

*You're Invited!*

## **Spring 2026 – Master of Public Health Forum**

**Friday, May 8, 2026**

**University of Northern Colorado  
Columbine Room at the University Center  
2101 10th Ave. Greeley, CO 80634**

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The Capstone projects presented are the culminating experiences of students in the Master of Public Health program at the Colorado School of Public Health at the University of Northern Colorado.

<b>8:00 am - 8:20 am:</b>	<b>Welcome</b>
<b>8:30 am - 11:45 am:</b>	<b>In-person Presentations</b>
<b>11:45 am - 12:00 pm:</b>	<b>Closing</b>
<b>12:00 pm - 12:30 pm:</b>	<b>Celebrating UNC MPH Graduates</b>

Online Access: Community Partners and student family and friends can also watch the presentation online. Please use this Zoom Login to join us virtually. [LOGIN](#) or use this QR code to login to Zoom.



# SCHEDULE OF PRESENTATIONS

Time	<b>Public Health Forum: Presentations In-Person</b> Moderators: Dr. Cox, Dr. Grose, Dr. Gilbert Location: Columbine Room at the University Center
8:00 – 8:20 AM	<b>Welcome</b> Dr. Patricia Valverde, ColoradoSPH at UNC Director Dr. Kamel Haddad, Dean of the College of Natural & Health Sciences Rudy Vargas MPH, ColoradoSPH at UNC Alumni
	<b>Moderator: Dr. Dannon Cox</b>
8:30-8:45AM	<b>Abigail Lister</b> Kick The Nic UNC: Development and Implementation of a Peer-Led Nicotine Education and Reduction Workshop for College Students
8:45- 9:00 AM	<b>Morgan Crawford</b> Social Connection and Healthy Aging: Exploring Social Connection Among Older Adults Participating in Aspen Club Programs
9:00 –9:15 AM	<b>Jenny Footle</b> Defining Wellness on Their Own Terms: An Ethnographic Study of Fitness, Wellness, and Healing Among Survivors of Human Trafficking in the United States
9:15- 9:30 AM	<b>Kassi Bohan</b> Nourishing Little Learners: A Culturally Responsive Snack Program for Immigrant and Refugee Children at IRCNoCo
9:30-9:45 AM	<b>BREAK</b>
	<b>Moderator: Dr. Liz Gilbert</b>
9:45-10:00AM	<b>Maria Macias</b> Evaluation of Youth Engagement Programs to Support Equitable Access and Expansion in Larimer County
10:00-10:15AM	<b>Liz Baylon Trejo</b> OmniSalud Health Insurance Literacy and Implementation Toolkit
10:15-10:30 AM	<b>Karla Guerra Santos</b> First-Generation Near-Peer Mentoring Program Mentee Evaluation Kit
10:30-10:45 AM	<b>Lupita Nabor Vazquez</b> Survey for Community Health Workers and Others in Similar Roles
10:45-11:00AM	<b>BREAK</b>
	<b>Moderator: Dr. Rose Grose</b>
11:00-11:15 AM	<b>Sarah Jackson</b> Expanding Access to Behavioral Health Care: Implementation Planning for the Weld County Mobile Unit
11:15- 11:30 AM	<b>Hannah Wilson</b> Growing Together: An Implementation Plan for Community-Centered Prenatal Care
11:30-11:45AM	<b>Lauren Crowley</b> Making Medicaid Accessible for Members with Intellectual Disabilities and Their Support Systems
11:45 – 12:00 PM	<b>Closing</b> Dr. Dannon Cox and Dr. Patricia Valverde
12:00 – 12:30 PM	<b>Student Celebration</b> Renee Greenberg and Student Council

*\*Please note, presentation times may vary slightly due to unforeseen scheduling changes.*

# Parking and Building Access

The Public Health Forum will take place in the Columbine Room at the University Center (2101 10th Ave. Greeley, CO 80634).

