

Annual Public Health Conference

April 8th – 10th, 2026

Austin, Texas

[Downright Austin - Marriott Hotel](#)

“Texas Public Health Sustainability = Infrastructure & Innovation”

Wednesday, April 8, 2026

11:30am		Welcome Conference Attendees – <i>Registration Open</i>
1:00pm		<u>Public Health Development Sessions</u>
		<u>Davonna Koebrick, LMSW, RS</u> - <i>Food Safety Officer/Program Supervisor DSHS</i> Food-Related Illness, Outbreak and Hazards Response: Introduction to the Texas Rapid Response Team
		<u>Catherine Troisi, PhD, MS</u> – <i>Professor/UTHealth Houston School of Public Health</i> Best Practices for Public Health Workforce Development
		<u>Ken Janda, BA, JD</u> – <i>Principal/WildBlue Health Solutions, LLC</i> Navigating the Health Plan Landscape in Texas: Medicaid Managed Care, Medicare, Employers, and the ACA Marketplace
		<u>Ross Shergog, PhD</u> – <i>Professor/UTHealth School of Public Health</i> Online Decision Support to Implement Evidence-Based HPV Vaccination Strategies in Texas Safety-Net Pediatric Clinics: Impact on HPV, MCV, and Tdap Initiation
		<u>Alex Reed LMSW, MPH, CPH</u> <i>Division Manager – Community Health – Denton County Public Health</i> ; Chris Dunkin- Director FindHelp From Search to Support: Enhancing Access with Closed-Loop Referrals

		<p><u>Michael Mrazek, PhD</u> – Associate Professor/UTHealth School of Public Health</p> <p>Strengthening Youth Mental Health: Using Digital Innovation to Better Leverage Existing School Infrastructure</p>
		<p><u>Public Health Development Sessions</u></p>
2:15pm		<p><u>Judy Branham</u> - Manager Medical and Dental Benefits Policy Medicaid/CHIP Services - Texas Health & Human Services Commission</p> <p>Introduction to Texas Medicaid and CHIP and Provider Enrollment</p>
		<p><u>Stephanie McCoy, M.Ed</u> – Grant Evaluator/City of El Paso Department of Public Health</p> <p>Employee Voice as Infrastructure: A Data-Driven Approach to Workforce Sustainability</p>
		<p><u>AAaron Davis, MPA MBA</u> – Director, Center for Public Health Initiatives/Wichita State University</p> <p>Smarter, Faster, Better: Using Generative AI to Streamline Your Daily Work</p>
		<p><u>Deanna M. Hoelscher, PhD, RDN</u> - Regional Dean and John P. McGovern Professor of Health Promotion/ UTHealth School of Public Health</p> <p>Assessing Diet and Physical Activity in Texas Children: Use of Texas School Physical Activity and Nutrition (Texas SPAN) Resources and Data</p>
		<p><u>Adrian Escajeda, BA</u> - Public Information & Marketing Manager/Austin Public Health</p> <p>With Great Power, Comes the Power to Empower Fighting Media Fatigue</p>
		<p><u>Jessica Hyde, MS, CHES</u> – Director, Public Health Partner Advancement/DSHS</p> <p>Strengthening the Public Health Workforce Through Academic Public Health Partnerships</p>

Public Health Development Sessions		
3:30pm		<p><u>Leah Whigham, PhD</u> – <i>Professor/Ut Health School of Public Health</i> Primary Care Obesity Management Training-to-Practice (T2P) Program</p>
		<p>Panel: <u>Jennifer Deegan</u> <i>Vice President, Health Policy and Systems Strategy/UT Health School of Public Health</i> <u>Rosalia Guerrero</u>, <i>UTH</i> and <u>Amy McGuire</u>, <i>BCM</i> Building Trust in Wastewater Data: Governance, Access, and Public Health Practice</p>
		<p><u>Sara Mendez, DrPH</u> – <i>Assistant Director, Public Health Practice/Texas A&M School of Public Health</i> Building the Pipeline: Cultivating the Future Public Health Workforce Through Youth Engagement</p>
		<p><u>Shelby Flores-Thorpe, PhD, MEd</u> - <i>Postdoctoral Fellow/ UTHealth Houston School of Public Health in Austin, NCI Cancer Control Research Training Program</i> Developing and Using Resource Reports to Support Public Health Infrastructure and Support Evidence-Informed Policymaking</p>
		<p><u>Stephen Kelder, PhD, MPH</u> – <i>Professor of Epidemiology/UTHealth Houston School of Public Health</i> CATCH: Pre-K to High School Preventive Health Programs – Early roots in Texas to International Dissemination</p>
		<p><u>Kara Hill, DHCA, MHA, BSSW</u> - <i>Consultant/Wild Blue Health Solutions, LLC.</i> Public Health and Payment: How Medicare, Medicaid, and Quality Metrics Can Support Local Health Departments</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Have A Wonderful Evening – <i>Dinner On Your Own</i></p>		

