



# APACHE COUNTY

## Public Health Services District

### ANNUAL REPORT TO THE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS Calendar Year 2025

Pursuant to A.R.S. § 36-186, the Director of the Apache County Public Health Services District is required to submit an annual report to the Apache County Board of Supervisors regarding the health and well-being of county residents. This report provides an overview of reportable diseases, departmental expenditures, and professional recommendations, ensuring the board remains informed of matters affecting the general health and welfare of Apache County constituents.

Overall, Apache County residents remained in generally good health throughout 2025. COVID-19 infection rates continued to decline, consistent with trends identified in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's COVID-19 epidemic trend model, and other communicable disease outbreaks were minimal during the year.

Despite these positive indicators, several ongoing challenges remain. Access to health care and adequate sanitation remains an ongoing concern for some residents. The limited availability of hospital services within the county requires many individuals to travel considerable distances to obtain hospital or clinical care. In certain cases, this can result in delays or gaps in treatment, which may negatively affect overall health outcomes.

The Health District continues to prioritize education and the promotion of healthy lifestyles. The Clinical Services Division provided vaccinations, phlebotomy services, and health education delivered by licensed nursing staff. The District also administered a comprehensive range of immunizations to both pediatric and adult populations. Additionally, youth-focused programming were offered to support informed decision-making related to personal health, wellness, and nutrition.

The district's home visitation program continued to serve expectant mothers and families with newborns. Through this program, families receive education and support related to prenatal preparation, infant care, proper childhood nutrition, and strategies to encourage healthy physical and cognitive development.

Environmental Health Services maintained oversight of local bars, restaurants, hotels, motels, and other regulated food establishments throughout Apache County to ensure compliance with applicable health and safety standards. The district also supported residential and commercial development by assisting property owners with wastewater septic system and well installation permitting and inspections. In addition, Environmental Health staff responded to complaints concerning waste disposal and other environmental conditions that could adversely affect public health and environmental quality.

The Health District also continued to expand its community outreach and public communication efforts. Regular public health updates, educational information, and service announcements were shared with residents through the district's Public Health Facebook page, Instagram and other communication channels. In addition, the district utilized its electronic messaging signs located in Springerville and St. Johns to provide timely health reminders, public safety information, and notifications regarding available services and community health initiatives.

## HIGHLIGHTS

The following highlights provide a snapshot of notable activities and accomplishments over the past year. While the health district saw success across all our programs, these represent work and dedication from our team that have had major impacts to our work in the community.

- The Environmental Division was awarded the VESP award from The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) for demonstrating measurable leadership in environmental protection, sustainability, and community engagement.
- The District successfully trained four additional staff members as Certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians (CCPST), increasing our CCPST team to 7 members, and expanding our capacity to serve the community. This increase allows for multiple certified technicians at each of our 3 locations, improving access to services and strengthening our ability to reach more families.
- For the first time in several years, our initiatives in youth anti-tobacco programming resulted in supplying youth representatives from our county to the Arizona Attorney General's Office and their Counter Strike program for tobacco retailer inspections and enforcement.
- In partnership with Alpine Elementary, our Battle of the Belt program saw tremendous success in offering passenger safety education and programming. Over the course of the school year the program saw steady growth, culminating in 100% of passengers buckled up at the final surprise seat belt check.
- The District completed the installation of an electronic messaging sign in St. Johns, near our St Johns Health Clinic, to improve communication with residents and visitors about programming, health advisories, community events and other services available.

## REPORTABLE DISEASES IN APACHE COUNTY VS. STATE OF ARIZONA

The following information reported on specific diseases below is based on these specific diseases rates of occurrence, their character, and their overall impact on county residents throughout 2025.

Data Source: Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS)

<https://www.azdhs.gov/documents/preparedness/epidemiology-disease-control/disease-data-statistics-reports/data-statistics-archive/2025/yearly.pdf?v=20261015>

Data Source: Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS), MEDSIS—Medical Electronic Disease Surveillance Intelligence System, disease surveillance database.

**SUMMARY OF SELECTED REPORTABLE DISEASES**  
**January–December 2025**

Disease	Apache County	State Total
Amebiasis	0	15
Campylobacteriosis	1	1,576
Carbapenem-Resistant Enterobacterales (CRE)	5	2,252
Coccidioidomycosis	35	12,423
Dengue	0	38
E. Coli, Shiga Toxin-Producing	2	395
Giardiasis	5	149
H.Flu B All Ages	0	1
Hantavirus Infection	4	6
Hepatitis B Acute	3	41
Legionellosis	3	189
Meningococcal Invasive Disease	0	16
MRSA	11	1,692
Mumps	0	4
Pertussis	8	992
Salmonellosis	13	1,125
Shigellosis	2	532
Streptococcus pneumoniae, Invasive	36	1,157
Vibrio Infection	0	74
West Nile virus	3	66

**Amebiasis:** An intestinal infection caused by the parasite *Entamoeba histolytica* (E. histolytica). It can lead to symptoms such as diarrhea, abdominal pain, and cramping. The infection is typically spread through the ingestion of food or water contaminated with fecal matter or through fecal-oral contact. Although approximately 80–90% of infected individuals remain asymptomatic, some cases progress to severe illness known as amoebic dysentery. The risk of infection is higher in regions with inadequate sanitation, particularly in tropical areas. Treatment generally involves prescription antibiotics, most commonly metronidazole.

