



  
**2020**  
**ANNUAL REPORT**



## Dear friends of CHI,

As the cloud of the COVID-19 pandemic begins to dissipate, I find myself wondering how 2020 will be remembered. No doubt our memories will be colored by grief and loss. But I find myself reflecting on the silver linings, such as the incredible ways health care workers, front-line employees, and nonprofits rose to the challenge.

As did the Colorado Health Institute.

Our generous philanthropic supporters stepped up to fund CHI's work providing real-time data and recommendations to state leaders, local public health agencies, school districts, and community organizations. We built bridges across sectors and ensured that leaders had the data they needed to make informed decisions and better navigate this fast-moving crisis. We also pivoted to support our clients as they delved into uncharted territory, rapidly adapting to telehealth and implementing new technology.

We did this while continuing to provide the analysis and insight that CHI is known for. Because the important work of expanding access to health care, supporting behavioral health, and ensuring that people have access to healthy food and safe housing didn't go away. In fact, we must focus on these things more than ever if we are to respond to the mental health challenges and other long-term issues caused by months of isolation and economic challenge.

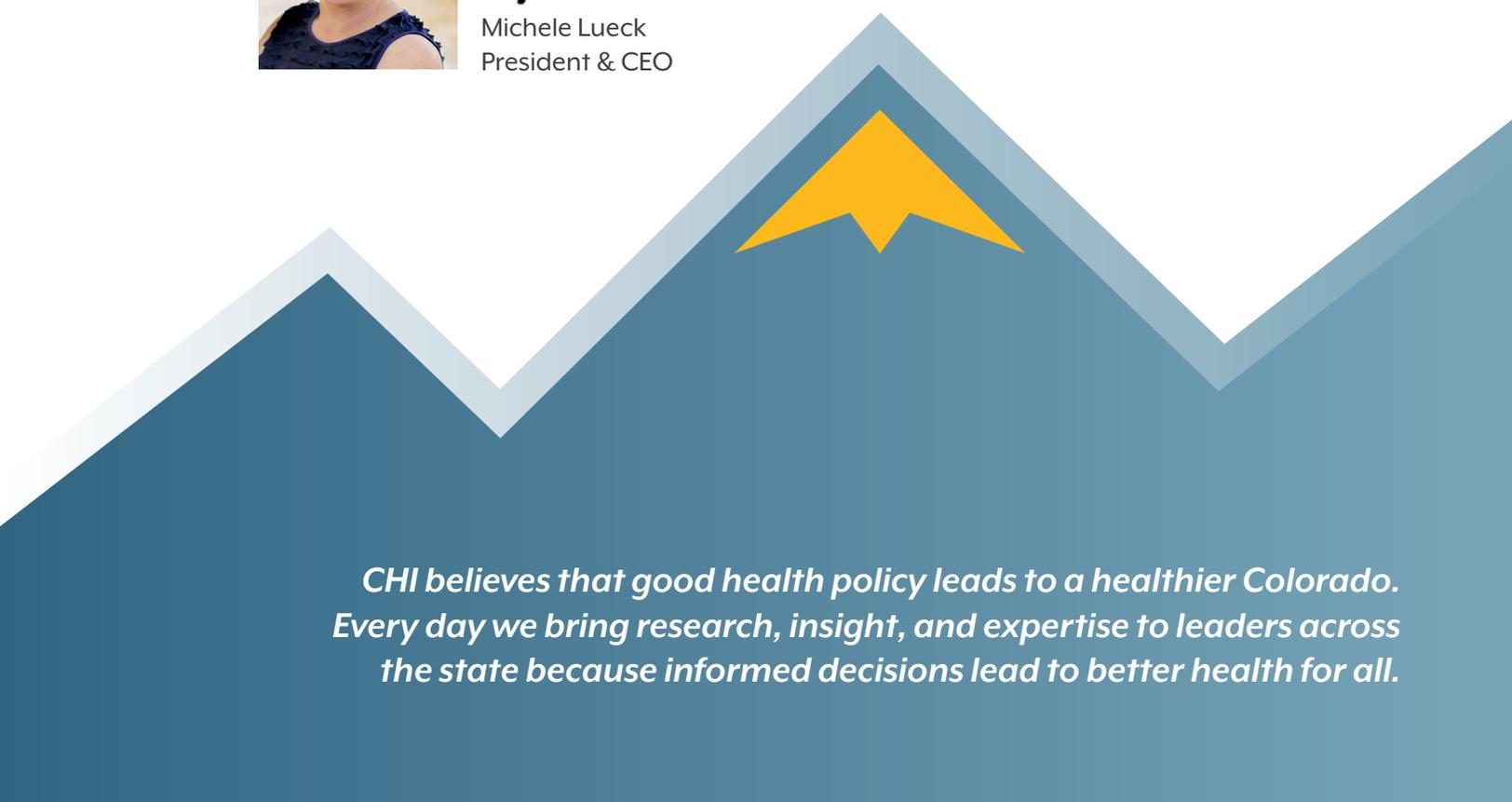
I am immensely proud of the work CHI did to help our community navigate 2020. And I am eager to see that the lessons we have learned guide us toward a better future.



