

5



health

& wellness





INTRODUCTION

Health and wellness are important aspects of environmental sustainability, as a healthy environment is inextricably linked to a healthy population.

Ensuring that all residents can breathe clean air, drink clean water, have safe places to be active, access and afford healthy food, and are prepared for extreme weather events as a result of climate change is vital to keeping our communities healthy. 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. 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. Health data for our community reflects our high expectations: in general, we smoke less, have lower

Body Mass Index (BMI), eat more healthy foods, exercise more, and have lower rates of chronic disease than the nation as a whole.

However, looking only at broad health data can lull us into complacency. A closer look through an equity lens reveals that not all members of our community have equal access to such health and quality of life. Some people may 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.

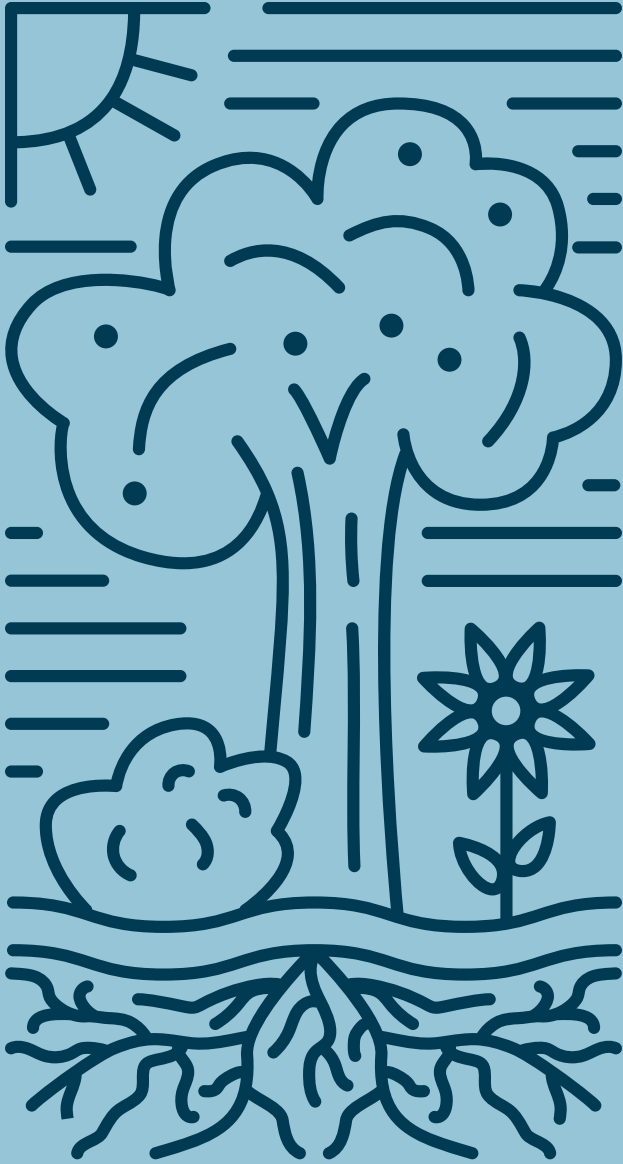
To ensure that the opportunity to live a healthy life is available to every Boulder County resident, the following goals and strategies have been identified for the next five years and beyond.

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Health equity is the realization by all people of the highest attainable level of health. Achieving health equity requires valuing all individuals and populations equally. It entails focused and ongoing societal efforts to address avoidable inequalities by ensuring the conditions for optimal health for all groups, particularly those who have experienced historical or contemporary injustices or socioeconomic disadvantage.

—Adewale Troutman,
*Health Equity, Human Rights
and Social Justice: Social
Determinants as the Direction
for Global Health*

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health goal

Ensure that Boulder County is a socially just and inclusive community, where physical and mental health, social well-being, and the environment are valued, supported, and accessible to all.



COMMUNITY STRATEGIES

Develop and implement a strategic plan for health equity to ensure that all people have full and equal opportunities to lead healthy lives

- Align work with and among our partners to place more focus on policy reform that promotes equity and social justice, and deliberately incorporates community voice and leadership to improve the health of the community and the environment in Boulder County.
- Collaborate with community residents and partners to change systems, structures, and policies that perpetuate inequities and structural racism. Partner with communities experiencing health inequities to inform and shape public health programming to ensure
 - clean air and water and safe food
 - access to quality and affordable education at all stages of life
 - opportunities for employment and a livable wage
 - access to safe, affordable, and stable housing
 - a safe and inclusive community

Improve mental health

- Support an inclusive community, free of stigma, that demonstrates acceptance and understanding of its residents who are struggling with mental health issues by increasing the number of community members trained in mental health first aid;¹⁷ supporting local and state policies to improve access to mental health care and support; and researching and evaluating community options for improved navigation to mental health services and programs.
- Reduce the incident of suicide by promoting a positive youth development (PYD) approach for youth-serving organizations throughout the county; supporting programming that prioritizes reducing suicide among youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and questioning (LGBTIQ); supporting evidence-based programming and policy interventions for people ages 6 to 25; and supporting a more coordinated and cohesive service system for youth.
- Improve early childhood social and emotional development and reduce the rate of post-partum depression by expanding the Boulder County Assuring Better Child Health and Development (ABCD) Partnership for early childhood development delays; increasing support for families with young children; and decreasing adverse childhood experiences among young children.