**Campylobacteriosis:** Causes diarrheal illness in humans and may also produce symptoms such as abdominal pain, malaise, fever, nausea, vomiting, and occasionally bloody stools. The bacteria are commonly carried by cattle but can also be found in sheep, cats, swine, and dogs. Infection is most often foodborne and associated with the consumption of raw or undercooked foods. It may also be transmitted through contaminated water sources that have come into contact with raw meat or animal waste.

**Carbapenem-resistant Enterobacteriaceae (CRE):** A group of bacteria, including *Escherichia coli* (E. coli) and *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, that are highly resistant to carbapenem antibiotics. These organisms are often referred to as “superbugs” because they can cause severe, difficult-to-treat infections that may be life-threatening.

Carbapenem-resistant Enterobacterales (CRE) most commonly cause pneumonia, bloodstream infections, and urinary tract infections. They primarily spread in healthcare settings through contaminated medical equipment or the hands of healthcare workers. Patients who require devices such as ventilators, catheters, or intravenous lines are at increased risk of infection.

**Coccidioidomycosis:** Valley Fever is a fungal infection caused by inhaling spores of *Coccidioides*, a fungus commonly found in the soil of the southwestern United States. Symptoms may include fatigue, cough, fever, headaches, night sweats, muscle or joint pain, and sometimes a rash on the upper body or legs. Infection occurs when soil containing the fungal spores becomes airborne and is inhaled.

**Dengue:** A viral infection transmitted by *Aedes* mosquitoes that causes high fever, severe headache, pain behind the eyes, joint and muscle aches, and a rash. Because of the intense joint and muscle pain it can cause, it is often referred to as “break-bone fever.” Symptoms typically begin 3–14 days after an infected mosquito bite and usually last about 4–7 days.

**E. coli, Shiga Toxin-Producing:** *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) is a bacterium that normally lives in the intestines of humans and is also found in the digestive tracts of some animals. Certain strains can cause illness in people, leading to symptoms such as abdominal cramps, vomiting, diarrhea, and in some cases, bloody diarrhea. Infection is most commonly contracted through the consumption of contaminated food or water.

**Giardiasis:** A common intestinal illness caused by the parasite *Giardia*. Infection may result in symptoms such as diarrhea, stomach cramps, bloating, and nausea. The parasite spreads through contaminated water, food, or surfaces, and through contact with an infected person. Giardiasis is typically treated with prescription antimicrobial medications.

**Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib):** A serious bacterial infection that most commonly affects children under five years of age and can lead to conditions such as meningitis and pneumonia. It spreads through respiratory droplets from coughing or sneezing. Symptoms may include high fever, headache, and a stiff neck. Vaccination is the most effective form of prevention and is typically administered at 2, 4, 6, and 12–15 months of age.

**Hantavirus Infection:** Hantavirus is a virus that can cause serious illness in humans. Infection typically occurs through contact with rodents—particularly deer mice—or exposure to their urine, droppings, or saliva when contaminated particles become airborne and are inhaled. In rare cases, transmission may occur through a rodent bite or scratch. In the United States, hantavirus can lead to Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS), a severe disease that primarily affects the lungs.

Symptoms usually develop 1–8 weeks after exposure and often begin with fatigue, fever, and muscle aches, especially in the thighs, hips, and back. Early symptoms may also include headaches, dizziness, chills, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and abdominal pain. Within a few days, the illness can progress to severe respiratory symptoms, including coughing and shortness of breath as fluid accumulates in the lungs. HPS is life-threatening, with a mortality rate of approximately 38% among patients who develop respiratory symptoms, making early medical care critical.

**Hepatitis B Acute:** A short-term, acute liver infection caused by the hepatitis B virus (HBV) that typically lasts less than six months. The virus is transmitted through contact with infected blood, semen, or other bodily fluids, most commonly through sexual contact, sharing needles, or from mother to child during birth. Symptoms may include fever, fatigue, abdominal pain, and jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes), although some individuals may not experience noticeable symptoms.

**Legionellosis:** Legionnaires' disease is a serious form of pneumonia caused by infection with *Legionella* bacteria. Symptoms may include high fever, cough, shortness of breath, diarrhea, and confusion. The illness is typically contracted by inhaling water droplets containing the bacteria, often from contaminated water systems in large buildings such as hospitals, hotels, or cooling towers. Legionnaires' disease can be severe and may be life-threatening, particularly for older adults or individuals with weakened immune systems.

**Meningococcal invasive disease (IMD: )** A severe and rapidly progressing infection caused by *Neisseria meningitidis* bacteria that can lead to meningitis, bloodstream infection (septicemia), or pneumonia. The disease spreads through respiratory droplets and close contact and is considered a medical emergency. It has a fatality rate of approximately 10–15%, and death can occur within hours if not treated promptly. Among survivors, about one in five may experience long-term complications such as limb loss, hearing loss, or brain damage.

