School District and the RGC Annex in Del Norte, as well as one clinic at the Sargent School District. To date, they've provided 116 flu and 52 COVID shots to residents!

Dianne has also been helping with prevention through her regular attendance at our monthly blood pressure and blood glucose screening clinics, where residents and visitors at Tri-County Senior Citizens and Casas de Rio Grande receive free testing, recommendations from Dianne on managing these conditions and referrals as-needed to primary care physicians.

Helen has been providing travel vaccinations to patients from throughout the SLV! If you know someone who is planning on traveling internationally and needs to know what vaccines are recommended/required for the region they're visiting, give Helen a call!

RIO GRANDE HOSPITAL & CLINICS
a non-profit organization

PUMPKIN PALOOZA
at RGH Wellness Center

- Walking 'dead' Tacos
- Scary Scavenger Hunt
- Spooky Story Tour
- Boo-to-the-Flu Clinic
- Photo Booth
- Haunted Hayrides

Friday, October 31st
from 3:30 - 6:30

...and much more

Logos: Rio Grande County Public Health, Rio Grande Hospital & Clinics, NAPA, Rio Grande Hospital Wellness Center, Joy Squad, Top Value, Three Guys Farms, Safeway, CityMarket, and a Police badge.

Free
**Blood Pressure &
Blood Glucose Screening!**
1st Wednesday of the Month
Tri County Senior Citizens
9am-12pm
311 Washington St.
Monte Vista CO 81144

2nd Wednesday of the Month
Casas de Rio Grande Senior Housing
10am-1pm
1305 6th Street
Del Norte CO 81132



Quarter 1 Around Rio Grande County Public Health....

Public Health Accountant Kaleigh White is always hard at work year-round ensuring our agency remains compliant and in good standing with all of our funders at the local, state and federal levels! In the past quarter she has been providing numerous draft budgets for grant applications and making modifications to budgets as-needed. There have been several amendments required this year as federal changes and state funding cuts have altered the percentages available for some grant programs and in some cases periodically stalled them entirely. Kaleigh has been a stalwart expert throughout these complicated processes.

Outside of our department, RGCPH is also the fiscal agent for some regional sources of funding, including the Prevention Subcommittee/Coalition under the Region 18 Opioid Settlement Governance Council. Kaleigh coordinates with the six counties in the SLV and other agencies to ensure everyone is submitting invoices and all work being done under this program is compliant with the standards set forward by the Colorado Attorney General's Office in Exhibit E.

Director's Message: Building a Healthier Future for Our Youth
By Dr. Kolawole Bankole, MD, MS, MBA – Public Health Director, Rio Grande County

As we move into the fall season, I am encouraged by the progress our community continues to make in promoting youth wellness and preventing substance use across Rio Grande County. This time of year offers an opportunity to reflect on the meaningful work being done through our prevention programs—and to recommit ourselves to the long-term goal of building a community where every young person can thrive.

This fall, the Rio Grande County Public Health Agency is deepening its focus on youth substance use prevention and the implementation of evidence-based public health programs that make a measurable difference. Working closely with schools, law enforcement, behavioral health providers, and community coalitions, we are supporting initiatives that build resilience, increase access to positive youth development opportunities, and reduce the risks associated with early substance use.

Our prevention programs are expanding to include stronger data-driven strategies, family engagement components, and community outreach tailored to the unique needs of our region. By aligning our efforts under a unified prevention framework, we are ensuring that public health resources are used effectively, sustainably, and with the greatest possible impact.

Prevention is not a single event—it's a culture we build together. Every parent, teacher, business leader, and community member has a role to play in shaping the environment our youth grow up in. By investing in prevention today, we are creating the foundation for a healthier, safer, and more resilient Rio Grande County tomorrow.

Thank you for your continued support, partnership, and commitment to the well-being of our community's youth.

FREE DIAPERS!



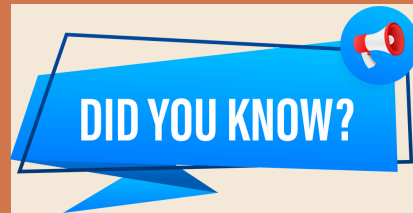
Thanks to a partnership with Weecycle,

Rio Grande County Public Health will again have free diapers available starting November 3, 2025!

One package per child per month for RGC residents only. Call ahead for size availability!
(719)657-3352



Communities MAKE CHANGE



September was Prostate Cancer awareness month. RGCPH is promoting an information and awareness campaign about this important topic!

- The American Cancer Society states 1 in 8 men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in their lifetimes.
- According to CDPHE, there were 3,258 cases of prostate cancer in Colorado in 2022 including at least 8 in Rio Grande County.
- African American men are more 17 times more likely to develop prostate cancer and twice as likely to die from it, according to the American Urological Association.
- Prostate cancer is the most common non-skin cancer in men. When diagnosed early, it has very high 5-year survival rates, according to the American Association for Cancer Research.

Check out this article for more risk factors and prevention information!

LOOKING TO THE (NEAR) FUTURE...

As we start the next quarter and enter the winter and holiday season, our Prevention Program and RGCPH are not slowing down! We'll be continuing our work in the community promoting Safer Streets, including seeking supplemental funding for more solar streetlights.

We will also be launching our new behavioral health co-responder program in partnership with local law enforcement agencies, San Luis Valley Behavioral Health Group and Rio Grande Hospital. This is currently a one-year pilot program to send licensed providers to meet with county residents experiencing mental health crises, combined with follow-up coordination of care from a peer support specialist! Our goal is to reduce law enforcement involvement in behavioral health crisis calls and reduce the strain these calls put on local health systems.


In partnership with the SLVTPC/DFC program and Alamosa County Public Health, we will also be finalizing a new program for youth who violate their tobacco free schools policies and require extra support to stop using nicotine. We will be utilizing incentives and peer support, as well as a nationally-recognized intervention program to help promote long-term success!

In the coming quarter and beyond we will continue efforts for:

- Launching Sources of Strength at Monte Vista High School
- Continued work on vape recycling programs
- Promotion of the Baby and Me Tobacco Free program
- Youth mentorship opportunities
- Commercial theft/crime reduction strategies




RGCPH is hiring for a Peer Support Specialist for our new Co-responder Program! Visit the [HR site](#) for details!

Call 988

Text 988

Live Chat



988 Colorado Mental Health Line
988Colorado.com



WE ARE LOOKING FOR INTERNS

\$750 after completing 75 hours
Get involved with your community
get to know others go to events.
AGES 14-18
Work groups
Media, Executive Team,
Hospitality

APPLY NOW



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF THE SAN LUIS VALLEY



MY LIFE MY QUIT™




All Colorado youth are eligible for free therapy at IMatterColorado.org.

CONTACT INFO:

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chelseamm@riograndecounty.org

Ida White, Response Coordinator
iwhite@riograndecounty.org



 [@Rio Grande County Public Health](#)
[@Rio Grande Prevention Partners](#)

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 www.rgpp.org

