

Austin Public Health

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**2020-2025**

**STRATEGIC PLAN  
STATUS REPORT**

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# EMERGING FACTORS

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In Fall 2019, Austin Public Health published the Department's 2020-2025 Strategic Plan. Three months later, the COVID-19 pandemic was declared a national and local emergency. Since 2020, there have been several emerging factors that have significantly impacted the Department, requiring Austin Public Health to shift resources, priorities, and strategies to focus on addressing these needs. This *Strategic Planning Status Report* outlines how Austin Public Health had the capacity to respond to critical emerging factors impacting our 2020 - 2025 Strategic Plan, progress made toward the implementation of the plan, despite these emerging factors, and significant departmental investments that will have an impact on Austin Public Health for the remainder of this Strategic Plan.

## Public Health Emergencies

Since the development of our 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, Austin Public Health has seen a significant increase in the need to expand our capacity to serve the community through Public Health Emergency Preparedness. In January 2020, Austin Public Health began responding to the most impactful of these emergencies, COVID-19. As the Lead City agency responding to COVID-19, Austin Public Health quickly scaled up our operations and increased our capacity by rapidly onboarding staff for the Emergency Response. Austin Public Health was responsible for planning, operations, logistics, finance and communication needs for the COVID-19 response. A Social Services Branch was set up to reach communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. Through this branch, Austin Public Health engaged the community to develop customized outreach and messaging in multiple languages, and applied an equity lens to the Emergency Response that had not previously been embedded on this scale. In the early stages of the pandemic, Austin Public Health led the City through mass community testing, tracked COVID-19 data via public facing dashboards, developed protective lodges to provide a safe environment for individuals experiencing homelessness to social distance and facilities to provide the community a safe place isolate, and communicated urgent health information to medical providers, long-term care facilities, childcare providers, businesses, and the public, with special focus on those who were at high risk of severe disease. All programs were adapted to continue to safely provide services throughout the pandemic. Later, Austin Public Health was designated as a Central Texas Vaccination Hub and was responsible for delivering vaccines to the community and responding to each COVID-19 surge and variant.

# EMERGING FACTORS

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In June, 2022 the City declared a public health emergency based on increasing Mpox cases in the area. Again, Austin Public Health was the Lead Agency for the Mpox response operations which included communications, testing, case investigations, and vaccine distribution. Austin Public Health worked to provide the Mpox vaccine to persons at risk of infection or exposure, and worked with area providers to distribute the vaccine. In addition, Austin Public Health launched an extensive education campaign, conducted town halls, and attended meetings with community partners & healthcare providers. Currently, Austin Public Health is utilizing lessons learned from the COVID-19 Pandemic and other Public Health Emergencies to improve our engagement, communications, and practices to better serve the community.

## **Racism Declared a Public Health Crisis**

During the Summer of 2020, Austin City Council passed a Resolution declaring racism as a public health crisis. The devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and violence toward historically marginalized communities continue to underscore the deep need for continuous, strategic work to achieve greater equity in everything we do. Austin Public Health has a vital role in making the changes that this moment in history demands of us all. These significant factors led Austin Public Health to respond by developing a mid-point update to our Strategic Plan Vision and Goals, as well as identifying funding and resources to support department-wide activities addressing racial equity.

Efforts currently underway include work done by dedicated staff to implement the 2021 Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI) Plan, which outlines the department's critical actions toward achieving equity, diversity, and inclusion. In 2022 Austin Public Health re-launched the Equity Ambassadors Program, which provides professional development and dialog on equity topics; developed an Equity Council, which engages in assessment and further strategic planning; and developed a Communications Equity Review Committee, which works to ensure Austin Public Health is engaging and communicating with community members through an equity lens. Additionally, Austin Public Health conducted an organizational self-assessment to determine our capacity to address the root causes of health inequities via a staff survey, which will help build our overall capacity as an organization to impact the factors that influence community health and wellbeing, including institutionalized racism and social and environmental factors.

# EMERGING FACTORS

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## Organizational Changes

Since implementation of the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, Austin Public Health has experienced organizational changes that are incorporated into strategic planning, strategies and activities. This information is updated in the Strategic Plan through annual reviews of the goals and KPIs, performance measure tracking and reporting, updates to public dashboards highlighting strategic measures, and in presentations and reports to staff and City Council.

In 2020, the Homeless Strategy Division was developed within Austin Public Health. Previously Austin Public Health focused on serving individuals and families experiencing homelessness through our Social Services Contracts that fund community organizations addressing homelessness. With the development of the new Homeless Strategy Division, this work has expanded, and Austin Public Health is now responsible for coordinating a community-wide response system through strategic oversight, continuous improvement, addressing equity, and introducing proven housing and social service interventions. Austin Public Health provides annual updates for these activities on public facing dashboards highlighting progress made toward six Strategic Measures related to homelessness that are included in the City's Strategic Plan. Measures are accompanied by Story Pages outlining the work done by Austin Public Health, and other City Departments to improve these metrics. More details can be found on the City of Austin's Strategic Direction 2023, "[Health and Environment](#)" Outcome.