Visitor parking is available in any of the lots near the University Center (A-1 lot, A-2 lot, or Parking Lot C). You can pay for parking using the [Passport Parking App](#). You will need to know your vehicle's license plate number when paying to park. Parking is \$1 for 30 min up to about \$7 for a full day (~9 hours).

## University of Northern Colorado Map



## The Colorado School of Public Health MPH Capstone Experience

### Goal:

The goal of the Capstone experience for Master of Public Health (MPH) students is to connect all aspects of the curriculum, including seminars, lectures, course work, independent studies, projects and direct experiences to establish an understanding, appreciation and working knowledge of public health practice and, specifically, how their chosen areas of concentration enhance public health practice in Colorado, the nation and the world.

### Objectives:

1. To develop products that can be added to the student's portfolio, documenting her/his reasoning, decision-making, analytical and authorship skills as they relate to linking important public health projects to the MPH learning objectives and competencies.
2. To provide a collaborative environment for students from all concentrations to review and discuss the core competencies of the MPH curriculum in relationship to their practice-related experiences.
3. To provide an independent but guided opportunity for the student to practice and document the role that her/his specific concentration skills play in public health practice.
4. To develop awareness of personal strengths and competencies as a public health professional.
5. To improve skills related to presenting project results in oral and written formats.

*Thank you!*

### **MPH Capstone Faculty & MPH Faculty**

*Patricia Valverde, PhD, MPH*

*Rose Grose, PhD, MS*

*Dannon G. Cox, PhD, MEd\**

*Liz Gilbert, EdD, MEd*

\*Capstone Instructor for Spring 2026

# Thank You

The Colorado School of Public Health at the University of Northern Colorado would like to recognize preceptors who gave their time and expertise to advise our students:

Preceptor	Agency	Student
Maria F. Rodriguez MPHc	Division of Insurance, Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies	Liz Baylon Trejo
Kunteang Haskins MPH	The Immigrant and Refugee Center of Northern Colorado	Kassi Bohan
JoAnn Herkenhoff	UCHealth Aspen Club	Morgan Crawford
Lana Eggers	Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF)	Lauren Crowley
Katie Brydon LCSW, LAC, MAC	Beautiful Feet Wellness	Jenny Footle
Maira Oliva Hernandez MS	First-Generation Near-Peer Mentoring Program (FGNP)	Karla Guerra Santos
Shaun May MPH, CPM	Weld County Department of Public Health and Environment	Sarah Jackson
Shawn Walcott MPH, CHES	The Office of Health Promotion, University of Northern Colorado	Abigail Lister
Destini Hall BA	Larimer County Department of Health and Environment	Maria Macias Chavez
Shenazar Esmundo MPH, DrPH	Patient Navigation & Community Health Worker Training (PNCT) Program	Lupita Nabor Vazquez
Shaun May MPH, CPM	Weld County Health Department	Hannah Wilson

## **Kick The Nic UNC: Development and Implementation of a Peer-Led Nicotine Education and Reduction Workshop for College Students**

Abigail Lister

Preceptor: Shawn Walcott, MPH, CHES

Site: The Office of Health Promotion

**Background:** Nicotine use among college students remains a public health concern, especially with high-nicotine modern products and targeted marketing. The purpose of this project was to design, implement, and evaluate a peer-led nicotine education and harm reduction workshop (Kick the Nic) to improve knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors among students at the University of Northern Colorado.

**Methods:** Two 40-minute workshop sessions were conducted, totaling 26 participants, including a pilot session and a Greek life-focused session. The workshop included education on nicotine's effects, media targeting, an interactive nicotine content activity, and skill-building using the 4Ds (delay, deep breathing, distract, drink water). Pre- and post-surveys assessed changes in knowledge, attitudes, concern, confidence, and behavioral intentions, along with open-ended responses.

**Results:** Participants demonstrated increases in perceived knowledge (2.54 to 3.88), attitudes toward nicotine content (4.08 to 4.65), and concern about health effects (2.92 to 3.50). Among current nicotine users, confidence in reducing or quitting increased (2.88 to 3.25), and 100% reported some intention to change their behavior after the workshop. Confidence in refusing nicotine in social situations also increased (3.12 to 3.58). Additionally, all current users reported confidence in using the 4Ds to manage cravings. Qualitative responses highlighted increased awareness of nicotine content in modern products, improved understanding of health effects, and the usefulness of practical strategies.