**MRSA (Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus), invasive:** Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) is a strain of Staphylococcus bacteria that is resistant to several commonly used antibiotics. MRSA can spread in the community through direct contact with an infected person or by touching contaminated objects or surfaces. Transmission often occurs through contact with infected wounds or by sharing personal items such as towels, razors, or other objects that come into contact with the skin.

Symptoms vary depending on the site of infection. Skin infections are most common and may cause redness, swelling, warmth, pain, and drainage at the affected area. More serious infections can occur if the bacteria spread to other parts of the body. Treatment depends on the severity of the infection and may include antibiotics and, in some cases, isolation precautions in healthcare settings to prevent further spread.

**Mumps:** A contagious viral illness that causes painful swelling of the salivary glands (parotitis), along with symptoms such as fever, headache, muscle aches, fatigue, and loss of appetite. The illness typically lasts about two weeks. Mumps spreads through respiratory droplets or direct contact with saliva from an infected person. Vaccination with the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine is the most effective method of prevention. Although most cases are mild, complications can occur and may include meningitis, orchitis (inflammation of the testicles), or hearing loss.

**Pertussis:** Whooping cough, also known as the “100-day cough,” is a highly contagious respiratory infection characterized by severe coughing fits that may be followed by a high-pitched “whoop” sound when breathing in. Pertussis can affect people of all ages but is most severe in infants and young children.

The illness typically progresses through three stages: an initial stage with mild cold-like symptoms, a stage marked by intense coughing fits, and a gradual recovery period. Antibiotics can help prevent the infection from spreading to others and may reduce the severity of symptoms if given early.

**Salmonellosis:** Causes illness characterized by diarrhea, stomach cramps, and fever. While most infections affect the intestinal tract, certain strains can spread beyond the intestines and cause infections in the bloodstream, bones, urinary tract, or nervous system. In some cases, the disease can become severe. People are most commonly infected by consuming contaminated food or water. Infection can also occur through contact with infected animals, their feces, or contaminated environments.

**Shigellosis:** A bacterial infection that can cause symptoms such as abdominal pain, fever, dehydration, vomiting, diarrhea, tenesmus (a frequent urge to pass stool), and bloody or mucus-containing stools. Infection typically occurs through the ingestion of contaminated food or water via the fecal-oral route. The disease is more common in areas with poor sanitation and limited access to clean water.

**Streptococcus pneumoniae, invasive:** A bacterium that is a common inhabitant of the respiratory tract and causes pneumonia respiratory infections. Symptoms include chest pain when breathing deeply, a cough, difficulty breathing, an elevated heart rate, and elevated respiration rates. This can lead to low oxygen saturations, sepsis, and death.

**Vibrio infection:** *Vibrio vulnificus* is a bacterium that can cause severe, potentially fatal infections. Exposure typically occurs through eating raw or undercooked shellfish—especially oysters—or through open wounds exposed to contaminated warm, brackish water. Symptoms can progress rapidly and include fever, low blood pressure, severe skin infections with blistering, and sepsis. Prompt medical attention is critical due to the rapid and life-threatening nature of the infection.

**West Nile Virus:** The leading mosquito-borne disease in the United States, West Nile virus (WNV) is transmitted to people through the bite of an infected mosquito. Most infections occur during mosquito season, typically from summer through fall. While most do not develop symptoms, others may experience fever, headache, body aches, or fatigue. In rare cases, the infection can lead to severe illness affecting the nervous system and may be fatal. Preventive measures include using insect repellent, wearing long sleeves and pants, and taking steps to avoid mosquito bites.

## 2025 HEALTH DISTRICT SERVICES

### CLINICAL SERVICES

#### Immunization Program

During 2025, the Health District continued to provide a wide range of immunizations to both children and adults in Apache County. Vaccines offered included Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, Meningococcal ACWY, Meningococcal B, MMR, Varicella, Polio, Rotavirus, HPV, Tdap, DTaP, and Typhoid. Seasonal respiratory vaccinations, including Influenza, Pneumonia, RSV, and the

COVID-19 booster, were administered at both health clinics as well as through vaccination Points of Distribution (PODs) held throughout the fall.

The Clinical Services team also offered drive-through vaccination services at POD locations. These events helped increase vaccine accessibility for residents and county employees, particularly those living in rural areas or far from clinic locations. PODs were conducted in Chinle, Ganado, Sanders, St. Johns, Springerville, Greer, Concho, Vernon, and Alpine.

Both the St. Johns and Round Valley health clinics operated Monday through Thursday from 6:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Walk-ins were accepted, though appointments were strongly encouraged to help ensure efficient service delivery.

### **COVID-19 Update**

In 2025, public health guidance for COVID-19 continued transitioning from pandemic emergency response to routine respiratory disease management. Updated COVID-19 vaccines were released to better match circulating variants, and vaccination remains strongly recommended for individuals at higher risk of severe illness, including older adults and those with underlying health conditions.