In 2021, the Office of Violence Prevention was developed within Austin Public Health and focuses on investing in equitable access to safety in Austin through evidence-based, community-led programming targeted to those who need it most. The Office of Violence Prevention applies an equity lens to their work by acknowledging and addressing how systemic racism, economic disinvestment and segregation, and over policing have created very different environments for residents based on where they live. Activities include work to prevent gun violence, preventing youth violence, and supporting healing in the community through Community-Rooted Safety Grants.

# VISION, MISSION, & GOALS

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Each Fall, Austin Public Health Leadership reviews the Vision, Mission, and Goals, as well as progress made toward Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). During these annual Strategic Planning Reviews, emerging public health and department priorities are assessed and any unanticipated changes in resources, agency infrastructure, or opportunities are reviewed. During the annual review leading into Fiscal Year 2023, emerging factors led Austin Public Health to update our Vision, along with some Goals and KPIs for our 2020-2025 Strategic Plan.

Austin Public Health updated our Vision to strengthen our commitment to achieving racial equity. Through staff input and development sessions, Austin Public Health built upon the existing Vision: Everyone will have an optimal quality of life, health, and well-being. We built upon our Vision to reflect the direction Austin Public Health is striving toward in achieving equity. If we acknowledge that the social determinants of health – where we are born, work, live, learn, eat, play, worship, and age – have a significant effect on a wide range of health and quality of life outcomes, we must also acknowledge how the racism inherent in these systems drives the inequitable outcomes for Black, Indigenous, and people of color. This new Vision will guide Austin Public Health for the remainder of our Strategic Plan.

**Everyone will have an optimal quality of life, health, and well-being free from racism, poverty, and oppression**

The focus on equity, in addition to health and well-being, is building upon the work currently being done at Austin Public Health to address racism as a public health crisis, as well as address the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19. Austin Public Health is taking an intersectional equity approach that leads with race. This approach means we consider all forms of oppression and marginalization and all the places where our multiple identities intersect and overlap – but begin the conversation with race. We lead with race because, unfortunately, it is the most consistent predictor of outcomes – nationally and locally. An intersectional approach strengthens this focus to ensure that community members uniquely impacted by race and other forms of oppression have their needs met. Our updated Vision will strategically guide Austin Public Health as we strive for a better quality of life for our entire community.

# VISION, MISSION, & GOALS

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## **Austin Public Health Vision:**

**Everyone will have an optimal quality of life, health, and well-being free from racism, poverty, and oppression**

## **Austin Public Health Mission:**

**To prevent disease, promote health, and protect the well-being of all**

## **Austin Public Health Goals:**

- **Promote healthy development and healthy behaviors across all life stages**
- **Prevent and control chronic disease and risk factors**
- **Minimize the public's exposure to environmental hazards, infectious diseases, and foodborne illness**
- **Provide emergency response actions to prevent, respond to, and rapidly recover from public health threats, both natural and manmade**
- **Prevent and control the spread of HIV, STIs, TB, and vaccine-preventable diseases within the general population**
- **Promote health equity, eliminate disparities, and assist people in achieving wellness, stability, and self-sufficiency**
- **Use science, data, and a prevention-focused approach to guide and support health and racial equity**

# PROGRESS MADE TOWARD GOALS & KPIS

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Austin Public Health tracks progress made toward Goals through annual reporting on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Performance Measures. These measures are reported throughout the fiscal year with a final report at the end of each fiscal year. During the middle of the fiscal year, measures, including progress made toward targets, are reviewed with program staff and Austin Public Health Leadership. This information is shared with the City of Austin's Financial Services Division, City Management, and City Council, and used to inform the budget process. Measures that are not meeting targets are reviewed with leadership and quality improvement methods to reach the target are identified.

