

2020 Annual Report



KNOX COUNTY
TENNESSEE
HEALTH DEPARTMENT

LETTER TO KNOX COUNTY

A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER



Dr. Martha Buchanan
Senior Director and
Public Health Officer,
Knox County Health
Department

“**E**very person, a healthy person.” The Knox County Health Department remained committed to our vision this year, even as our community encountered a new threat to our health that permeated every aspect of our lives. The impact of COVID-19 was one without boundaries, felt in every ZIP code and by every citizen.

Since March, KCHD team members have responded to this evolving pandemic with all of the tools that public health has to offer. From testing, to contact tracing, to community education, to convening partners, to vaccination ... the list could go on and on.

While I am incredibly proud of our effort to combat the pandemic on multiple fronts, I am also encouraged by the resilience of our team and our commitment to offer critical services to our community outside of the pandemic. Our Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program continued to provide much-needed services to thousands of families in our community. Our work to combat the substance misuse epidemic continued with the release of the All4Knox Strategic Plan. The work of our Environmental Health team never stopped – from restaurant inspections that evolved to incorporate COVID-19 safety guidance – to our Air Quality division whose work to maintain national standards persisted uninterrupted. Those are just a few examples of many.

As we look ahead, COVID-19 is unfortunately still a present threat across our community. However, vaccination efforts are underway and there finally seems to be a light at the end of the tunnel. Moving forward, KCHD will continue to be a part of the conversation regarding recovery. As Knox County’s health strategist, we will use our role as convener and partner to focus efforts on restoration – not just from COVID-19 itself, but from other adverse health effects that have worsened due to the impact of the pandemic.

As I conclude this letter that looks back on the year no one could have expected, I want to take some time reflect on all of those who lost their lives to COVID-19. We will continue our work to fight this virus and promote the health of all Knox Countians with their memory close by.

Gratefully yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Buchanan', written over a light blue circular stamp.

Dr. Martha Buchanan
Senior Director and Public Health Officer
Knox County Health Department

WHO WE ARE

VISION

Every Person, A Healthy Person

MISSION

To encourage, promote and assure the development of an active, healthy community through innovative public health practices

CORE VALUES

- Responsiveness and commitment to our community
- Excellence through evidence-based and innovative practices
- Accountability and integrity in our operation
- Leading by example