Current guidance advises individuals with COVID-19 to stay home while symptomatic and return to normal activities once symptoms are improving and they have been fever-free for at least 24 hours without medication. Continued prevention strategies include staying up to date on recommended vaccinations, practicing good hand hygiene, improving indoor ventilation, and taking precautions such as masking when respiratory illnesses are circulating or when around high-risk individuals.

### **Family Planning Program**

Health District clinical staff continued to provide essential women's health services to individuals who were uninsured or underinsured throughout Apache County. Through the Family Planning Program, patients were offered comprehensive preventive and reproductive health services designed to support early detection, education, and access to care. Services included initial and annual well-woman exams, Pap smears, sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing, pregnancy testing, rapid HIV testing, urinalysis, clinical breast exams, and counseling and access to a variety of birth control methods. These services played an important role in promoting preventive care, improving health outcomes, and ensuring that women in rural and underserved areas have access to critical healthcare services.

The Health District initiated efforts to establish a partnership with White Mountain Regional Medical Center to expand access to transvaginal ultrasound services for patients requiring additional diagnostic evaluation. This will support further evaluation of gynecological concerns identified during clinical exams, such as abnormal bleeding, pelvic pain, or suspected reproductive health conditions. This partnership helps improve access to timely diagnostic imaging for residents of Apache County and reduces the need for patients to travel long distances to receive specialized care. The health district also began partnering with WMRMC for mammogram referrals. They contract with Assured Imaging who brings a mammography unit to their hospital three times a year, giving our patients the opportunity to receive much-needed breast diagnostic services locally.

## **Tuberculosis Control Program**

Health District clinical staff continued to provide tuberculosis (TB) prevention, screening, and education services to protect the health of the community. TB control efforts focus on early detection, monitoring, and treatment to prevent the spread of the disease and reduce the risk of serious illness. In 2025, no cases of latent or active tuberculosis were identified among clients served by the Health District.

Clinical staff worked closely with community partners, including local healthcare providers, schools, and other organizations, to increase awareness of TB prevention and screening services available through the Health District. Tuberculosis skin testing (PPD) was offered to Apache County residents to support employment requirements, school programs, and routine public health screening. These tests were provided at a cost of \$10 per test, helping ensure that affordable TB screening services remained accessible to residents throughout the county.

## **EDUCATIONAL SERVICES**

### **Health Start Program**

The Health Start Program is a family-centered home visitation program serving pregnant and postpartum women, as well as caregivers, fathers, and foster parents of children from birth to age two in southern Apache County. The program promotes healthy pregnancies, supports positive parenting, and encourages early childhood development during the first two years of life.

Trained staff provide health education, developmental guidance, and connections to healthcare providers and community resources. They also deliver education through the Family Spirit Program, using curriculum tailored to each family's needs. Staff meet families where they are, providing support in a respectful, non-judgmental way while honoring diverse cultures and experiences. All visits are face-to-face, conducted in clients' homes, at the Health District office, or at convenient community locations such as parks and libraries.

In 2025, the Arizona Department of Health Services implemented major updates to the Health Start Program, including a new program director and revised policies, procedures, and service delivery expectations. Health District staff adapted to these changes while continuing consistent support and outreach to families.

Staff also prepared and submitted an application for the 2025–2030 Health Start grant. The process included reviewing updated requirements, evaluating program performance, and developing goals, service strategies, and measurable outcomes that reflect the needs of families in southern Apache County. Securing continued funding is essential to maintaining these critical home visitation services that support healthy pregnancies, early childhood development, and access to healthcare and community resources. The health district was awarded \$140,000 for the use of supporting salaries, employee related expenses, and program operations during July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026.

### **Tobacco Program**

Apache County Public Health addresses tobacco and nicotine use through a comprehensive approach focused on prevention, enforcement, and cessation. Supported by state grant

funding, through the Healthy People Healthy Communities (HPHC) grant, these efforts reduce youth access to tobacco products, expand cessation support, and strengthen partnerships with schools, courts, and community organizations to improve health outcomes across Apache County. In 2025, the health district was awarded \$272,048 from July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026. These funds cover salaries, employee related expenses, travel and program operation costs.

### **Youth Prevention and Leadership Development**

The Health District continued strengthening youth tobacco prevention efforts by expanding student engagement and leadership opportunities within local schools. The department supported school-based prevention initiatives, including youth coalitions that encourage students to promote tobacco-free lifestyles and educate their peers about the health risks associated with nicotine and tobacco use. These coalitions provide students with opportunities to participate in prevention campaigns, discussions, and community outreach while building leadership skills and a sense of responsibility for the health of their communities.

### **Youth Cessation Support**

Recognizing that many schools are seeing increased nicotine use among students, the health district received special provision from ADHS to begin exploring a pilot program for a youth cessation program. Apache County is currently the only county in the state working on this and is laying groundwork for other counties to implement such programs across the state. Program staff worked with school and community partners to begin developing targeted cessation programming specifically for youth. These efforts are designed to provide students who are already using nicotine products with supportive, education-based options to help them quit. Rather than relying solely on disciplinary approaches, the program focuses on helping young people understand nicotine addiction, build coping strategies, and access resources that support long-term behavior change. This initiative will help communities address youth nicotine use with solutions that prioritize education, accountability, and recovery.