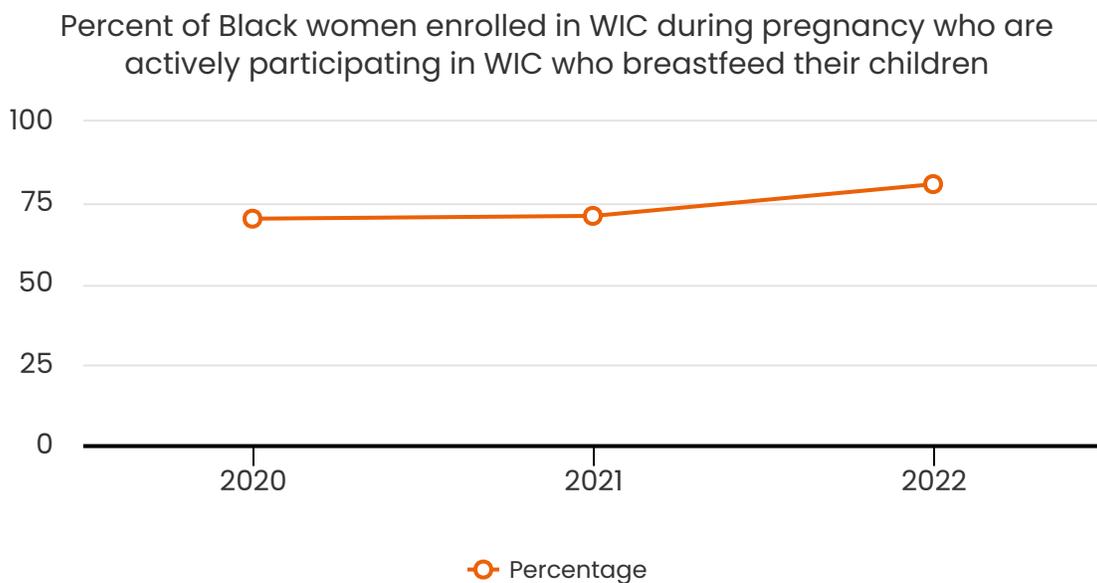
The following sections highlight progress made toward Goals and KPIs, as well as Austin Public Health's efforts to respond to and improve these metrics.

# PROGRESS MADE TOWARD GOALS & KPIS

## Goal 1. Promote healthy development and healthy behaviors across all life stages

### KPI 1.1 Percent of Black women enrolled in WIC during pregnancy who are actively participating in WIC who breastfeed their children

**TARGET: 80%**



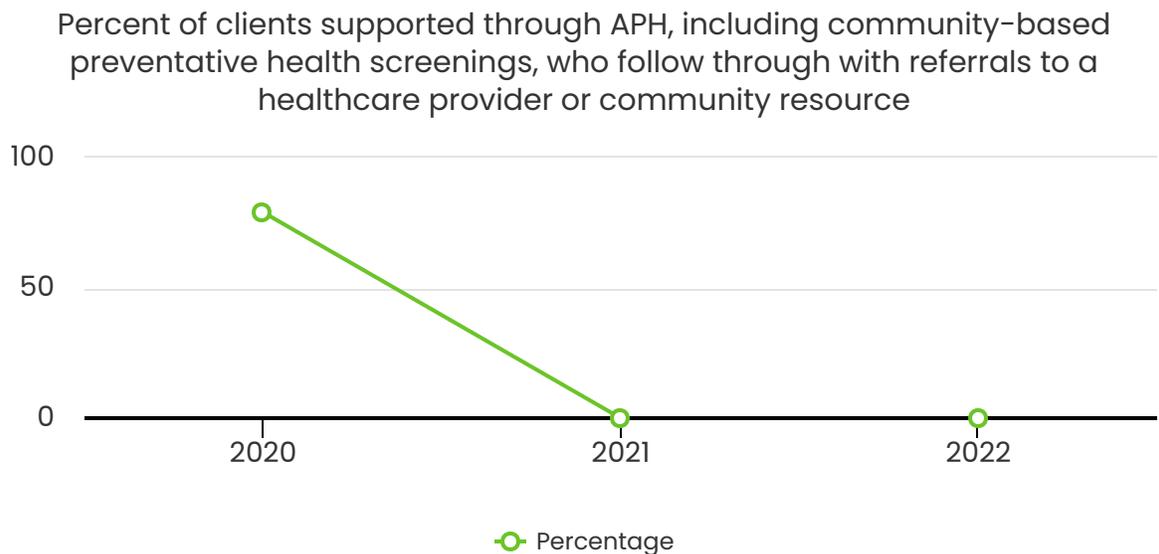
This KPI was updated during the Fiscal Year 2023 Vision, Mission, and Goal review. Previously, this KPI was "Percent of women enrolled in WIC during pregnancy who are actively participating in WIC who breastfeed their children." In an effort to focus on addressing health disparities experienced by Black women, Austin Public Health updated this KPI. Fiscal Year 2022 data shows an increase from 70.1 percent to 80.1 percent. Several programs at Austin Public Health influence this measure including WIC, a nutrition program for pregnant women, new mothers and young children; Family Connects, a nurse home visiting program for all families with newborns; and the Maternal Infant Outreach Program (MIOP). MIOP provides one-on-one support to Black moms in Austin/Travis County. Community Health Workers are paired with moms and provide general case management and maternal education with a specific focus on breastfeeding through a social reproductive lens. MIOP promotes breastfeeding by educating program moms, providing referrals to relevant resources, and by raising community awareness during Black Breastfeeding Week.