Onward,

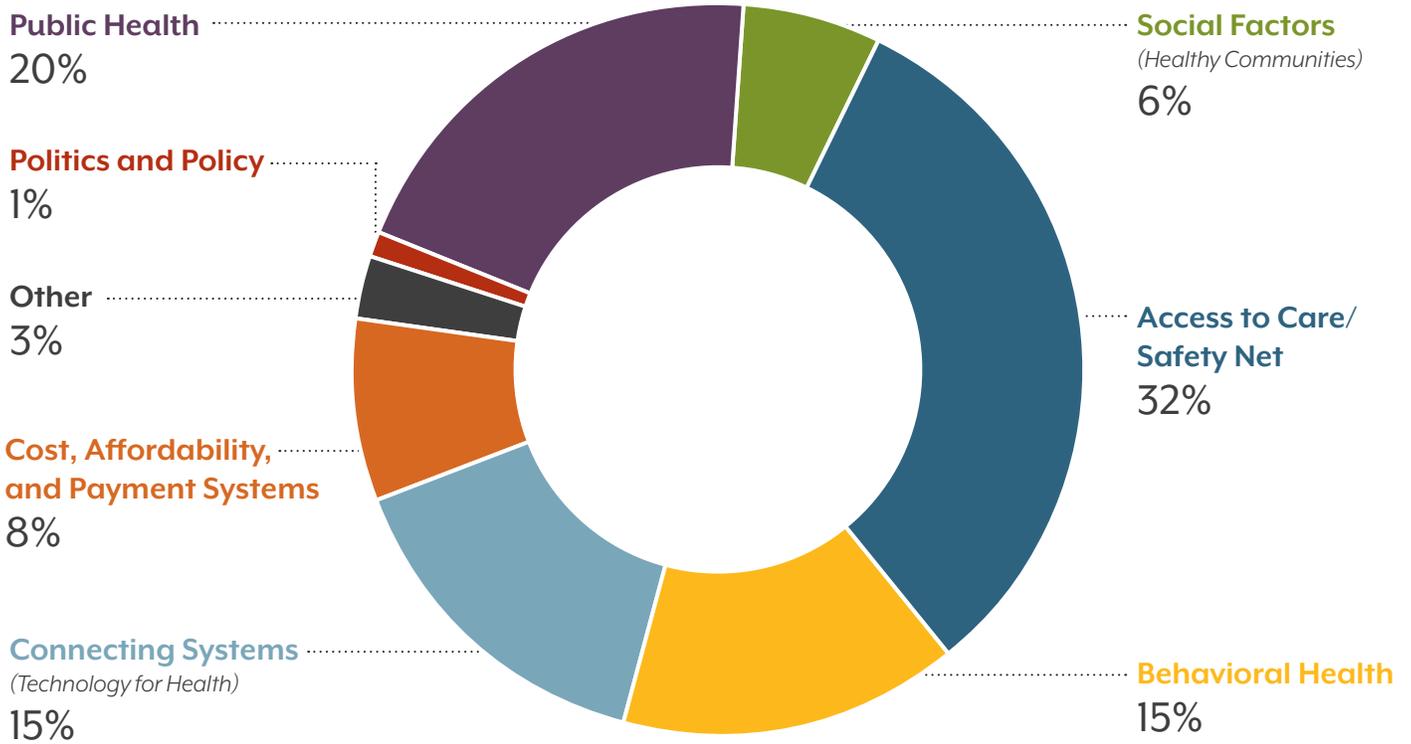


Michele Lueck  
President & CEO



*CHI believes that good health policy leads to a healthier Colorado. Every day we bring research, insight, and expertise to leaders across the state because informed decisions lead to better health for all.*

# HOW WE SPENT OUR TIME IN 2020



CHI's 2020 Financial Statement is available [here](#)

## BY THE NUMBERS

### IN THE NEWS

CHI's work was cited **110 times** by local and national media in 2020.

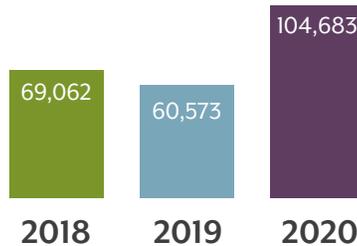


### SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS

- Facebook **1,356**
- Twitter **6,332**
- LinkedIn **2,528**

## COLORADOHEALTHINSTITUTE.ORG

### Website Users



### Top Users by City

- Denver **17,170**
- Aurora **5,944**
- Colorado Springs **4,085**
- Lakewood **2,192**
- Fort Collins **2,086**

### Most Viewed Reports in 2020

- [Colorado COVID-19 Social Distancing Index](#)
- [Metro Denver Partnership for Health COVID Resources](#)
- [Telemedicine in Colorado: The Jetsons, a RAPID Response to COVID-19, and the Big Questions Ahead](#)
- [COVID-19 in Colorado: Resources and Policy Analysis for Addressing the Coronavirus Pandemic](#)



# CHI Responds to COVID-19

*The COVID-19 pandemic challenged Coloradans like never before. CHI's experience and connections led to unique opportunities to provide expertise and coordination that were essential to efforts to combat the virus.*

## Governor's Response Team Support

When Governor Jared Polis put together the Innovation Response Team to manage the early months of the pandemic, CHI provided research support to identify best practices from around the world.

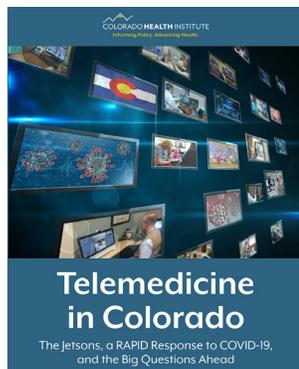
## Rapid Analysis

CHI analysts provided near-weekly interpretation and commentary on developments in the pandemic to help Coloradans understand and evaluate what was happening.

## Telehealth Analysis

Health care providers switched their services overnight from in-person care to telehealth. CHI identified strategies for providers to deliver telehealth services and provided one of the country's first quantitative assessments of the shift to telehealth — using data from the CHORDS network.

- **Telemedicine in Colorado:** [The Jetsons, a Rapid Response Response to COVID-19, and the Big Questions Ahead](#)



## Regional Coordination

The Metro Denver Partnership for Health — which CHI facilitates — provided a coordinated response from the area's local public health agencies. Health departments around the state used the partnership's guidance for testing programs, school operations, and identification of priority populations.

- **Metro Denver Partnership for Health:** [A Collective Effort to Improve Health for More Than Three Million Coloradans](#)

## National Recognition



The Metro Denver Partnership for Health was one of eight programs nationwide to be honored with a Gold Innovative Practice Award by the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO). The award celebrates local public health departments for developing innovative programs to meet the needs of their community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Video:** [About MDPH](#)

## The New Better

Working with The Denver Foundation, CHI convened a group of community leaders to **discuss ethical leadership and address long-neglected needs** for equity and fairness as we emerge from the pandemic.

