

# 2023 Annual Report



KNOX COUNTY  
TENNESSEE  
HEALTH DEPARTMENT

# MESSAGE TO KNOX COUNTY

I am pleased to present the Knox County Health Department Annual Report. The 2022/2023 fiscal year was a significant one for our department. Stability continued its return to our department after several years of change and transition sparked by the pandemic.



This year, we restructured our organization to better align our programs and services and promote cross-departmental collaboration. One of the greatest examples of this collaboration is the launch of our Maternal Child Health Workgroup. This team brings together all of our programs that promote the health of mothers and young families in an effort to serve these individuals to the best of our abilities. We also welcomed Dr. Megan Edwards as our new public health officer. She brings valuable clinical experience to our team and is already using those skills to improve access to care for vulnerable populations in our community.

We also continued to see participation in many of our programs and visits to our clinics increase. For example, our Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program continued to see more new families, increasing monthly participation by 11% from last year. Our Dental clinic continues to be a critical resource in our community for those with less access, with more than 6,000 patient visits.

Fitting all the milestones and accomplishments over the past year in a brief report isn't possible, but I hope after reading this you'll walk away with a deeper understanding of how your public health department is working to improve the health of our entire community.

We will continue working towards making Knox County a place where everyone has the opportunity to live a healthy life.

Please feel free to contact us at 865-215-5000 or email [health@knoxcounty.org](mailto:health@knoxcounty.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Parton', written over a white background.