# PROGRESS MADE TOWARD GOALS & KPIS

## Goal 2. Prevent and Control Chronic Disease and Risk Factors

**KPI 2.1 Percent of clients supported through APH, including community-based preventative health screenings, who follow through with referrals to a healthcare provider or community resource**

**TARGET: 85%**



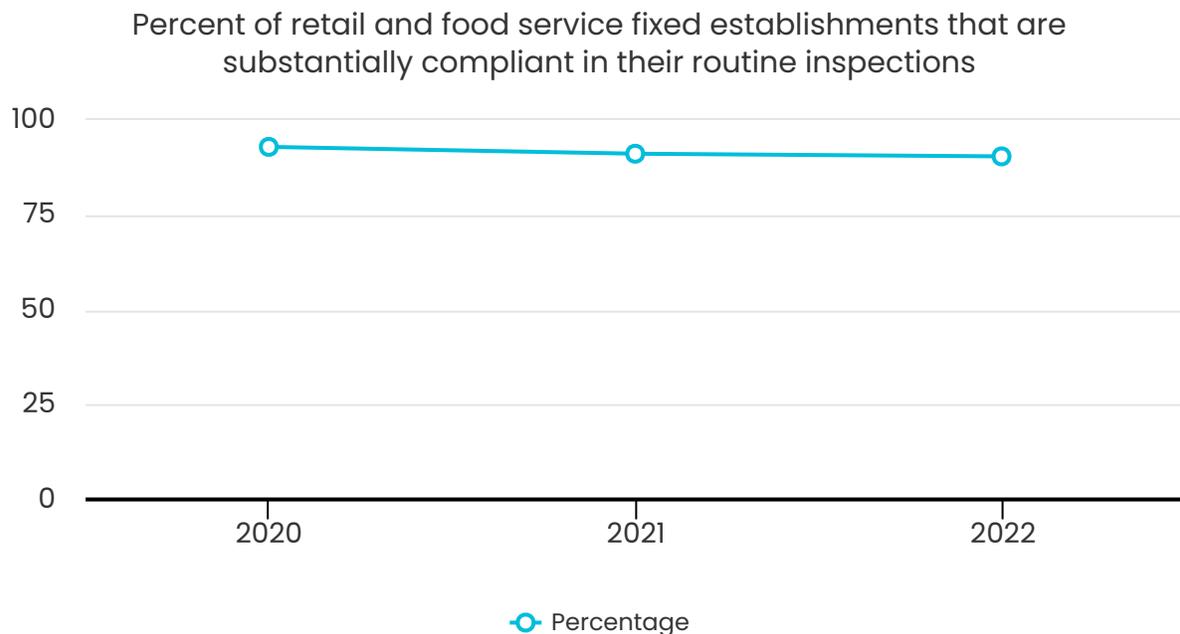
Austin Public Health provides preventative screenings through Public Health Nurses located at Neighborhood Centers and through Health Equity Mobile Outreach. Progress made toward this KPI was significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and Mpox emergency response. During 2020 - 2022 emerging needs required all Austin Public Health Nurses to be called into the COVID-19 response efforts. Public Health Nurses were called in to provide guidance, scheduling, and information through free public Nurse and Health Equity telephone lines for parents, school and childcare workers, businesses, health care professionals and the general public. Additionally, nursing staff were called in to the front-lines of testing and vaccination efforts as Austin Public Health was designated a Central Texas Vaccination Hub. In 2022 Public Health Nurses continued to serve as they responded to Austin Public Health's Mpox emergency response and vaccination efforts. Public Health Nurses have continued to provide support for public health emergencies since 2020 and are now able to resume outreach activities in 2023.

# PROGRESS MADE TOWARD GOALS & KPIS

## Goal 3. Minimize the public's exposure to environmental hazards, infectious diseases, and foodborne illness

### KPI 3.1 Percent of retail and food service fixed establishments that are substantially compliant in their routine inspections