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

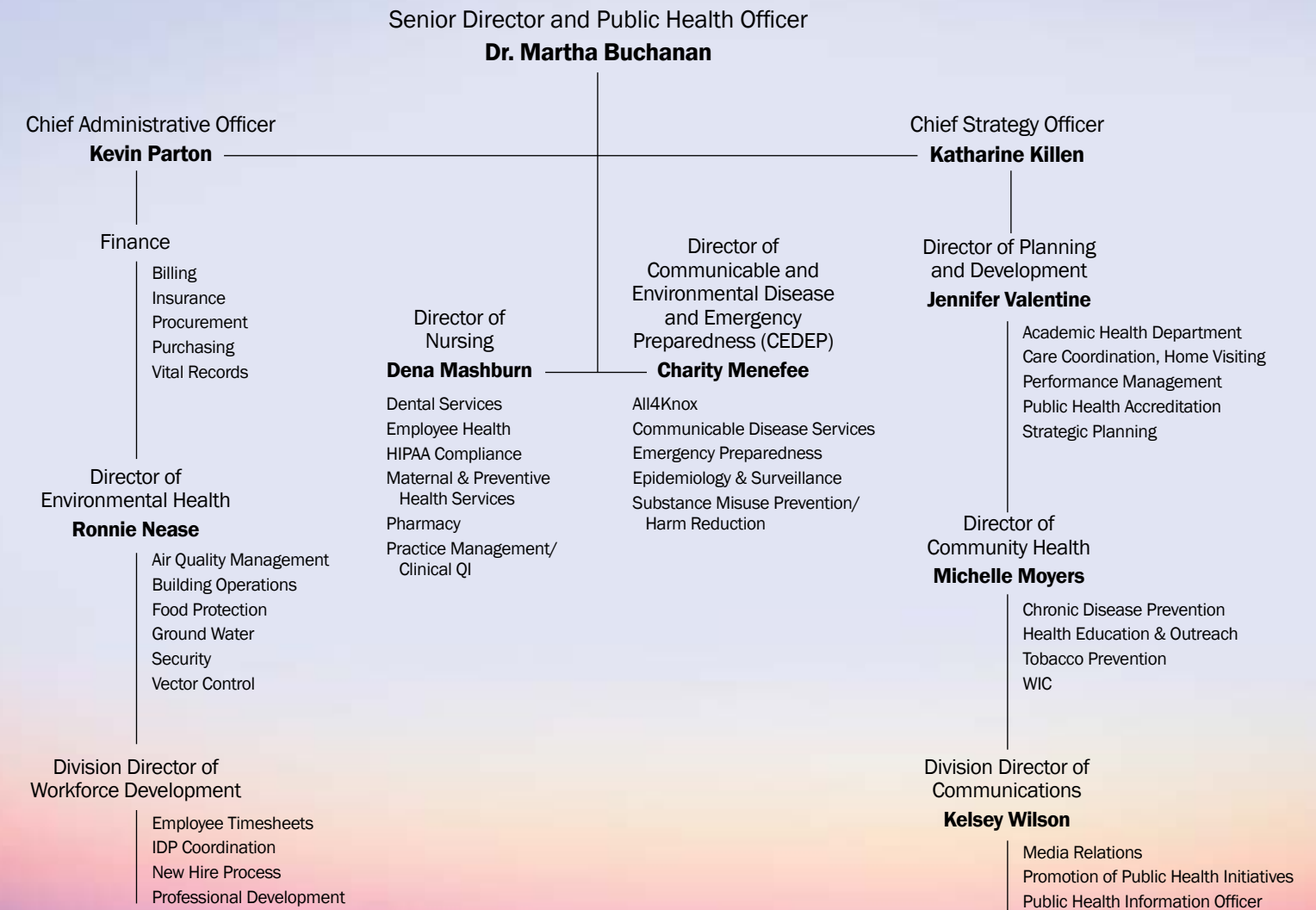
- How do we continually assure that the Knox County Health Department infrastructure empowers us to be at the forefront of public health?
- How do we facilitate a community approach to better health?
- How do we establish communitywide understanding and value for public health?
- How do we respond effectively to our community's public health issues?



ORGANIZATION

The Knox County Health Department is a division of Knox County Government under the supervision of Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs.

KCHD consists of numerous divisions and employs more than 250 professionals including epidemiologists, nurses, environmental specialists, public health educators, dentists, dieticians, emergency preparedness specialists and many others.



GENERAL INFORMATION

- Hours of operation: 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Days and hours of service may vary per department. Pandemic response may alter these hours. Please call the appropriate clinic before arriving.
- Main: 865-215-5000
- Email: health@knoxcounty.org
- Online: www.knoxcounty.org/health
- Facebook: @KnoxCountyHealthDepartment
- Twitter: @KnoxCoHealthTN
- Instagram: @KnoxCountyHealthDepartment
- On the first Wednesday of each month, all offices and clinics are closed in the morning for staff in-service. On these days, the main location opens at 10 a.m.

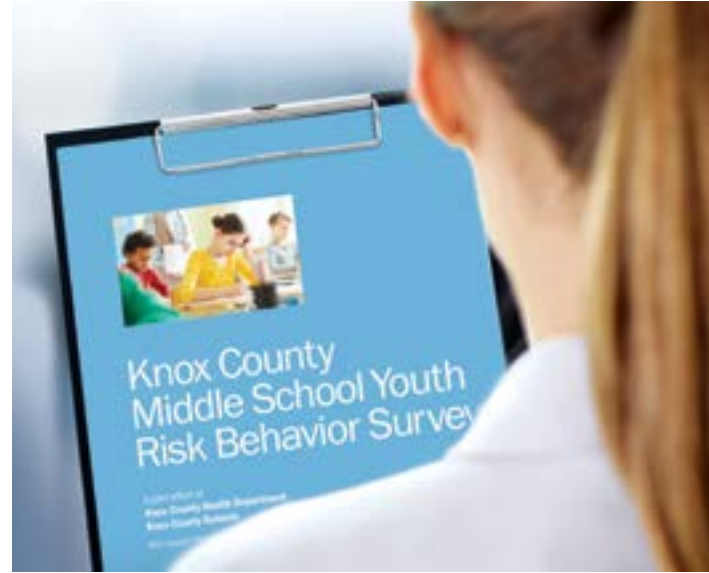
WHAT WE DO



EDUCATE AND ENGAGE

Providing accurate, reliable health information to the public is crucial to improving our community's health, both in good times and in times of crisis. We have a dedicated and diverse team of experts who carry out this work. In addition to managing crisis communications, our colleagues provide education on a variety of topics including substance misuse prevention, nutrition and physical activity, dental hygiene, food safety, adolescent health, maternal and child health, chronic disease prevention, and many others.