**Conclusions:** The Kick the Nic workshop shows promise as a peer-led intervention. Findings suggest that combining education, interactive activities, and practical strategies can improve knowledge, confidence, and intentions related to nicotine use.

## **Social Connection and Healthy Aging: Exploring Social Connection Among Older Adults Participating in Aspen Club Programs**

Morgan Crawford

Preceptor: JoAnn Herkenhoff

Site: UCHealth Aspen Club Senior Services - Community Health Improvement

**Background:** Social isolation and loneliness are growing public health concerns among older adults and are linked to poorer mental and physical health outcomes. Community-based programs may help reduce loneliness by creating opportunities for social interaction, learning, and engagement. The Aspen Club, part of UCHealth Community Health Improvement, offers health education programs, screenings, and resources for adults aged 50 and older. While individual programs are routinely evaluated, less is known about participants' overall perceptions of social connection. The purpose of this project was to assess social connection among older adults participating in Aspen Club programs.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional survey was distributed in person to Aspen Club participants attending health education classes, workshops, and community events. The anonymous survey included Likert-scale and open-ended questions related to social connection, belonging, well-being, and satisfaction. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, and qualitative responses were reviewed for common themes.

**Results:** Twenty participants completed the survey. Participants reported high satisfaction (8.8/10). Average Likert scores showed strong perceptions of social connection (5.0/5), feeling welcomed (4.8/5), opportunities for interaction (4.5/5), support for well-being (4.8/5), and belonging (4.7/5). Common themes included social connection, learning opportunities, movement and healthy aging information, and interest in additional programming.

**Conclusions:** Aspen Club programs play an important role in supporting social connection and healthy aging among older adults. Findings suggest that community-based programming can help reduce social isolation while promoting engagement, education, and well-being. Results may help inform future programming and strengthen efforts to support older adults aging in place.

# **Defining Wellness on Their Own Terms: An Ethnographic Study of Fitness, Wellness, and Healing Among Survivors of Human Trafficking in the United States**

Jenny Footle

Preceptor: Katie Brydon, LCSW, LAC, MAC

Site: Beautiful Feet Wellness

**Background:** The purpose of this project was to examine how the US legacy of slavery continues exploitation and constrains healing for survivors of human trafficking, using disability theory and social constructivism to center survivor conceptions of wellness toward more just and effective wellbeing frameworks.

**Methods:** A literature review on how racism and slavery hampers survivor's ability to identify & escape oppression was used for the introduction. The data set from Beautiful Feet Wellness, informed a case study using an ethnographic, multimodal approach to analyze 19 interviews with survivors that asked about needs, assets, and limitations regarding wellbeing. The data analysis conducted was inductive, using an interpretative phenomenological analysis method.

**Results:** Three themes emerged: 1. In the US, wellness is a privilege, not a human right. 2. They need to find their own expression of fitness and wellness instead of what other people claim it should be like for them. 3. For survivors of human trafficking, pursuing wellness is pursuing healing.

**Conclusions:** This ethnography places survivor wellness within the legacy of slavery, ableist, and exploitative US systems. It exposes how dominant health and service models hinder survivors' healing by mirroring trafficking. It emphasizes survivor-defined wellness as a protective factor that supports autonomy, dignity, and sustained recovery. The findings challenge practitioners to move beyond standardized, compliance-based interventions toward trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and self-determined approaches to wellbeing. This study offers a CBPR foundation for developing programs that promote long-term health equity and collective healing for survivors of human trafficking.