Target: 90%



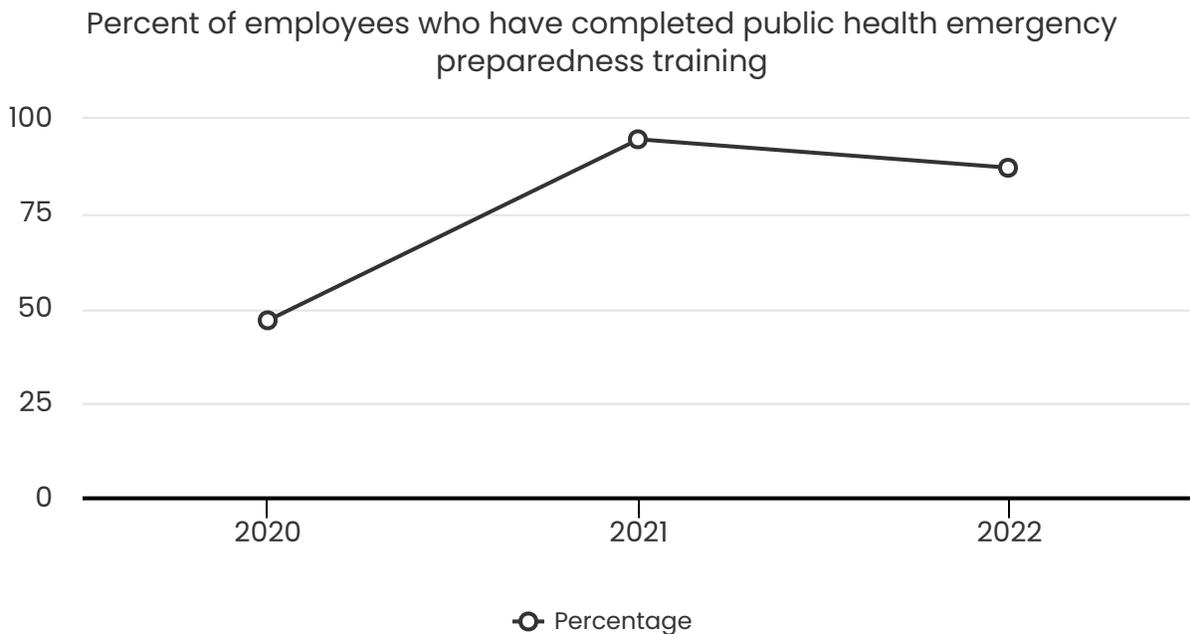
This goal was modified for Fiscal Year 2023 to combine Austin Public Health's efforts to reduce the public's exposure to environmental hazards, infectious diseases, and foodborne illnesses into one goal. Austin Public Health's Epidemiology & Public Health Preparedness and Environmental Health Services Divisions work together to protect the public and make progress toward this goal. Austin Public Health works to prevent foodborne, waterborne, and infectious diseases by permitting and inspecting over 22,830 establishments annually. In addition to foodborne illness, vector-borne diseases are prevented through trapping, identifying, assessing samples, and communicating these results to the community. The Epidemiology and Disease Surveillance Unit investigates foodborne illnesses and vector-borne diseases to identify potential sources of exposure. As part of the investigation, the team provides guidance and data to educate the public and support interventions such as food recalls and mosquito abatement.

# PROGRESS MADE TOWARD GOALS & KPIS

## Goal 4. Provide emergency response actions to prevent, respond to, and rapidly recover from public health threats, both natural and manmade

### KPI 4.1 Percent of employees who have completed public health emergency preparedness training

**TARGET: 90%**



Austin Public Health requires all staff to complete public health emergency preparedness training to ensure, as an organization, we are prepared to respond to public health emergencies. The importance of this readiness has been demonstrated throughout the course of this Strategic Plan as Austin Public Health has been the lead City of Austin Agency responding to COVID-19 and MPox and supported City-wide emergencies such as severe winter storms and other natural disasters. This KPI was impacted in 2020 as COVID-19 limited in-person gatherings for some required preparedness trainings. In 2021 and 2022 in-person trainings resumed and the Public Health Preparedness Program completed a quality improvement cycle to improve data collection and tracking for this metric.