Education and outreach accompany nearly every area of our work, but we don't stop with education – we also engage the community because we are stronger and more effective if we work together. We build strategic partnerships with schools, farmers markets, health care providers, nonprofits, law enforcement agencies and many others. We convene, organize and facilitate coalitions, including All4Knox, Knox/East TN Healthcare Coalition, Fetal Infant Mortality Community Action Team, Knox County's first Overdose Fatality Review Team, Knoxville-Knox County Senior Safety Task Force, and many others. All this work is to help ensure our community members have the information they need and support systems in place to make informed health decisions.



ASSESS AND RESPOND

Our goal is to improve the health of everyone in Knox County. One way we do this is by studying Knox County's overall health, which health departments are uniquely positioned to do. Our epidemiologists collect and analyze health data so we can share a comprehensive picture of our entire community. In addition to conducting our own surveys, we examine data from a variety of sources, including hospitals, medical providers, schools and many others. The largest report we produce is our Community Health Assessment, which provides a "state of health" for Knox County. As our cornerstone publication, this report helps us, our partners, nonprofit organizations and community leaders evaluate needs, make policy decisions and plan for the future.

In addition to studying our community's overall health, we also prepare for and respond to public health threats. While this year's pandemic put a new and intense spotlight on this role, the activities of our highly skilled epidemiology and emergency response teams have been a crucial part of our agency for decades. Every year, we monitor infectious diseases; investigate and contain outbreaks (12 per year, on average); and provide emergency preparedness education and guidance to families, businesses, churches, partner agencies, schools, and others.



PROVIDE AND CONNECT CARE

Providing and connecting our community to medical care is a key public health service. During a typical year, we serve thousands, reducing the human and economic costs of illness, and ultimately the burden of disease in our community. Our standard services include a broad range of preventive care and treatment, including adult and child immunizations, women's wellness and gynecological care, screening and treatment for sexually transmitted infections, and dental care.

Our clinical work also extends beyond the walls of our building. One excellent example is our Community Health Access and Navigation in Tennessee (CHANT) model, which provides care coordination services to eligible families at no cost. By conducting a comprehensive family screening and assessment, this program helps address needs while educating and referring families to community resources.

Connecting care does not apply to just medical care. Our Harm Reduction program offers case management and linkage to care services for people at risk from the consequences of substance misuse. The goal of this program is to provide non-judgmental support, education and linkage to care service including referrals to harm reduction, substance abuse treatment, mental health and social services.



PROTECT HEALTH

Part of our role as a public health agency is to enforce public health laws, which are designed to prevent and reduce potential health threats. These laws help ensure the conditions, such as safe food and clean air, so that every resident can be healthy.

Our Environmental Health division enforces state public health regulations for public swimming pools, restaurants, hotels, grocery stores and others. On average, we conduct thousands of food-related regulatory inspections annually and provide extensive food safety education for these agencies and the public. This work helps ensure food in Knox County is prepared, stored and served safely.

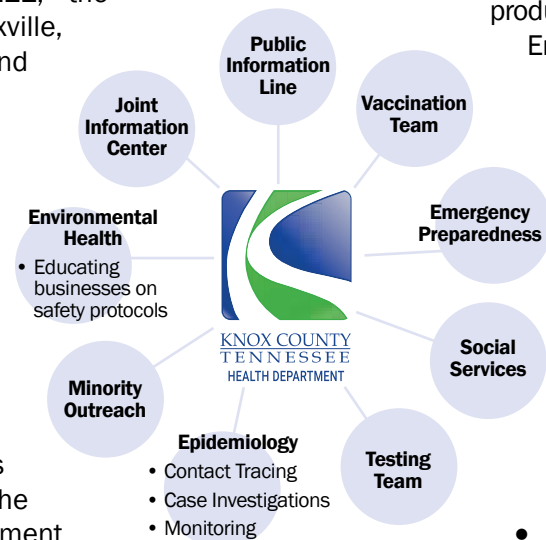
This team also includes the Groundwater Protection Division, which works to protect the groundwater supply and environment from pollutants by enforcing state laws governing onsite wastewater systems (septic systems).