## **Nourishing Little Learners: A Culturally Responsive Snack Program for Immigrant and Refugee Children at IRCNoCo**

Kassi Bohan

Preceptor: Kunteang Som Haskins, MPH

Site: Immigrant and Refugee Center of Northern Colorado

**Background:** Immigrant and refugee children in the United States experience disproportionate nutrition-related disparities, including limited access to culturally appropriate and safe foods. These disparities can negatively impact early childhood development and long-term health outcomes. The purpose of this project was to design a culturally responsive, nutrition-based snack program that promotes healthy eating behaviors, improves nutrition knowledge among families and staff, and supports safe feeding practices in an early childhood education setting.

**Methods:** The Nourishing Little Learners program was developed for early childhood classrooms at the Immigrant and Refugee Center of Northern Colorado. Guided by the Social Ecological Model, cultural humility, and health literacy principles, the program incorporates structured snack routines, culturally responsive halal-permissible menus, and age-appropriate modifications for children aged six months to eleven years. Key components include staff training on hand hygiene, food handling, and choking prevention, as well as distribution of multilingual educational materials to families. Ongoing observation and adaptation ensure alignment with cultural preferences and operational constraints.

**Results:** Expected short-term outcomes include enhanced staff knowledge and confidence in culturally responsive feeding practices, consistent implementation of safe snack procedures, and increased family engagement with nutrition education. Intermediate and long-term outcomes aim to establish healthier eating behaviors among children, reduce nutrition disparities, and promote sustainable, inclusive nutrition practices within early childhood settings.

**Conclusions:** This program offers an evidence-informed, culturally responsive approach to addressing nutrition disparities in early childhood. By integrating culturally appropriate practices with practical implementation strategies, it provides a replicable model to promote nutrition equity in community-based early childhood education.

# **Evaluation of Youth Engagement Programs to Support Equitable Access and Expansion in Larimer County**

Maria Macias

Preceptor: Destini Hall

Site: Department of Health and Environment Larimer County

**Background:** Youth Engagement Programs support positive youth development by building protective factors, strengthening youth-adult relationships, and connecting youth to community resources. Larimer County Department of Health and Environment is evaluating how programs developed in Fort Collins can better support equitable expansion to Loveland and Berthoud. This capstone project examined youth engagement specialist perspectives to understand program strengths, needs, and access gaps.

**Methods:** A program evaluation approach guided the project. Semi-structured key informant interviews were conducted with youth engagement specialists. Questions were organized around the Socioecological Model levels to explore identified needs in retention, barriers, and future expansion. Interview responses were reviewed, coded, and compared across participants to identify common themes.

**Results:** The results identified needs centered on substance-free spaces, trusted peer leadership, youth voice, access barriers, partnership supports, and future growth. Retention when programs offered friends, food, activities, and a sense of belonging. Barriers to participation included transportation, distance, unreliable rides, family responsibilities, and limited youth-friendly spaces. Participants also described a need for future stronger staff support, intentional social mixing, adaptable accommodations, and attention to younger or remote youth.

**Conclusions:** Larimer County Youth Engagement Programs should continue building welcoming spaces where youth feel safe, heard, and connected. Program improvement should prioritize transportation solutions, targeted outreach, supportive partnerships, consistent staffing, inclusive accommodations, and meaningful youth decision-making. Although grounded in Larimer County, findings can inform broader youth-serving efforts by showing that all youth benefit when programs reduce access barriers, strengthen belonging, and create real opportunities for youth voice.

# OmniSalud Health Insurance Literacy and Implementation Toolkit

Liz Baylon Trejo

Preceptor: Maria Rodriguez, MPHc

Site: Division of Insurance, Department of Regulatory Agencies

**Background:** Undocumented immigrants face systemic barriers to accessing health care services, including a lack of health insurance. OmniSalud, a Colorado-based program, allows undocumented Coloradans to obtain private health insurance. Health insurance literacy is a challenge for OmniSalud enrollees in effectively utilizing their insurance. Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) serve as trusted sources of culturally relevant information. The purpose of this project was to develop a health insurance literacy and implementation toolkit to help CBOs deliver materials that increase health insurance literacy among OmniSalud enrollees.