# PROGRESS MADE TOWARD GOALS & KPIS

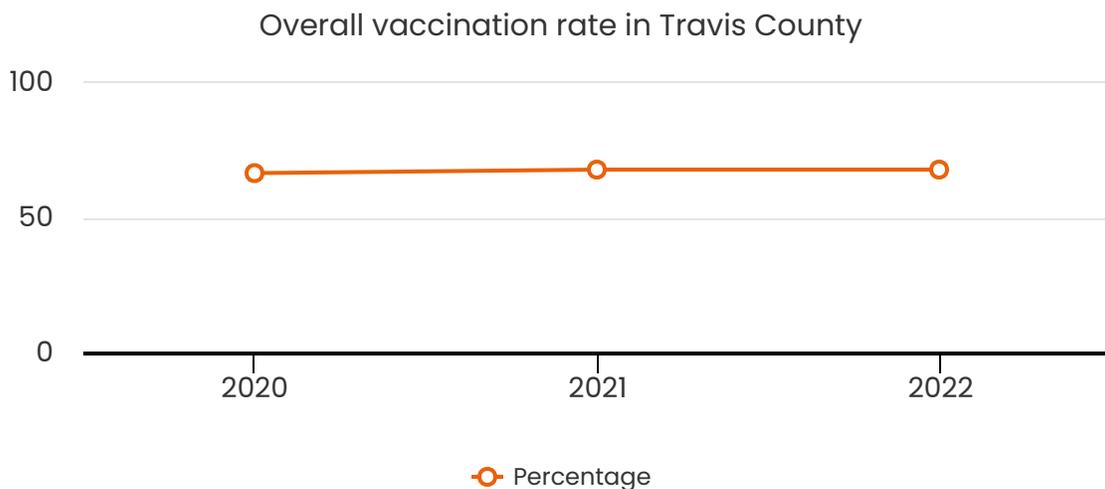
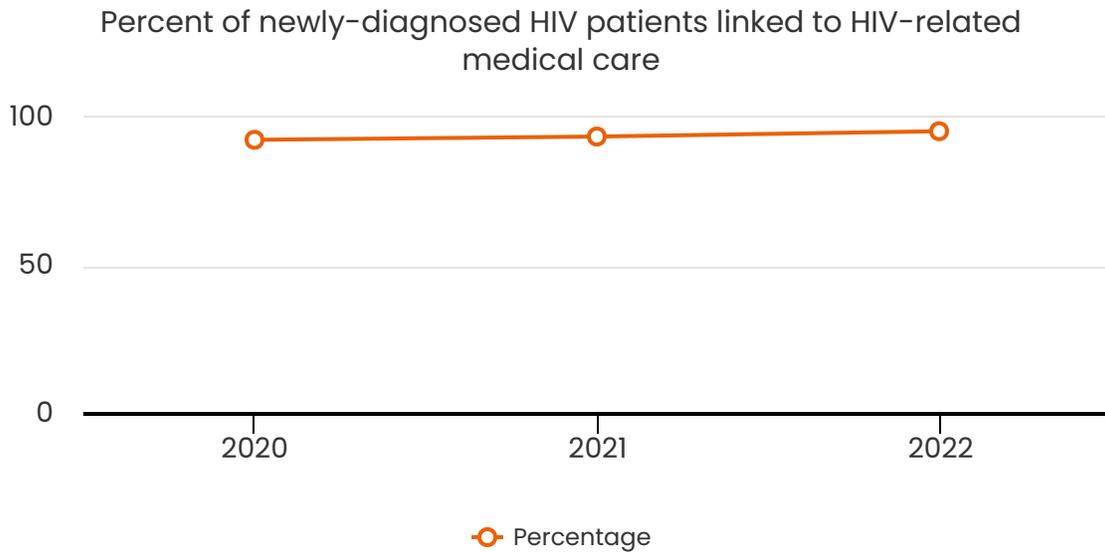
## Goal 5. Prevent and control the spread of HIV, STIs, TB, and vaccine-preventable diseases within the general population

### KPI 5.1 Percent of newly-diagnosed HIV patients linked to HIV-related medical care

**TARGET: 85%**

### KPI 5.2 Overall vaccination rate in Travis County

**TARGET: 68%**



# PROGRESS MADE TOWARD GOALS & KPIs

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A core purpose of Austin Public Health is to prevent, promote, and protect the community from the spread of diseases. All Austin Public Health programs contributed to this goal during the COVID-19 emergency response to protect the public. This included providing direct support to the response and recovery efforts, and modifying programs to continue to provide services safely throughout the pandemic.

Austin Public Health has a robust network of programs that support the KPI: Percent of newly-diagnosed HIV patients linked to HIV-related medical care. This includes work from the Communicable Disease Unit which is responsible for preventing and responding to the spread of HIV, STIs, and TB; the FastTrack Cities Initiative, which facilitates local community stakeholders to share ideas and practices to leverage resources and create community progress to end the HIV/AIDS epidemic; and the HIV Resources Administration Unit, which is responsible for procuring HIV/AIDS primary medical care, treatment, and health-related support services for City of Austin-funded HIV Prevention and Care Services. Austin Public Health's Communicable Disease Unit provides newly-diagnosed HIV patients onsite and immediate access to medical social work services. Medical social workers link patients to established HIV medical providers as soon as possible, sometimes the same day. Specific activities such as providing patients experiencing homelessness with a cell phone, and establishing strong relationships with community HIV-care providers have also contributed to successfully linking patients to care.

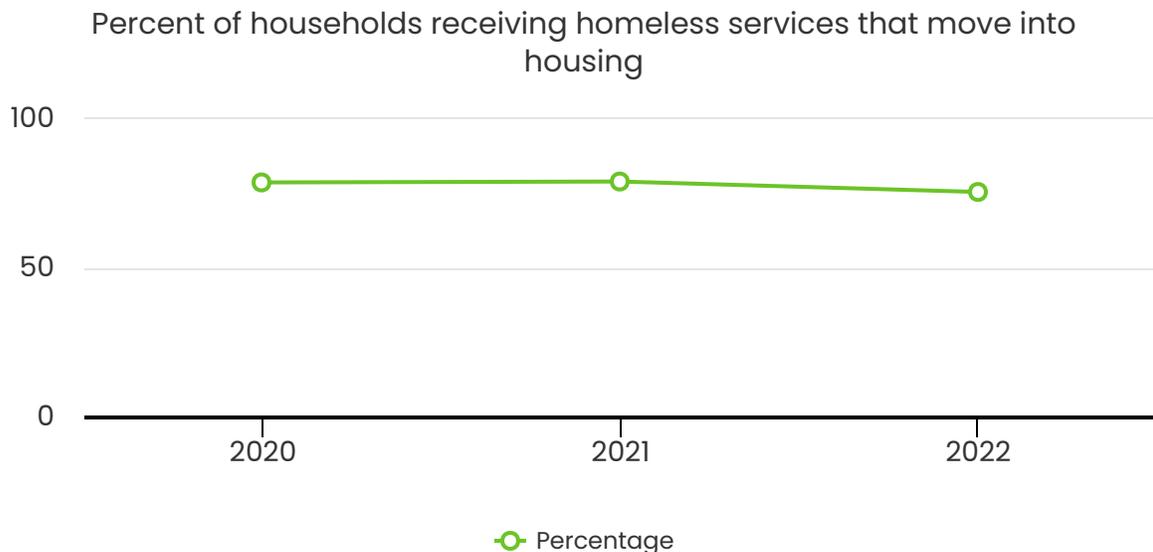
Austin Public Health's Immunizations Unit has expanded in scope and capacity since the beginning of this Strategic Plan to prevent the spread of vaccine preventable diseases. Recent accomplishments that impact this goal and KPI include: A larger workforce dedicated to educating the community on the risks associated with vaccine-preventable diseases; adding other adult vaccines at Austin Public Health adult outreach clinics for COVID-19 and Mpox, and supporting 85 local vaccine providers through Vaccines for Children/Adult Safety Net to serve those most vulnerable.