Thursday, April 9, 2026

7:00am		<u>Breakfast</u>
7:30am		Welcome Conference Attendees - Registration Open
		<u>Conference Opening Remarks</u>
8:30am		<u>Adrienne Sturup, MPA</u> – Director/Austin Public Health- TACCHO President Austin Convention & Visitors Bureau
		<u>National Public Health Perspective</u>
9:00am		<u>Lori Freeman, MBA</u> - CEO/National Association of County & City Health Officials (NACCHO) <u>Damon Chaplin, MBA</u> – Director Local Public Health Initiatives/Massachusetts Dept of Public Health – NACCHO President
		<u>State Public Health Perspective</u>
		<u>Jennifer Shuford, MD</u> - Commissioner/Texas Department of State Health Services Texas Public Health: Working Today for a Stronger Tomorrow
10:15am		<u>Break</u>
		<u>Local Health Department Sharing Session</u>
10:30am		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <u>Scott Jeansonne, MELP</u> – Director Env Public Health/Harris County Public Health New Texas Legislation in Food Safety/Environmental Public Health 2) <u>LaNiece Blue, BS</u> – Bureau Chief Immunizations/ Houston Health Department Trust is the infrastructure: A Nurse-Led Model for Vaccination Access During Fiscal Austerity

		<p>3) <u>Connie McCracken, BA</u> – <i>Marketing Representative & Language Access Lead/Austin Public Health</i></p> <p>The Messaging Enchilada – Recipe for a Sustainable Public Health Communications Infrastructure</p>
12:00pm		<u>Lunch</u>
		<u>TACCHO 2026 Public Health Awards</u>
		<u>Plenary Session 1</u>
1:30pm		<p><u>AAaron Davis, MPA MBA</u> – <i>Director, Center for Public Health Initiatives/Wichita State University</i></p> <p>AI in Public Health: From Policy to Practice in Texas and Beyond</p>
1:30pm		<u>Optional - Public Health Development Sessions</u>
		<p>1) <u>Courtney Standlee, BS, MPH, PhD</u> – <i>Director of Mosquito and Vector Control Division/Harris County Public</i></p> <p>Sixty Years, One Mission: Protecting Harris County from Vector-Borne Disease</p>
		<p>2) <u>Christine Reyes, CHW, MBA, PhD-C</u> - <i>Special Project Manager/Corpus Christi-Nueces County Public Health District</i></p> <p>Coordinating the Front Line: Public Health Leadership in Opioid Prevention and Response</p>
		<p>3) <u>Rachel Herrera, BS</u> – <i>Mental Health Navigator/Denton County Public Health</i></p> <p>One Warm Handoff Away: A Replicable Model for Health Department-Led Mental Health Navigation</p>
2:30pm		<u>Break</u>

2:45pm		<u>Local Health Department Sharing Session</u>
		<p>1) <u>Kelsey Espinoza, MSW</u> – <i>Case Manager/Dallas County Health and Human Services</i> A Community-Based EMS–Social Work Model</p> <p>2) <u>Jen Samp, BA</u> – <i>Public Information & Marketing Manager/Austin Public Health</i> Move Your Way: Sustaining Community Health Campaigns When Funding Isn’t Fun</p> <p>3) <u>Becci Hannigan, RN, MSN, Ed.</u> – <i>Chief Nurse of Immunizations/Houston Health Department</i> From Hesitancy to High Performance: The Case for Immunization Provider Certification</p>
		<u>Optional – Public Health Development Session</u>
3:00pm		<p><u>AAron Davis, MPA MBA</u> – <i>Director, Center for Public Health Initiatives/Wichita State University</i></p> <p>Write Grants, Not Garbage: Using AI to Elevate Your Applications (Without Getting Disqualified)</p>
5:15pm – 7:00pm		TACCHO Public Health Conference <i>Exhibitor Review & Networking Event</i>
<i>Join us for beverages and gourmet snacks in the Lobby</i>		

Friday, April 10, 2026

7:30am		<u>Breakfast</u>
		<u>Opening Remarks</u> <u>Conference Recap and Poster Awards</u>
		<u>Local Health Department Sharing Sessions</u>
9:15am		<p>1) <u>Terrance Ates, MEd</u> – <i>Public Information Officer, Director Community Wellness/ Northeast Texas Public Health District</i> NET Health + TXPAN + THBB = Improved Early Childhood Health Outcomes</p> <p>2) <u>Natalie Goodnow, MFA</u> – <i>Training Specialist Senior/Austin Public Health</i> The Public Health Academy: Innovative Approaches to Sustain Crucial Conversations</p> <p>3) <u>Makalya Emmons, BSN</u> – <i>Community Health Nurse/Chambers County Public Health</i> Reality Check: Building Community by Addressing Social Determinants of Health in High School Seniors</p>
		<u>Plenary Session 2</u>
10:15am		<u>Meredith Suntich</u> , Senior Vice President and Senior Partner, Texas Corporate Affairs/ Fleishman Hilliard 360° Readiness: Communications Strategies for Crisis-Ready Public Health Officials
11:30am		<u>Conference Ends</u>
Thank You For Your Dedicated Public Health Service ! Safe Travels		