### **Retailer Compliance and Community Enforcement Partnerships**

Reducing youth access to tobacco products remains a critical component of prevention. The Health District strengthened partnerships with the Arizona Attorney General's Office and federal enforcement partners to support tobacco retailer compliance inspections across the county. Through these efforts, youth volunteers from Apache County were recruited and participated in compliance inspections for the first time in several years. These youth volunteers helped with inspections in May, resulting in 3 citations, and in November which resulted in no citations. In addition, coordination with local justice courts supported the use of the Arizona Retailer Tobacco Training Diversion Program, which provides education and accountability for retailers who violate tobacco sales laws and receive citations because of these youth-assisted inspections.

### **Cessation Support for Justice-Involved Individuals**

The Health District also expanded cessation support for justice-involved individuals through partnerships that connect individuals in the local detention system with education and resources to support quitting tobacco. Because local detention facilities provide a tobacco-free environment, they offer a unique opportunity for individuals to begin addressing nicotine dependence. The program works with detention staff and community partners to provide

education and cessation resources that help individuals take advantage of this environment and begin their cessation journey. By supporting individuals during this transition period, the program helps reduce long-term tobacco use and promotes healthier outcomes for individuals and families across Apache County.

### **Health in Arizona Policy Initiative (HAPI)**

The Health in Arizona Policy Initiative (HAPI) program was awarded midway through the year. This is part of the HPHC grant, and the health district received a \$53,469.45 for the funding of salaries, employee related expenses, and program expenses during the period of July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026. Through this initiative the Health District will work to expand workplace wellness and health policy efforts across the county by partnering with local employers to promote healthier environments for employees and their families. Another key component of the initiative includes the county's WIC program identifying opportunities to support families, parents, and caregivers through collaboration with local grocery stores for better access and use of WIC approved foods.

### **Maternal Child Health**

Maternal and Child Health (MCH) programs continued expanding services, education, and community partnerships aimed at improving outcomes for women, infants, and children across Apache County. Efforts included child passenger safety education, car seat inspections, emergency identification stickers, and the distribution of car seats to families in need. These initiatives were supported through community events, targeted outreach, and partnerships with local law enforcement, fire departments, schools, and healthcare providers. Staff also prioritized additional training and certification to increase the number of certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians and expand access to services across the county.

Funding for these initiatives is provided through two grants, the MCH grant and the Governor's Office of Highway Safety (GOHS) grant. The health district signed a new 5-year contract for the MCH grant for July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2030 for an annual award of \$91,587. These funds cover salaries, employee related expenses, travel and program operation costs. The GOHS grant is awarded on an annual basis. For the October 1, 2024-September 30, 2025 grand period, the Health District received \$20,667 to support Child Passenger Safety initiatives, primarily through the purchase and distribution of car seats to community members.

According to data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Fatality Analysis Reporting System (NHTSA FARS), Apache County experienced 23 motor vehicle crash fatalities among youth ages 0–18 between 2010 and 2023. When examined on a per-capita basis, the fatality rate in Apache County was more than three times higher than Arizona's statewide rate.

The Health District provided education and outreach throughout surrounding communities. Certified technicians hosted quarterly car seat check events, offering hands-on instruction for families and caregivers. If a car seat was expired, damaged, or inappropriate for the child's size or age, a replacement seat was provided and instruction on proper installation was given. Strong partnerships were maintained with community organizations, including Nahata'Dziil Health Center, local fire departments, and neighboring counties to support child safety initiatives.

Apache County Public Health partnered with Alpine Elementary to implement the Battle of the Belt program, a school-based initiative focused on improving seat belt use through education and student engagement. Students participated in peer-led campaigns and awareness efforts designed to promote safe behaviors among their classmates and families. The program demonstrated exceptional success, culminating in a final surprise seat belt check that showed 100% of observed passengers were properly buckled.

Staff also delivered evidence-based education on Sudden Unexplained Infant Death Syndrome (SUIDS) and safe sleep practices for infants up to one year of age. Education was provided through home visitation staff and other programs serving pregnant and postpartum women. Families lacking a safe sleep environment received a portable crib (Pack 'n Play) and a Safe Sleep supply bag containing a fitted sheet, pacifier, sleep sack, and educational materials for caregivers.

Injury Prevention events occurred at the following locations:

- Sanders Bashes’ Diné Market
- Round Valley Head Start
- New Covenant Church in St. Johns
- St. Johns Head Start
- Concho Elementary
- Apache County Fair

The table below highlights the distribution of injury prevention resources and the District’s efforts to improve community safety.