**Methods:** A literature review was conducted to identify challenges OmniSalud enrollees face in navigating the health insurance system. Based on findings from the literature review, educational materials were created to increase enrollee knowledge on using their health insurance. The materials were compiled into a toolkit with guidance on how CBOs can deliver the materials among enrollees. A survey was developed to evaluate the effectiveness of the materials in the toolkit.

**Results:** An OmniSalud toolkit was developed to equip CBOs with culturally-relevant materials in Spanish and English. Materials in the toolkit included downloadable health literacy session slide decks and social media posts. Topics covered in the materials include key health insurance terms, costs associated with health insurance, and tools to navigate the health care system.

**Conclusions:** OmniSalud enrollees should be provided with the resources to navigate the health insurance system. This toolkit provides CBOs in Colorado with culturally relevant materials to ensure that OmniSalud enrollees have the tools to confidently and effectively use their health insurance.

## **First-Generation Near-Peer Mentoring Program Mentee Evaluation Kit**

Karla Guerra Santos

Preceptor: Maira Oliva Hernandez, MS

Site: First-Generation Near-Peer Mentoring Program

**Background:** The First Generation Near Peer Mentoring Program (FGNP) focuses on first generation students in higher education, and the K-12 education system. With most participants being newcomer students both in mentor and mentee roles. It is important to acknowledge how mentorship can impact mentees and the importance of having culturally competent mentors. The purpose is to create an evaluation kit for FGNP to better understand the mentee experience.

**Methods:** A literature review is written to get a better understanding of what other mentorship programs have found to be successful and how they have been evaluated. With information from a needs assessment and literature review a logic model was created. Followed by creating and distributing evaluations to mentees who participated in the program. The evaluation assesses knowledge, attitudes and behaviors with six quantitative and three qualitative questions. The quantitative questions were on 1-4 Likert scale with 1 being “not true at all” and 4 being “very true.”

**Results:** Mentees completed the evaluation with the results for the quantitative being between 3-4 showing the strong positive impact mentors make in the classroom. The qualitative questions demonstrated the positive impact mentors had in the classroom by helping them with themes on exploring and understanding. As well as showing the importance of learning and their future.

**Conclusion:** FGNP has not previously collected data on mentees. To better understand their needs and be able to support them academically the evaluations were distributed. This will then help increase persistence and graduation rates of the mentees supported.

## Survey for Community Health Workers and Others in Similar Roles

Guadalupe (Lupita) Nabor Vazquez

Preceptor: Shane Esmundo, DrPH

Site: Patient Navigation and Community Health Worker Training Program

**Background:** Community health workers and others in similar roles, such as peer support professionals, behavioral health qualified assistants, care coordinators, and health navigators, work as liaisons between communities and health services to facilitate care coordination through various forms. The objective was to develop a survey to assess workforce needs: support needs, advancement opportunities, and partnerships, with input from community health workers and others in similar roles in the process of the survey development.

**Methods:** The methods included a scan of competencies, certifications, and training requirements for community health workers and others in similar roles. The survey development was informed by literature, the compilation of validated survey instruments surrounding well-being and work environment, and stakeholder input. The survey was piloted amongst CHWs and others in similar roles to inform the survey development and receive feedback for survey revisions.

**Results:** The crosswalk findings informed the development of the survey by identifying competencies, work settings, skills, roles, responsibilities, and training pathways and programs across community health workers and similar roles. The pilot survey results incorporated stakeholder feedback to ensure the finalization of the survey and its questions were relevant to this workforce.

**Conclusion:** Overall, the survey development concerned the work environment of community health workers and similar roles' job satisfaction, role navigation, challenges, goals, and any other areas identified in Adams County. This survey will help guide public health interventions, policies, and workplace environments to promote and advance health equity, and center the voices of community health workers and others in similar roles.

# Expanding Access to Behavioral Health Care: Implementation Planning for the Weld County Mobile Unit

Sarah Jackson

Preceptor: Shaun May, MPH, CPM

Site: Weld County Department of Public Health and Environment

**Background:** Demand for behavioral health care is growing across the United States, yet limited access to early intervention and prevention means many behavioral health concerns go unaddressed. The purpose of this project was to develop a report to inform the implementation of a behavioral health navigation specialist embedded in the Weld County Mobile Unit (MU).