- **The New Better:** [Ethical Leadership to Guide Our Pandemic Recovery](#)



## Speaking Up For Public Health

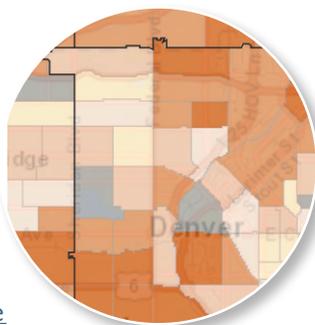
CHI President Michele Lueck wrote an **opinion piece** in The Colorado Sun to defend besieged public health workers and refocus criticism on the system, rather than individuals.

- **Opinion:** [Blame Our System, Not Public Health Workers, For Our COVID Failures](#)

## Innovative Mapping

CHI's mapping experts identified neighborhoods at higher risk for COVID-19 transmission in our **Social Distancing Index**.

- **COVID Diagnoses by Census Tract:** [CHORDS Data Show the Disparate Impact of the Pandemic on Front Range Neighborhoods](#)



## Community Convening

CHI's popular **Hot Issues in Health** conference shifted to an online format for 2020 and attracted its highest attendance ever, with more than 640 registrants. It was the first opportunity of the year for a large part of Colorado's health policy community to come together to look back at the year and look ahead to better days.

# Quantifying COVID

## 2020 Perspective

**18,598 Coloradans were hospitalized** with COVID-19.<sup>1</sup>

**5,130 Coloradans died** from the virus in 2020,<sup>2</sup> making it the third leading cause of death in the state.<sup>3</sup>

**Drops in overall life expectancy** for Hispanic (81.4 years to 77.3 years) and Black Coloradans (78 years to 74.1 years) were more extreme compared with their white neighbors (81.5 years to 80.1 years).<sup>4</sup>

**1 in 25 Colorado nursing home residents died** from coronavirus in December 2020.<sup>5</sup>

**323,500 estimated jobs lost** in 2020 due to pandemic closures.<sup>6</sup>

**Colorado's peak unemployment rate was 12.1%** in April 2020, up from 2.7% in January 2020.<sup>7</sup>

## Lasting Impacts

**1,300 calls per month** in 2020 fielded by TESSA, a Colorado Springs nonprofit that offers a hotline for victims of domestic violence, compared with 800 calls per month in 2019.<sup>8</sup>

**35% increase in overdose deaths** (443 total) in Colorado from January to April 2020 compared with the same period in 2019.<sup>9</sup>

**18% increase in calls and texts to Colorado's crisis line** between March and October, reaching an all-time high of 21,250 contacts (685/day) in October.<sup>10</sup>

# Pulse of Colorado: CHI's 2020 Publications

Who has access to health insurance and health care? How do food, housing, and air quality affect health? What role can policies and practices play in ensuring more Coloradans have what they need to live a healthy life? CHI's team provided incisive analysis on perennial health issues affecting Coloradans in 2020. Samples of this work are highlighted below.

## Access to Care and the Safety Net

CHI tracked the dynamics affecting access to care before the pandemic and used data and our deep connections to Colorado's health community to track how COVID-19 was reshaping those dynamics.

We examined the state of Colorado's health care safety net and how forces ranging from the pandemic to immigration policies meant more Coloradans were falling through the cracks.

- **Stretching the Safety Net:** [How Are Colorado's Providers Adapting Amid Change and Uncertainty](#)
- **Troubling Trends:** [Uninsured Rate Triples for Hispanic/Latinx Kids](#)
- **2017-18 Eligible but Not Enrolled** – Momentum Reverses



We focused on how the pandemic might affect enrollment in Health First Colorado, the state's Medicaid program

- **Medicaid Surge:** [Access to Care](#)

We spotlighted the direct care workers and informal caregivers

who were often overlooked, even as they provided vital care to many Coloradans.