**2025 Injury Prevention  
Distributed Services**

Service	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter	Total
Car Seats	15	70	21	38	144
Inspections Only	11	48	11	9	79
Roth ID Tag	23	102	59	41	225
Health Start Funds	1	0	1	0	2
Ticket Deferral	4	0	0	1	5
CPS Tech Trained	0	4	0	0	4
Portable Cribs	3	5	7	2	17

**Public Health Improvement (PHI)**

The Public Health Improvement (PHI) grant was awarded to the Health District midway through 2025 and provides new opportunities to strengthen how data is used in public health planning, decision-making, and community engagement. Through this funding, the district is building staff capacity in data analysis and visualization by implementing the MySidewalk platform and participating in related training. The health district was awarded \$48,799 for the use of salaries, employee related expenses, and program operation costs during the period of July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026.

MySidewalk allows the district to create interactive data dashboards and community health data stories that highlight important issues affecting county residents. The platform makes it possible to analyze and present health and demographic data at a more detailed and local level than was previously available. By improving access to meaningful data and strengthening staff skills in data interpretation, the district is working to build a stronger data-driven approach to public health.

**Women, Infant, Children (WIC)**

The Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program is a federally funded nutrition and health program administered through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The program provides vital support to eligible pregnant women, breastfeeding and postpartum women, infants, and children up to age five. Through WIC, eligible Arizona residents receive a variety of services at no cost, including access to nutrition education, healthy foods, and referrals to additional health and social services.

WIC also offers breastfeeding education, encouragement, and support, along with resources to help mothers successfully initiate and continue breastfeeding. In addition, the program connects families to other community services and provides benefits that help participants purchase nutritious foods that support healthy growth and development.

The Apache WIC program continued its partnership with the Epiphany Project to provide high-risk nutrition appointments and access to lactation consultant services for participants who require specialized breastfeeding support. Additionally, the program began working with the Pima County Health Department to offer Breastfeeding Peer Counseling for mothers who need additional encouragement and support during their breastfeeding journey.

In 2025, the Arizona WIC Program within the Southwest region continued efforts to increase program participation and maintain caseload levels within the funding allocation for the region. As a result, annual funding increased from approximately \$97,808 to \$108,152 following a mid-year amendment in June. The program was also approved for a significant funding increase to \$175,974 for the 2025–2030 WIC grant cycle, allowing the Health District to expand services and continue supporting the nutritional health of women, infants, and young children in Apache County.

The table below represents the distribution of services provided through the Apache County WIC Program during 2025.

**2025 Apache WIC  
Distribution of Services**

Service	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter	Total
Certification (new enrollment)	91	121	109	74	395
Nutrition Education	167	147	119	100	533
Mid-Certification	81	84	66	54	285
Breastfeeding Assessment	3	2	9	2	16
Women	50	64	58	36	208
Infant	39	80	57	34	210
Children	157	211	173	163	704

## **ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES**

### **The VESP Award**

The VESP Award is a recognition granted by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) through its Voluntary Environmental Stewardship Program (VESP). This statewide initiative recognizes organizations that go beyond basic environmental compliance and demonstrate measurable leadership in environmental protection, sustainability, and community engagement. The program also encourages participating organizations to promote STEM-related career awareness among local high school students.

Participants are evaluated based on performance metrics, environmental improvements, and long-term sustainability commitments. For a public health district or county agency, receiving this recognition reflects a strong commitment to protecting environmental quality and community health, while reinforcing public trust and responsible stewardship of public resources.

When the Apache County Summer Intern Program resumed in the summer of 2023, the Apache County Public Health Services District eagerly participated by assigning our interns to the Environmental Health Division. Leadership recognized this as a valuable opportunity not only for interns to contribute meaningfully to our work, but also to introduce them to important public health and environmental careers that may influence their future professional paths.

Interns assisted staff with a variety of field activities, including wastewater system inspections, code enforcement efforts, and monitoring compliance among regulated food establishments. These hands-on experiences provided students with practical exposure to environmental health practices while supporting the division's ongoing regulatory responsibilities.

In addition to field work, interns played a critical role in a major internal modernization effort. Following the corruption of the District's legacy Blackbear database, the Environmental Health Division began a multi-year, three-phase project to digitize all parcel records in preparation for a system-wide data migration. Interns were trained to review and interpret older, and in many cases antiquated, paper records in order to extract key information and create accurate digital files within the District's new data management system. Their contributions significantly advanced the digitization process and helped establish a more efficient and accessible recordkeeping system for future environmental health operations.

The Environmental Division would like to recognize the staff members who dedicated their time and expertise to training and mentoring interns across a variety of program areas. Through their guidance and willingness to share their knowledge, these team members helped provide meaningful, hands-on learning experiences that support the development of future public health professionals. Those recognized for their commitment to mentoring include Michael Madrid—RS and Environmental Division Manager, Scott Yarosh—Compliance Officer, Sarah Poe—Food Compliance Officer, and Monica Orona—Office Manager. Their support and leadership play an important role in strengthening both the Environmental Division and the next generation of professionals entering the field.