**Methods:** First, a literature review was conducted to understand the current landscape of behavioral health, focusing on best practices and barriers to care in mobile settings. To address gaps in perceptions of mental health among MU users, a survey to collect primary data was launched. The survey ran for 31 days, yielding 84 responses. Additionally, a mini-SWOT analysis from the navigator's perspective on integrating into MU, along with proposed methods to evaluate the services' effectiveness, completed the suggestions.

**Results:** Survey findings indicate that most mobile unit users view behavioral health services as helpful and are willing to use mental health screenings on the mobile unit, but they also report uncertainty about seeking care, illustrating how perceptions may affect the integration of the behavioral health navigator, such as cultural practices, religious beliefs, and family attitudes. The SWOT analysis identifies strengths such as community trust and reduced geographic barriers, as well as challenges including space constraints, workforce shortages, and sustainability concerns.

**Conclusions:** For the Weld County Department of Public Health and Environment, this service is an effective way to promote a holistic approach to health by improving the efficiency and effectiveness of health services for their patients.

# Growing Together: An Implementation Plan for Community-Centered Prenatal Care

Hannah Wilson

Preceptor: Shaun May

Site: Weld County Department of Public Health and Environment

**Background:** More than 50% of rural counties nationally do not have obstetric services. From 2007-2024, 22.5% of pregnant people did not receive prenatal care or initiated care after the first trimester in Weld County. The purpose of this project is to create an implementation plan for first trimester prenatal services at the Fort Lupton Public Health Clinic to improve access in rural Weld County.

**Methods:** Current prenatal services in Weld County was assessed, in addition to local and state data, and best practices based on national standards. Additionally, a SWOT analysis of the Public Health Clinic was conducted and key informant interview data was collected. Using this information, an implementation plan rooted in the Quadruple Aim model was created.

**Results:** This implementation plan consists of a mission and vision statement, the goals and related objectives, a logic model, the proposed services to be included, an estimated budget, a communication plan, and recommended evaluation methods. This plan was compiled into a presentation-ready report that can be distributed to Weld County administrators and leadership.

**Conclusions:** Prenatal services is an area of need in Weld County, and this implementation plan provides a roadmap for addressing this gap. This plan can also be used as a foundation for expansion to other clinics or to provide services throughout pregnancy. With this program implementation plan, Weld County can increase health equity among rural communities, reduce negative birth outcomes, and improve the health and wellbeing of babies, parents, and communities at large.

## **Making Medicaid Accessible for Members with Intellectual Disabilities and Their Support Systems**

Lauren Crowley

Preceptor: Lana Eggers MPH

Site: Health Care Policy and Financing

**Background:** Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) emphasize person-centered planning, yet individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDDs) are often excluded from direct communication during service planning. This project addresses gaps in case management practices, HCPF materials, and community resources by developing accessible health communication materials, promoting supported decision-making, and increasing participation among members with IDDs in their own care planning.

**Methods:** We conducted a gap analysis of existing resources for adults with IDDs transitioning from children to adult waiver programs. Best practices for communicating with individuals with intellectual disabilities and low literacy were identified through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). These standards were compared to current materials to identify deficiencies, which informed revisions to existing resources and the development of new materials.

**Results:** Best practices include the use of sight words, clear graphics, consistent and direct language, and larger font sizes. Materials should be designed specifically for people with IDDs rather than adapted from general resources. The gap analysis revealed a lack of tools supporting decision-making among individuals with IDDs. In response, we developed targeted materials for both individuals with IDDs and their Support Systems.

**Conclusions:** Existing Medicaid materials primarily target Support Systems, contributing to a knowledge gap for individuals with IDDs. By applying best practices and incorporating supported decision-making resources, we aim to improve engagement and confidence among individuals with IDDs in their service planning. Future evaluation will include feedback from users and stakeholders to assess effectiveness.