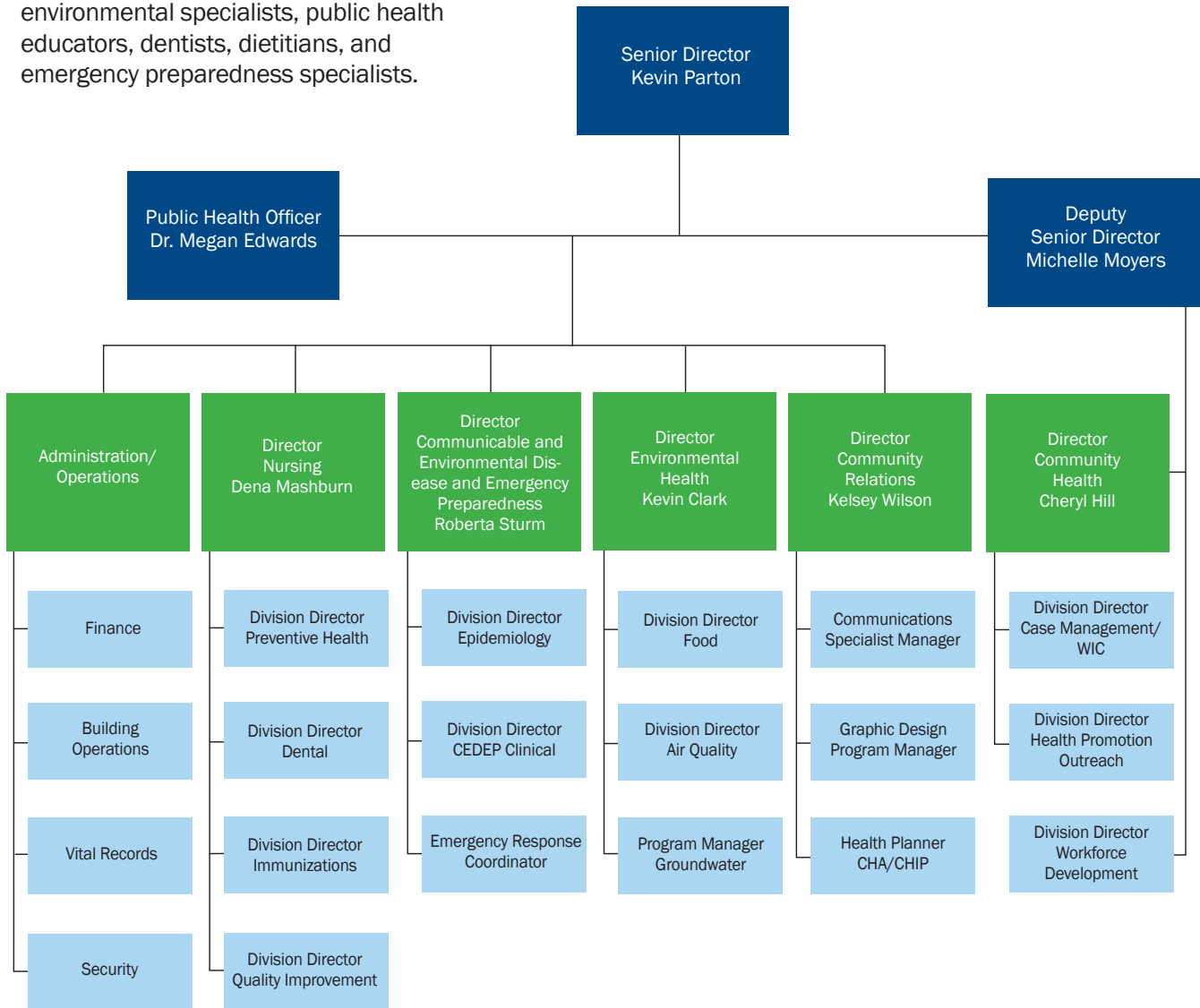
**Kevin Parton**  
Senior Director



# 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 270 professionals including epidemiologists, nurses, environmental specialists, public health educators, dentists, dietitians, and emergency preparedness specialists.



# WHO WE ARE

## VISION

Every person a healthy person.

## MISSION

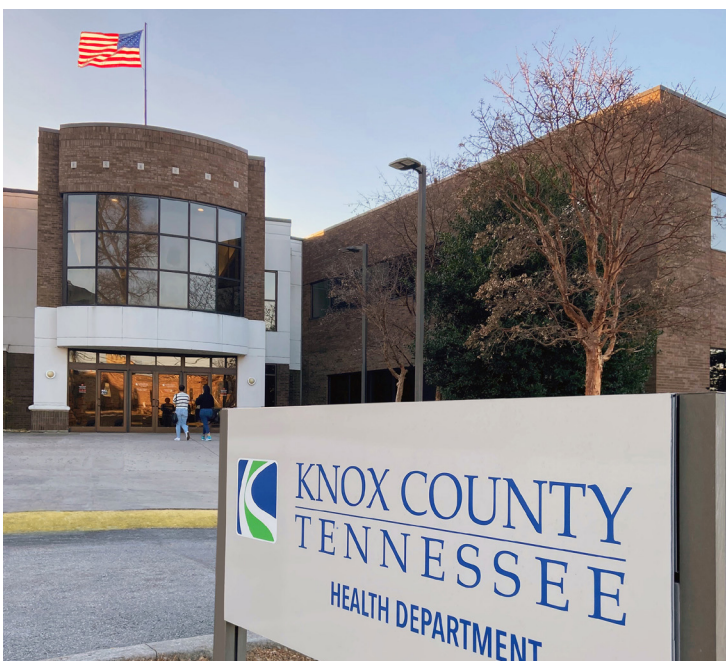
To encourage, promote, and support the development of an active, healthy community through innovative public health practices.

## 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

- Continually assure that Knox County Health Department's infrastructure empowers us to be at the forefront of public health
- Build communitywide understanding and value for public health
- Respond effectively to our community's public health issues
- Facilitate a community approach to better health