Pictured from left to right: Mannie Bowler–ADEQ Delegation Agreement Liaison, Kimberly Cole–Health Director, Monica Orona–Office Manager, Sarah Poe–Food Compliance Officer, Dr. Joe Shirley, Jr.–District 1 Supervisor & Board Vice Chairman, Alton Joe Shepherd–District 2 Supervisor & Board Chairman, Nelson Davis–District 3 Supervisor & Board Member, Michael Madrid–Registered Sanitarian & Environmental Division Manager, Scott Yarosh–Wastewater & Compliance Officer

### **Inspections & Licenses**

The Environmental Health Division conducted a variety of regulatory and public health activities throughout 2025 to protect the health and safety of Apache County residents. Staff inspected and issued permits for onsite wastewater (septic) systems, conducted routine and follow-up inspections of food establishments, provided food handler education and certification, investigated environmental health compliance complaints, and responded to vector control concerns reported by county residents and state partners.

The division’s primary goals for 2025 were to maintain consistent and uniform regulatory processes while fostering positive and collaborative relationships with residents, local businesses, and community partners. By providing education, guidance, and timely inspections, Environmental Health staff worked to support compliance with public health regulations and promote safe environmental conditions throughout the county.

### **Smoke-Free AZ**

Environmental Health staff continued outreach efforts with local businesses to ensure awareness and compliance with the Smoke-Free Arizona Act. Staff visited retail establishments throughout the county to provide education on the law’s requirements, answer questions from business owners and employees, and distribute required signage and informational materials. These visits helped reinforce the importance of maintaining smoke-free environments and ensured that businesses understood their responsibilities under the law.

In 2025, Apache County received zero complaints related to violations of the Smoke-Free Arizona Act, and therefore no formal investigations were required. This reflects the continued

cooperation of local businesses and the effectiveness of proactive education efforts. Statewide data also indicates that smoking-related complaints have continued to decline, suggesting that ongoing public health education and enforcement efforts are having a positive impact both across Arizona and within Apache County.

**GENERAL HEALTH**

**Vital Records**

The Health District continued to provide vital records services to residents at multiple locations throughout Apache County, including the Springerville Health Clinic, St. Johns Health Clinic, the Health District office in St. Johns, the District II Office in Ganado, and the District I Office in Chinle. Through these locations, the district issued certified copies of birth certificates, death certificates, fetal death certificates, and certificates of birth resulting in stillbirth for events that occurred within the State of Arizona. These records are essential for identification, legal matters, employment, school enrollment, and access to public benefits and services.

The Health District also provided same-day walk-in services for corrections and amendments to vital records when appropriate documentation was presented. Staff assisted residents with updates to birth records from 1997 to the present, death records from 2008 to the present, and fetal death records from 2013 to the present, helping ensure that official records remain accurate and current.

In addition, the Health District continued to provide vital records services on the Navajo Nation to improve access for residents living in more remote areas of the county. Residents were encouraged to schedule appointments in advance so staff could review individual needs and explain required documentation prior to their visit, although walk-ins were also welcome. Services were offered on the second Tuesday and Wednesday of each month at the District Office locations in Ganado and Chinle, helping ensure that residents throughout Apache County have convenient access to vital records services.

The tables below highlight the distribution of vital records that were distributed in Apache County by District:

**2025 Vital Records Issued – District I**

Record Type	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter	Total
Birth Certificates	73	135	107	103	418
Birth Certificate Amendments	7	7	7	8	29
Death Certificates	6	13	10	16	45
Death Certificate Amendments	0	0	0	0	0

**2025 Vital Records Issued – District II**

Record Type	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter	Total
Birth Certificates	46	63	60	41	210
Birth Certificate Amendments	3	3	1	1	8
Death Certificates	12	11	2	10	35
Death Certificate Amendments	0	1	0	0	1

### 2025 Vital Records Issued – District III

Record Type	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter	Total
Birth Certificates	175	247	187	110	719
Birth Certificate Amendments	12	13	6	8	39
Death Certificates	575	515	586	529	2,205
Death Certificate Amendments	1	2	32	16	51

#### Alternate Medical Examiner

Pursuant to Arizona Revised Statutes (A.R.S.) Title 11, counties are responsible for providing medical examiner services to investigate certain types of deaths. These statutes require that deaths resulting from violence, accidents, suicide, sudden or unexplained causes, deaths occurring in custody, or deaths without a known medical cause be reported to the county medical examiner. The medical examiner is responsible for determining jurisdiction, conducting investigations, and performing autopsies when necessary to establish the cause and manner of death. These investigations help ensure accurate death certification, support law enforcement activities when appropriate, and protect public health by identifying potential hazards or emerging health concerns within the community.

To maintain continuity of these services, the Health District maintained a partnership with the Pima County Office of the Medical Examiner (PCOME), which served as the acting medical examiner for Apache County. PCOME staff worked closely with local law enforcement to triage death investigations, often consulting by phone or coordinating with officers on scene to determine whether a case fell under medical examiner jurisdiction. When jurisdiction was established, PCOME initiated a formal investigation; in other instances, jurisdiction was declined and the case was released. In September 2025, the Health District successfully renegotiated the service agreement, reducing the annual contract cost from \$150,000 to \$100,000 annually.