# PROGRESS MADE TOWARD GOALS & KPIS

## Goal 6. Promote health equity, eliminate disparities, and assist people in achieving wellness, stability, and self-sufficiency

### KPI 6.1 Percent of households receiving homeless services that move into housing

**TARGET: 82%**



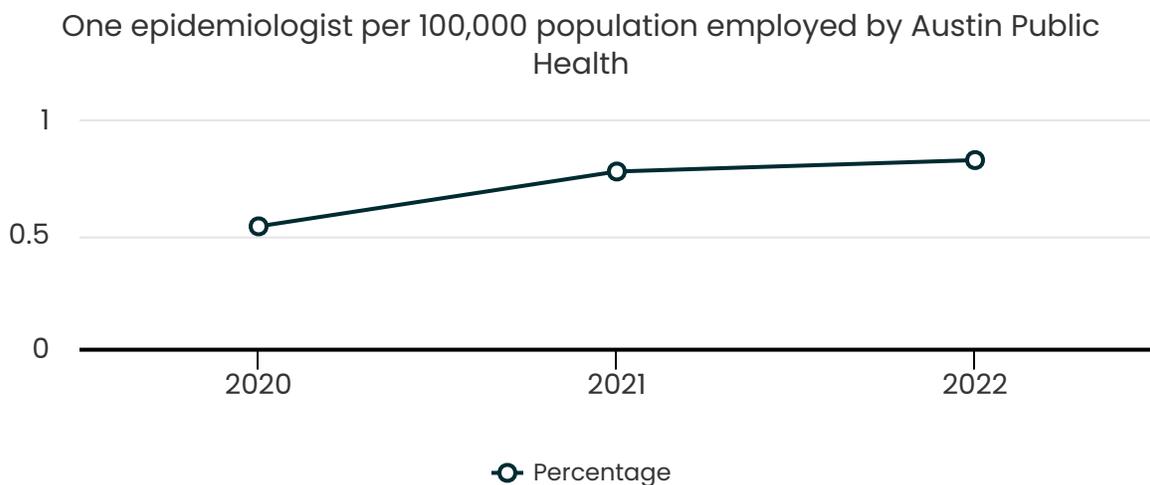
Austin Public Health has continued to focus efforts on this Goal and KPI by serving individuals and families experiencing homelessness. In 2020 the Homeless Strategy Division was developed within Austin Public Health to address community-wide homelessness response system through strategic oversight, continuous improvement, addressing equity, and introducing proven housing and social service interventions. Division staff coordinate cross-departmental activities with more than a dozen City of Austin departments and lead community engagement, program development and communication initiatives. Through partnerships, Austin Public Health has continued to provide funding through the solicitation of Social Services Contracts to providers serving individuals and families experiencing homelessness with outreach and navigation, emergency shelter services, rapid rehousing, permanent supportive housing, homelessness prevention, behavioral health and access to benefits, workforce development, hygiene and community planning with the Ending Community Homelessness Coalition.

# PROGRESS MADE TOWARD GOALS & KPIS

## Goal 7. Use science, data, and a prevention-focused approach to guide and support health and racial equity

### KPI 7.1 One epidemiologist per 100,000 population employed by Austin Public Health

**TARGET: 1 per 100,000 Population**



This goal was developed leading up to Fiscal Year 2023 to focus Austin Public Health's work in addressing health and racial equity that is both data and community-driven. Austin Public Health has started making progress toward this goal through a focus on Workforce Development. In 2022, Austin Public Health resumed and expanded on racial equity work at the department by developing and implementing the REDI Plan which outlines the department's critical actions toward achieving equity, diversity, and inclusion. Workforce Development activities outlined in the REDI Plan include re-launching the Equity Ambassadors Program, which provides professional development and dialog on equity topics as well as conducting an organizational equity assessment. In addition, Austin Public Health has leveraged funding to increase our capacity to utilize data to support health and racial equity. Since 2020, Austin Public Health has been able to increase epidemiologists on staff from five to thirteen, increasing our capacity to analyze health disparities. The team increased their capacity in key areas such as substance use/misuse, mental health, injury prevention, and emerging environmental factors. The increased capacity allows for additional programmatic support through a variety of data teams that provide data expertise to inform program planning and grant applications.

# STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

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## SD2023 & CHA/CHIP

Austin Public Health developed the Department's 2020-2025 Strategic Plan Goals in alignment with the Austin/Travis County Community Health Plan and the City of Austin's Strategic Plan titled Strategic Direction 2023 (SD23). Through this Strategic Plan alignment, Austin Public Health focused on implementation of both Community-driven and City priorities as we implemented the Department's Strategic Plan.

The Austin/Travis County Community Health Plan is organized by Austin Public Health with support from community members, partners, and stakeholders, and is comprised of both the Community Health Assessment (CHA) and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). 2022 marked both the fourth year of implementation for the 2018 CHIP and the development of the 2022 CHA. During this year, community partners continued working together to address the four priority areas identified: Access to Care, Chronic Disease/Active Living, Sexual Health, and Behavioral Health, all of which include active participation from Austin Public Health staff working in these program areas. Strategies within these priority areas were updated during the past two years to address emerging needs as a result of COVID-19. Additionally, in 2022, Austin Public Health worked to align the timeline of the Community Health Plan with area hospital partners and moved from a 5-year cycle to a 3-year cycle, allowing for strengthened partner engagement throughout the entire CHA/CHIP cycle. Once the 2023 CHIP is completed, Austin Public Health will identify areas of alignment with the updated Plan.

Austin Public Health continued to support implementation of the City's Strategic Plan, SD23 during the first three years of our Department's Strategic Plan. Austin Public Health is one of the key Departments contributing to SD23's "Health and Environment" Outcome and is responsible for updating on progress for 21 Strategic Measures that are publicly reported. These measures have been identified as a priority by City Council with some measures incorporated into Department's Strategic Plan. Austin Public Health tracks these priority measures through public facing dashboards that are updated annually with new data, measure cards, and story pages highlighting the work Austin Public Health is doing to improve these measures.

# NOTABLE INVESTMENTS

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Austin Public Health relies on public health investments to increase our capacity to serve the community and implement activities outlined in our Strategic Plan. In Fiscal Year 2023, approximately 55% of the annual operating budget, not including social services contracts, was grant funded. This funding supports critical public health work throughout the department. The COVID-19 pandemic and following public health emergency response activities illustrated the overall need for investment in public health infrastructure.

Recent investments include the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), which included approximately 95 million dollars in funding to support addressing homelessness and approximately 38 million dollars in funding to support public health, which includes support for programs, outreach, workforce, and infrastructure needs. Additional funding was obtained through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to strengthen Austin Public Health's outreach and community engagement following COVID-19 and allows for Community Health Workers to provide community outreach and education for COVID-19, Immunizations, Chronic Disease, and Injury Prevention activities. In 2021, a CDC Workforce Development grant strengthened our capacity to support organizational workforce development with a focus on equity and inclusion in training, recruitment, hiring, and retention policies and practices.

In Fiscal Year 2023, Austin Public Health was awarded the Public Health Infrastructure Grant (PHIG) through the CDC to support implementation of best practices and innovative activities for addressing barriers to accessing essential public health services. Austin Public Health joined one of 19 selected city health departments in the U.S. as a selected PHIG site focusing efforts on strengthening the workforce and organization through investing in its people, communities, programs, data modernization, and sustainability. The PHIG brings approximately 12 million dollars to Austin Public Health over 5 years to strengthen workforce capacity, foundational capabilities, and data modernization initiatives. The cornerstone of PHIG – building our public health workforce – is illustrated in Austin Public Health use of funds to retain and build on key positions that would otherwise lose funding from expiring grants. The retention and new positions include workforce development, evaluation, performance, equity and inclusion, community engagement, community health workers, customer service, nursing, epidemiology, public health preparedness, environmental health, administration, data modernization, and maternal and child health.

# NOTABLE INVESTMENTS

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PHIG enables Austin Public Health to hire a Workforce Development Director to guide the department in developing and strengthening competencies and, in partnership with key players, this team will evaluate PHIG activities, leverage evaluation opportunities for Austin Public Health, assess grant strategy and processes, identify and provide training opportunities, re-assess the performance management system, and collaborate with human resources on workforce infrastructure planning including retention, recruitment, succession planning, and more. Looking ahead, these activities will support and strengthen implementation of this Strategic Plan, increasing our capacity to serve the community and strengthen our workforce and infrastructure.