## GENERAL INFORMATION

### Knox County Health Department

- Main Location  
140 Dameron Avenue
- West Clinic  
1028 Old Cedar Bluff Road

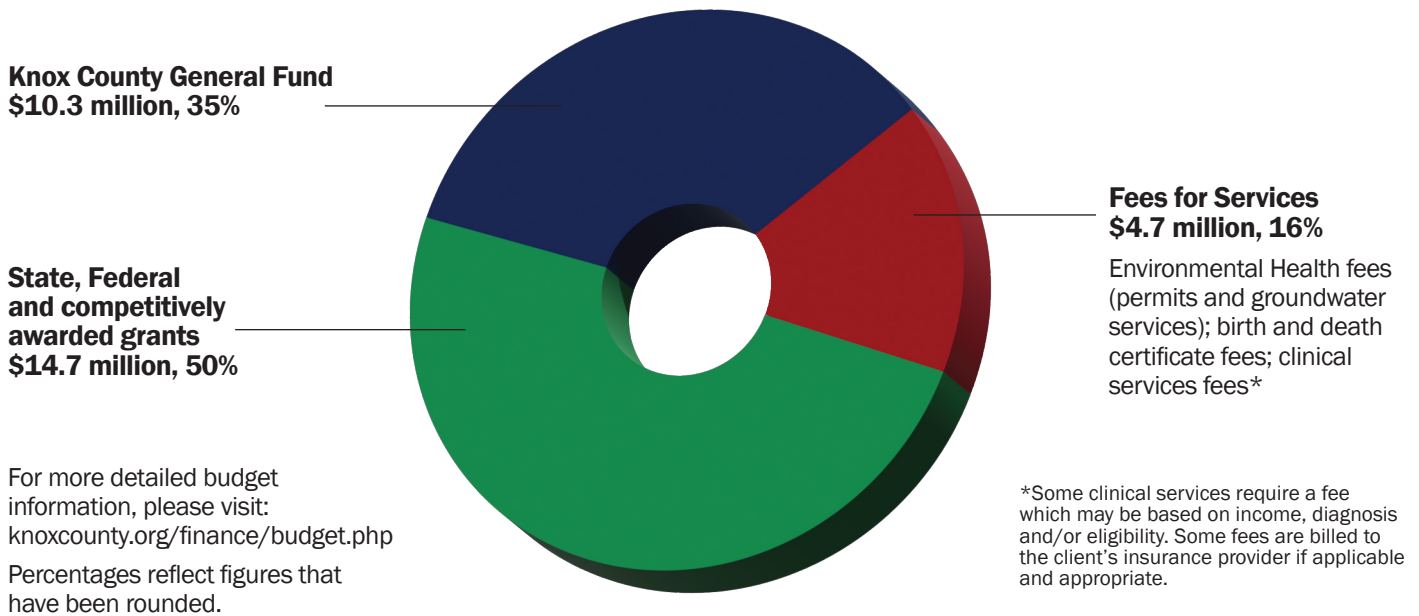
### KCHD contact information:

- Main: 865-215-5000
- Email: [health@knoxcounty.org](mailto:health@knoxcounty.org)
- Online: [www.knoxcounty.org/health](http://www.knoxcounty.org/health)
- Facebook: @KnoxCountyHealthDepartment
- Twitter: @KnoxCoHealthTN
- Instagram: @KnoxCountyHealthDepartment

# FINANCE

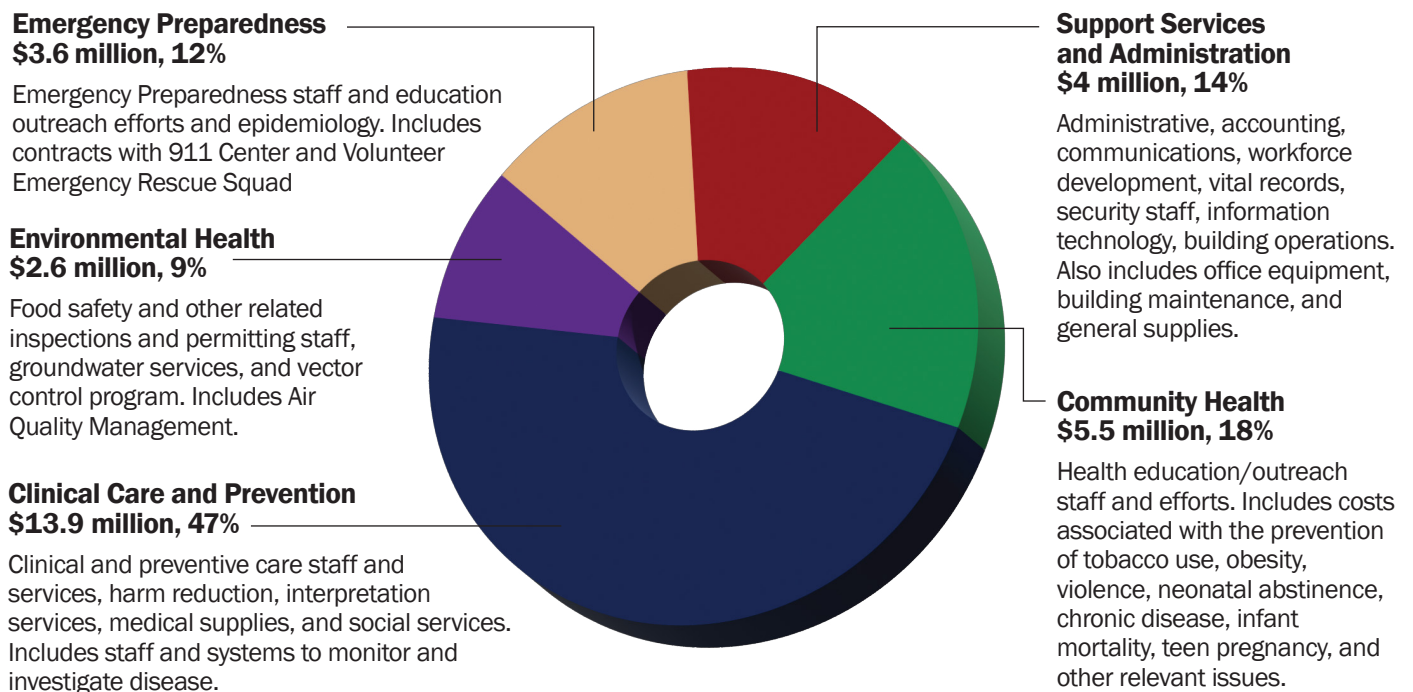
According to the latest (2023) U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts, the Knox County Health Department serves an estimated population of 494,574. In the 2023 fiscal year, KCHD had an operating budget of approximately \$29.7 million. No one is denied service due to an inability to pay.