The Health District also maintained contracts with local mortuary services to assist with decedent transport. Burnham Mortuary provided removal services for medical examiner cases and transported decedents requiring autopsy to Pima County. Green Meadow Funeral Home provided removal services for cases occurring along the Interstate 40 corridor and in the northern portion of Apache County. These partnerships ensured that the county could continue to provide timely, respectful, and professional medicolegal death investigation services while maintaining continuity of operations and supporting coordinated response efforts with law enforcement and emergency personnel.

#### EXPENDITURE REPORT

In 2025, the Apache County Public Health Services District expended \$3,746,420 to support program services and public health related activities across the county. Funding for these services was supported through a combination of grant funding, local tax levy contributions, revenues associated with the Salt River Project’s Coronado Generating Station, and other program-generated revenue sources such as service fees, licenses, and permits. Grant funding

represented a significant portion of the district’s operating budget and allowed the Health District to provide essential public health programs and services to Apache County residents.

In addition to supporting direct public health services, Health District salary expenditures also support several operational services that benefit multiple county departments and facilities. District staff provide daily management of the county mail room and county switchboard, as well as custodial services for the Health District administrative office and medical-grade cleaning for the St. Johns and Springerville health clinics. These responsibilities also extend to cleaning services at the mortuary office as part of the medical examiner agreement and at the Springerville Justice Court office. In addition, staff manage a shared fleet of 13 vehicles used across multiple divisions, including regular maintenance and upkeep.

The table below outlines the District’s revenue sources and highlights the diverse funding streams that sustain essential public health services.

**2025 Health District Revenue Sources**

Revenue Source	Amount	Percent of Budget
Grants	\$1,369,545	37%
Tax Levy & SRP Coronado Generating Station	\$1,976,468	51%
Charges for Services	\$217,537	6%
Licenses & Permits	\$117,139	3%
Total Program Expenditures	\$3,746,420	100%

**FUTURE PUBLIC HEALTH INITIATIVES**

Looking ahead, the Apache County Public Health Services District will continue strengthening programs and partnerships that address the evolving health needs of county residents. Future initiatives will focus on expanding access to preventive care, vaccinations, and clinical services; increasing community outreach and health education; strengthening environmental health protections; and improving the use of data to guide public health planning. The District will also continue collaborating with healthcare providers, schools, tribal communities, and other local partners while pursuing grant opportunities and workforce development efforts to ensure residents across Apache County have access to essential public health services.

Below is a list of future public health initiatives that will focus on expanding access to preventive services and strengthen community partnerships to improve health outcomes across Apache County.

- Pursuit of the Rural Health Transformation Grant to support development of a mobile health unit aimed at expanding access to clinical services, immunizations, and preventive care in remote and underserved areas of Apache County.
- Implementation of HAPI-funded chronic disease prevention efforts, to support chronic disease prevention efforts, including screening, education, and outreach services that will be incorporated into the development and operation of the mobile health unit serving rural and underserved communities.

- Expansion of Maternal and Child Health (MCH) programming to address updated state performance measures, with an increased focus on youth physical activity and adolescent bullying prevention.
- Continued development of a youth nicotine cessation pilot program in partnership with the University of Colorado Behavioral Health and Wellness Program to provide targeted support for youth using nicotine products. Following development and approval, this program will be utilized statewide.
- Development and implementation of online Community Health Dashboards by utilizing the MySidewalk platform to support data-informed decision-making and improve public access to local health data.

### **DIRECTORS RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE OVERALL HEALTH OF APACHE COUNTY**

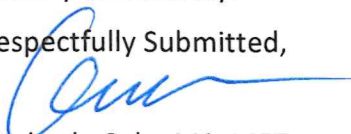
To improve overall health outcomes in Apache County, continued emphasis should be placed on strengthening both individual prevention practices and system-level public health efforts. Residents are encouraged to remain up to date on recommended vaccinations, practice proper hand hygiene, cover coughs and sneezes, disinfect frequently touched surfaces, and stay home when ill. Additional preventative measures such as safe food handling, proper sanitation, and minimizing exposure to sick animals or insect vectors should continue to be reinforced through consistent public health messaging. Maintaining these foundational practices is essential to reducing the spread of communicable diseases and protecting community health.

Expanding outreach and improving community trust must remain a central focus moving forward. Continued investment in communication strategies including social media platforms, digital messaging, and community-based outreach, will be critical to ensure that accurate and timely health information reaches all areas of the county. Efforts should prioritize reaching underserved and rural populations, where access to services and information may be limited. Building trust through consistent, transparent, and culturally responsive communication will help increase community engagement and participation in public health programs.

Increasing access to preventive services should also remain a priority. The Health District should continue to expand opportunities for residents to receive free or low-cost testing, vaccinations, and health education through clinics, community events, and partner referrals. Strengthening coordination with local healthcare providers, schools, and community organizations will improve referral pathways and ensure residents are connected to appropriate services in a timely manner. These efforts will support earlier intervention, reduce barriers to care, and increase the number of individuals served across Apache County.

By aligning prevention strategies with expanded outreach, increased access, and stronger community partnerships, Apache County can continue building a more resilient, informed, and healthy community.

Respectfully Submitted,



Kimberly Cole, MS, MFT  
Health Director