And finally, this division also works to maintain the EPA's National Ambient Air Quality Standards in Knox County. This is accomplished in many ways, including the continuous monitoring of fine particulate matter and ozone in the outdoor air; issuance of air quality health alerts; and permitting of air contaminant sources, such as industrial manufacturers, gas stations, dry cleaners and others.

COVID-19

Our goal is to improve the health of everyone in Knox County, not just those who visit one of our offices. That same goal has held true during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020:

- We investigated 34,018 cases and traced their associated contacts.
- More than 37,000 COVID-19 tests were conducted through KCHD. We offered testing opportunities throughout the county, from large-scale testing events to smaller, targeted testing opportunities for vulnerable or at-risk populations.
- In the spring of 2020, we recruited a team of dedicated organizations who were willing to serve as critical contacts for our business community. These organizations, including 311/211, the Knoxville Chamber and Visit Knoxville, provided important guidance and information for months.
- In addition to providing ongoing services to local food-service businesses, our Environmental Health team assumed a key role in educating community organizations and businesses on COVID-19 safety protocols.
- To help address some of the social and economic impacts of the pandemic, we asked the Knoxville Emergency Management Agency (KEMA) to activate its Emergency Operations Center (EOC) last March. This provided a unique way for KEMA, key nonprofit agencies, the City of Knoxville and many others to coordinate and provide crucial community support.
- Our Emergency Preparedness team coordinated response and provided logistical support (including testing, contact tracing, infection control and vaccination support) to more than 325 health care organizations throughout the region.
- We developed new benchmarks and metrics to track the burden of disease, and maintained daily data updates for our community.
- We placed a polling location, along with the Knox County Election Commission, at KCHD's main location for those in isolation/quarantine to be able to vote in the 2020 election.



- We cross-trained the majority of our team members to be able to serve in different response roles, including contact tracing, data entry and others.
- We stood up a COVID-19 Our Public Information Line, which handled more than 63,000 calls from March 2020 to the end of the year, answering questions regarding quarantine/isolation, testing, vaccines and proving general guidance related to COVID-19.
- Our team worked with community partners to create more than 90 COVID-19 educational videos produced in five languages for our non-English speaking community members.
- With support from Knox County IT, we developed and maintained a new pandemic-focused website that could not only handle the high volume of traffic, but also provide important local information on everything from prevention and support to data and case counts, and from vaccine information to business guidance.
- COVID-19 vaccines arrived in Knox County in late December 2020. KCHD administered the first dose to nearly 1,400 people by the end of the year, between Dec. 22-31.
- We established Knox County's first Joint Information Center (JIC) and partnered with area nonprofits, hospitals and government agencies to assist with communication efforts through the JIC.
- We held more than 100 live media briefings to help keep our community informed.
- We trained more than 150 temporary team members to support the pandemic response.
- KCHD developed a special social services team to serve those who are living homeless and other at-risk individuals, and work with partner agencies to provide help with food and rent assistance.

ANNUAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Our All4Knox team members, with the support from a diverse group of community members and organizations, namely Metro Drug Coalition, released the joint City/County Three-Year Strategic Plan to address substance misuse. This comprehensive plan is an excellent example of public health's role as a convener and facilitator. As a communitywide approach to improving public health, this plan brings numerous partners and agencies together with the goal to end this devastating epidemic.
- After more than 18 months of data collection and evaluation by our epidemiology and health planning team members, we released our cornerstone publication: our 2019 Community Health Assessment. To create this extensive document, our team collected data from the community, pulled additional information from dozens of sources, and brought it all together with context and analysis to provide a full picture of health in our county. The process is based on a nationally recognized strategic planning model and is an important pillar of our voluntary accreditation process. Releasing this report is a crucial step in raising awareness of our county's ongoing health issues while informing our path to building a healthier community.
- Our clinical team members, who also lead our COVID-19 testing and vaccination efforts, quickly altered their method of service delivery to be able to continue many of their standard, preventive clinical services while ensuring patient and team member safety.
- Our Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program not only continued providing important nutritional benefits and education during the pandemic, they transformed their model to be completely remote and managed to serve 1,400 more clients at the end of 2020 compared to the end of 2019, which is a 22 percent increase.
- Our CHANT program (Community Health Access and Navigation in Tennessee), which is designed to provide needed resources and parenting education for Knox County families with children, quickly altered their program to a phone-based model so they could continue to provide important services during the pandemic. In addition to reworking their model and continuing to offer their important services, this team mobilized quickly to also provide critical, up-to-date pandemic information for participating families related to food banks, utility assistance, shelters and more.
- Our Community Health team, while also serving in lead roles in our COVID-19 Joint Information System and with COVID-19 community education, accomplished many other healthy environment and community projects including: awarding 11 worksites with East Tennessee Wellness Roundtable Recognition; implementing diabetes management classes in Spanish in partnership with Centro Hispano; completing eight Healthy Built Environment Projects in partnership with Community Schools; securing funding and technical assistance for a new ASTHA/NACCHO Social Determinants of Health grant; and partnering with the University of Tennessee and the City of Knoxville Parks and Recreation on a case study regarding parks, recreation and public health.
- Our evidence-based Parents As Teachers program, normally a home-visiting model, reworked their program to continue offering their important services virtually. They were able to continue their program, which helped ensure more than 160 families and over 200 young children are healthy, safe and ready to learn.