## FISCAL YEAR 2023 KCHD FUNDING SOURCES



## FISCAL YEAR 2023 KCHD OPERATING EXPENSES

**TOTAL EXPENSES: \$29.7 million**



# WHAT WE DO



## EDUCATE AND ENGAGE

Providing accurate, reliable health information to the public is crucial to improving population health. Education and outreach accompany nearly every area of our work, but we don't stop with education – we also engage the community. We build strategic partnerships with schools, farmers markets, health care providers, nonprofits, law enforcement agencies, and many others. We convene coalitions and serve on community groups, including All4Knox, East Tennessee HCV Task Force, Knox/East TN Healthcare Coalition, Fetal Infant Mortality Community Action Team, and many others.

## THIS YEAR WE:

- Hosted the 6th annual Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day in partnership with Project Gabriel, East TN Children's Hospital, UT Medical Center, and Precious Prints for **45** attendees.
- Implemented nutrition education programming and health promotion policy through the N.E.A.T. program with **38** afterschool programs across six organizations, reaching over **1,500** elementary school students each semester.
- Provided worksite wellness resources to **11** Knox County Elementary schools, reaching **858** educators through the East Tennessee Wellness Roundtable Educators program. Resources included **5** lactation rooms, custom walking routes and blood pressure stations.
- Assisted **800** families through the Community Health Access and Navigation in Tennessee (CHANT) program, providing developmental screenings, safe sleep education, housing and shelter options, and primary medical care connections.

“**By connecting with CHANT, I was able to make community connections that assisted me and my family with all of the community's resources and more! So grateful for all CHANT has done for me and my family. And for that, we will forever love CHANT! #foreverCHANT**”

– CHANT Participant



## ASSESS AND RESPOND

We study Knox County’s overall health. Epidemiologists collect and analyze health data so a comprehensive picture of the community can be shared. In addition to studying the community’s overall health, the Health Department prepares for and responds to public health threats. Our highly skilled epidemiology and emergency response teams continue to be a crucial part of preventing and responding to outbreaks and providing emergency preparedness education/guidance to families, businesses, churches, partner agencies, schools, and others.

## THIS YEAR WE:

- Furthered a commitment to addressing mental health as **8** KCHD employees became Certified Mental Health First Aid Instructors, giving them the ability to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illness and provide support to those experiencing a mental health crisis.
- Managed and/or investigated **16** outbreaks.
- Supported **34** long-term care facilities through COVID-19 clusters.
- Responded to nearly **31,000** reports of infectious disease
- Began distributing naloxone to reduce overdose fatalities. More than **250** doses were provided in the first month of distribution.

“**The Knox County Health Department continues to be a critical partner and resource in our community to improve the health and well-being of our area. Their expertise in public health approaches to our most pressing challenges are beneficial in moving issues to the forefront using epidemiology to determine where resources are needed most.**”

– **Karen Pershing**  
Former Executive Director, Metro Drug Coalition



## PROVIDE AND CONNECT TO CARE

Providing and connecting the community to medical care is a key public health service. We serve thousands each year, reducing the human and economic costs of illness and, ultimately, the burden of disease in the community. 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.

### THIS YEAR WE:

- Provided access to comprehensive medical care for **214** children with special health care needs through our CHANT program.
- Administered more than **26,000** vaccines in our clinics.
- Served more than **56,700** patients across our clinics and in the community.
- Had more than **6,000** patient visits in our Dental clinic.
- Provided more than **230** free flu vaccines during the statewide Fight Flu TN event at **4** locations across the county.