COMMUNITY STRATEGIES

Continue the Healthy Eating and Active Living (HEAL) Coalition to collectively align existing and new interventions related to healthy eating, active living, and healthy weight

- Increase fruit and vegetable consumption and healthy food access among young children and their families in Boulder County.
- Increase breastfeeding duration among mothers and infants in Boulder County.
- Increase physical activity and active transportation among young children and their families in Boulder County.
- Reduce sugary drink consumption among young children and their families in Boulder County.

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

SEE THE CLIMATE CHAPTER (PAGE 32) FOR ADDITIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE PREPAREDNESS STRATEGIES

mental health

Mental health was chosen by Boulder County residents as the public health issue most impacting their lives and the lives of friends and loved ones. Mental health is a cross-cutting issue that contributes to sustainability, equality, inclusion, and resilience, and impacts our physical health too. It is associated with

- substance use
- chronic diseases, including diabetes, heart disease, and cancer
- early death
- suicide
- other more subtle impacts to physical health



LOCAL TAX ON SUGARY DRINKS

Starting in 2012, Boulder County Public Health collaborated with residents and organizations across the county in the HEAL coalition to improve the health of children in our community. The coalition aimed to increase fruit and vegetable consumption, breastfeeding duration, and physical activity, and to reduce sugary drink consumption.

Because of the tremendous impacts to lifelong health, reducing sugary drink consumption became a focus area for collective action. Actions included

- developing the local “Make the Switch” campaign and partnering in the regional “Hidden Sugar” campaign¹⁸
- adopting organizational policies not to accept funding from manufacturers of sugary drinks and requiring healthy food and drinks at organization-funded meetings and events
- researching and supporting sugary drink taxes, including endorsement of the City of Boulder sugary drink tax by the Board of County Commissioners

In November 2016, the City of Boulder became the nation’s second city to vote in a sugary drink tax,¹⁹ which levies a \$0.02/ounce tax on sugary drink distributors. The tax is estimated to generate \$3.8 million a year to support programs that promote health and wellness, prevent chronic disease, and ensure that all people have access to safe and clean drinking water, healthy foods, nutrition and food education, and places to be physically active. The programs specifically support people with low incomes and those most affected by chronic disease linked to sugary drink consumption.

**POLICY PRIORITIES**

The following are environmental sustainability policy priorities adopted through Boulder County's legislative agenda:

POLICY**WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW****Increase funding for healthy eating and active living**

On average, one Coloradan dies every hour from heart disease. Healthy eating and active living reduce the risk for heart disease and cancer, two leading causes of death in Boulder County. Boulder County supports healthy eating and active living policies that promote

both health and sustainability, such as policies that improve access to healthy foods (including fruits and vegetables) and beverages, increase active transportation utilization, and support breastfeeding duration.





Social Sustainability

The Boulder County Human Services Strategic Plan is a community blueprint focusing on social sustainability in Boulder County.²⁰ Implementing a livable community blueprint involves all sectors of the community and supports understanding of the interconnectedness among natural, economic, and cultural resources. It impacts not only where we live but how we live. In Boulder County, livability depends on linking together economic, social, and environmental sustainability. Decisions that influence 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 interrelationships among systems.

Successful implementation of the Boulder County Human Services Strategic Plan will

create 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





TAKE ACTION

For Your Health

Take care of your most precious resource—your health. Consider these suggestions for improved health and wellness:

- ❑ Remember to stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water (at least 1–1.5 liters per day), especially in place of sugary alternatives that can reduce the amount of fluid your body retains.
- ❑ Offer tap water at meetings and encourage attendees to bring their own reusable water bottles. New research indicates that consuming just two sugary beverages per week increases the risk of developing type 2 diabetes.
- ❑ The average worker eats one meal and two snacks, and makes 113 food decisions each day. Be sure to offer healthy choices like fruit, nuts, or “lite” popcorn to support health.
- ❑ Reduce portion sizes, order less food, rethink whether snacks are needed, and buy in bulk (e.g., purchasing a bunch of bananas, carrots, and cherry tomatoes for a snack) to save money.
- ❑ Offer healthy and sustainable snacks, such as apples, bananas, or oranges, which all come in nature’s compostable packaging!
- ❑ Bike to and from work for your health. You’ll get exercise and improve the air quality by not driving.
- ❑ Get outside and move! Consider biking to a trailhead instead of driving, to get more exercise and fresh air.
- ❑ Take a walk at work. If the weather is nice, consider turning your check-in meeting into a walking meeting. Check-in with your colleagues and get exercise at the same time.



RESOURCES

More Information

Health Equity

bouldercounty.org/departments/public-health/health-equity
rwjf.org/en/library/research/2017/01/communities-in-action--pathways-to-health-equity.html

Healthy Eating and Active Living

bouldercounty.org/departments/public-health/healthy-eating-and-active-living

17 Mental Health First Aid

mhfac.org

18 Hidden Sugar Campaign

Hidden-Sugar.org

19 Sugar Sweetened Beverage Tax

bouldercolorado.gov/tax-license/finance-sugar-sweetened-beverage-tax

20 Boulder County Human Services Strategic Priorities

assets.bouldercounty.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/strategic-priorities-2014.pdf

Climate Friendly Purchasing

goodfoodpurchasing.org
foe.org/resources/meat-of-the-matter