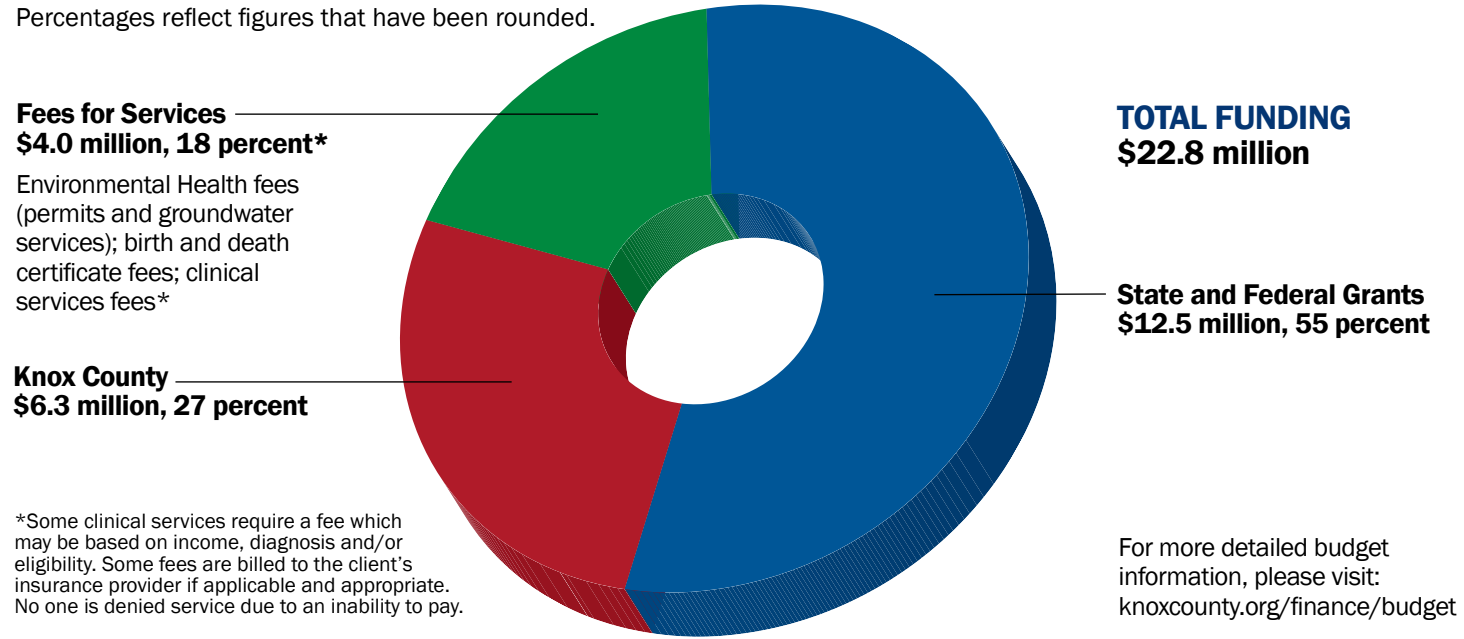


FINANCE

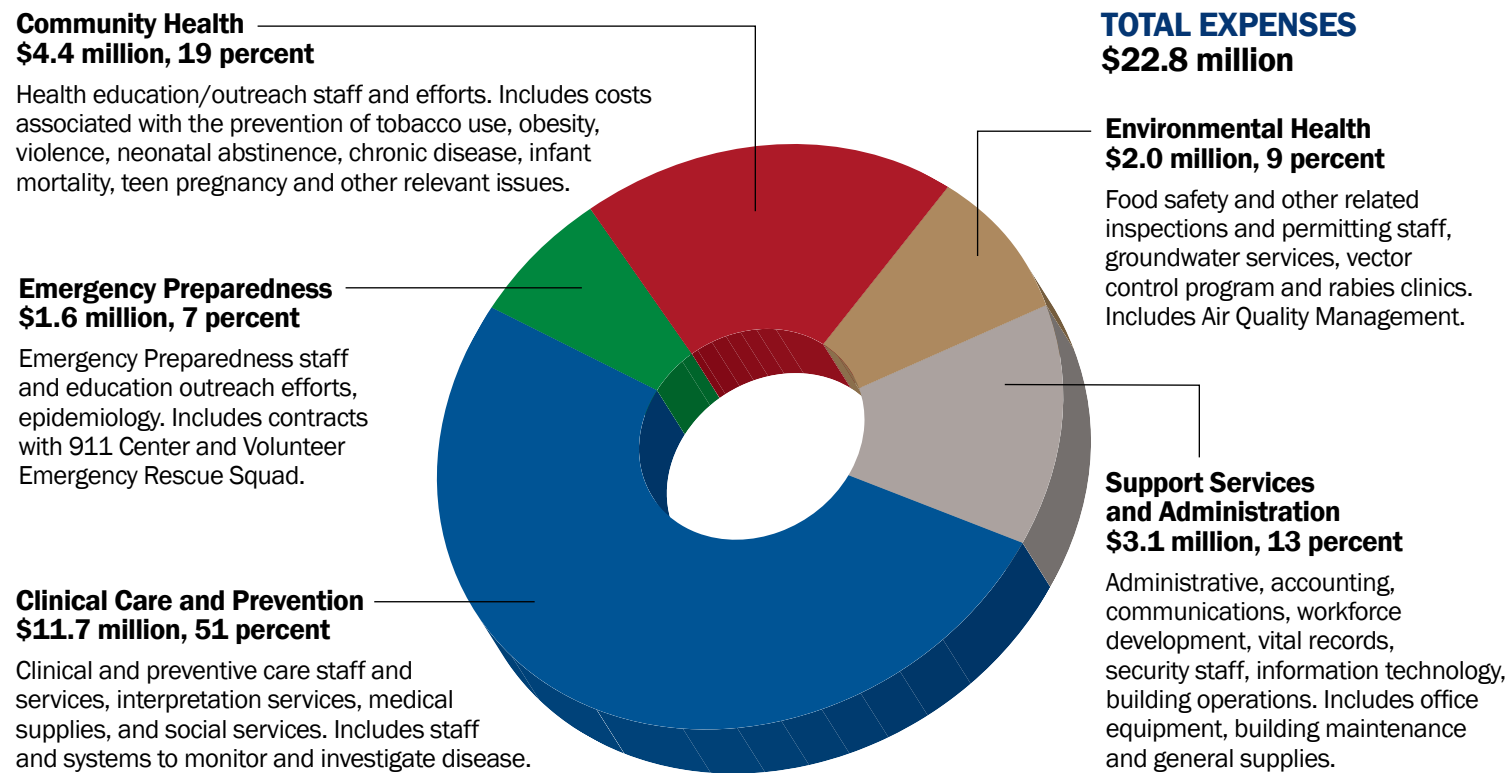
The Knox County Health Department serves a population of 470,313 people according to the latest U.S. Census population estimate. In the 2020 fiscal year, KCHD had an operating budget of approximately \$22.8 million.

FISCAL YEAR 2020 KCHD FUNDING SOURCES

Percentages reflect figures that have been rounded.



FISCAL YEAR 2020 KCHD OPERATING EXPENSES





KNOX COUNTY
TENNESSEE

HEALTH DEPARTMENT