“ Since our organization’s inception in 2017, we have maintained a strong partnership with the Women’s Clinic at the Knox County Health Department. We continue to feel so grateful for the care our clients receive from the team at KCHD’s Women’s Health Clinic. Their values are reflected in the care they provide to our clients”

– Taylor Phillips  
Executive Director, A Step Ahead East Tennessee





# 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 important conditions are regulated so that every resident can be healthy. The Environmental Health division enforces state public health regulations for public swimming pools, restaurants, hotels, grocery stores, and other facilities. 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 YEAR WE:

- Conducted more than **7,500** regulatory inspections at food service establishments, schools, day care facilities, hotels, body art studios, and swimming pools.
- Trained more than **1,600** individuals from across the state through our online food safety courses. An additional **52** individuals completed the online Spanish food safety training course.
- Proctored **4** online bloodborne pathogen courses, training more than **160** individuals.
- Conducted over **330** final inspections for septic system installations through our Groundwater Protection program.

“ I have had the pleasure of having Ms. Verettia inspect my pool this summer. I must say she is, without a doubt, one of the nicest, most genuine people I have ever met, and the best inspector I have dealt with in my 24 years of being at my property. She always explains the procedure and any words of wisdom she has.”

– Property Manager

# ANNUAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- The Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program increased monthly participation by 11%, a continuation of the upward participation trajectory that began in 2020.
- KCHD published its first Mental Health Report, summarizing major findings from the community as well as mental health providers about challenges and influencing factors on the mental health of our community.
- WIC and Community Health team members hosted a World Breastfeeding Week celebration at World's Fair Park in August 2022. One hundred and seventy-four attendees participated in an awareness walk, painted t-shirts and onesies, and received information about local breastfeeding resources.
- The Fetal & Infant Mortality Review (FIMR) team, in partnership with the Knox Birth Equity Alliance, presented "Birthing Change: Addressing Birth Equity & Disparities" to attendees representing 26 community partners and organizations.
- In May 2023, KCHD opened a Community Refrigerator in Sam Duff Memorial Park. The refrigerator accepts donations of fruits and vegetables from community members, community gardens, food pantries and food banks. This project won a Keep Knoxville Beautiful Orchid Award in the community project category in 2024.
- The KCHD Youth Health Board program helped students participate in more than 330 volunteer hours.
- The Air Quality Management Division issued more than 5,800 open burning permits to county citizens.
- N.E.A.T. Harvest, in partnership with Second Harvest Food Bank of East Tennessee, coordinated the distribution of 2,375 produce boxes and provided hands-on nutrition education to help students and their families eat and enjoy more fruits and vegetables.
- The N.E.A.T. Program coordinated volunteer or supervised practice experiences for 67 University of Tennessee students, providing students over 1,300 hours of valuable, hands-on public health nutrition experience in the community.
- The Parents as Teachers Program held the annual Roll and Read event at Safety City and partnered with approximately 25 community agencies for this event to promote childhood literacy



- KCHD supported staff from over 30 early care and education sites through the Healthy Habits programming, which included staff wellness initiatives and childhood food literacy programming for students. Healthy Habits programming reached over 100 early care and education staff, and over 600 students.
- SAIL (Stay Active and Independent for Life) classes expanded to Halls Senior Center. SAIL is a strength and balance exercise class for senior adults who are at higher risk for falling. The SAIL program is recognized nationally by the National Council on Aging and the Administration on Community Living as a best practice, evidence-based program for fall prevention. SAIL programs are offered in 4 additional locations in Knoxville.
- KCHD's Violence Prevention Health Educator conducted 54 presentations on the topic of Healthy vs. Unhealthy Relationships reaching 1,018 individuals, including students, professionals, and community members.
- KCHD offered Safe Bar training to educate bar owners and staff about bystander intervention and alcohol's role in sexual assault. The training courses reached 55 bar staff, owners, and managers.

- KCHD implemented several critical programs for monitoring substance misuse and overdose-related health outcomes in the county, including the real-time spatial reporting system ODMAP. This program monitors the time and location of ambulances responding to suspected overdose events to better understand when and where overdoses are occurring.
- The Women's Health Clinic completed the design and ordering of a mobile unit which will allow the clinic to bring critical health services to women in the community with less access.
- The Women's Health Clinic created a new health navigator position that allows for continued follow-up with pregnant clients, ensuring they receive adequate prenatal and postpartum care.
- After enrolling in the Baby and Me Tobacco Free Program, 16 women reported being tobacco-free prior to delivery, improving their health and the health of their babies.
- The Air Quality Management Division conducted 220 compliance evaluations and observed/reviewed 38 performance tests of permitted facilities to ensure clean air standards were being met.