- **An Overlooked Workforce:** [Colorado's Informal Caregivers of Color and Policies That Can Support Them](#)
- **Closing the Care Gap:** [Opportunities for Employers to Support and Grow Colorado's Direct Care Workforce](#)

As social distancing measures and closures changed Coloradans' access to care for substance use, CHI tracked the ongoing drug overdose epidemic.

- **Going Without:** [Many Coloradans Not Getting Needed Treatment for Substance Use Disorders](#)

## Cost, Affordability, and Payment Systems

2020 began with the state's policymakers focused on the cost of health care. While the pandemic inevitably took center stage as the year progressed, the issue of health care affordability did not go away.

CHI examined the role of previous policy interventions on the state's insurance rates.

- **Sustainable Relief?** [2020 Colorado Insurance Rates and the Role of Reinsurance](#)



We offered a primer for employers looking to reduce the cost of health care.

- **The Cost of Doing Business:** [Employers' Role in Reducing Health Costs](#)

We examined the impact of the pandemic and new laws on the finances of the state's hospitals.

- **Hospital Community Benefit:** [Accounting for Impact](#)
- **Medicaid Surge Due to COVID-19:** [Financial Impacts for Hospitals](#)

We showed how health care is still out of reach for many Coloradans — especially millennials.

- **Generation Debt:** [Affordable Health Care Eludes Millennials](#)



## Building Bridges to Health

Where we live, work, play, and learn affects our health.



We used the Colorado Health Access Survey to underscore the connection between food security, housing security, and health.

- **Making a Home for Health: Supporting Health by Putting Housing First**
- **An Uneven Burden: Food Insecurity in Colorado**

## The Intersection of Politics and Policy

CHI continued its vital work as a nonpartisan resource for the state's legislature and those who track health policy.

Our legislative preview and review reports documented an unprecedented session.

- **2020 Legislative Preview: The Health Policy Hustle**
- **2020 Legislation in Review: Pandemic, Protests, Pause Define Session**

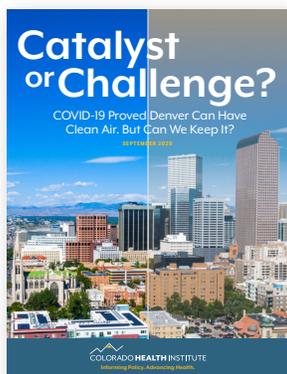


We examined the role health care organizations — which are responsible for a large share of the state's emissions and waste — can play in promoting environmental sustainability.

- **Sustainability in Health Care: Colorado's Landscape for Going Green**

We examined the challenges and opportunities for improving air quality in Denver that were highlighted by the COVID-19-related shutdown.

- **Catalyst or Challenge? COVID-19 Proved Denver Can Have Clean Air. But Can We Keep It?**



We kept watch on the Affordable Care Act and its impact on the state as the U.S. Supreme Court considered yet another attempt to dismantle the law.

- **Repealing the Affordable Care Act: What's at Stake in Colorado?**

## Sources from Page 5

- 1 The COVID Tracking Project. (2021). Colorado. <https://covidtracking.com/data/state/colorado>
- 2 Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. (2021). Colorado COVID-19 Data. <https://covid19.colorado.gov/data>
- 3 Daley, J. (2021). "From Starvation To Overdose, Coronavirus' Hidden Toll Emerges in Colorado's Death Data." Colorado Public Radio. <https://www.cpr.org/2021/02/16/from-starvation-to-overdose-coronavirus-hidden-toll-emerges-in-colorados-death-data/>
- 4 Daley, J. (2021). "Life Expectancy In Colorado Fell Sharply During The Pandemic, Especially For People Of Color." Colorado Public Radio. <https://www.cpr.org/2021/06/25/pandemic-life-expectancy-fell-health-care-inequality/>
- 5 Osher, C. and Wyloge, E. (2021). "Colorado had America's highest nursing home coronavirus death rate at end of 2020." The Gazette. [https://gazette.com/premium/colorado-had-americas-highest-nursing-home-coronavirus-death-rate-at-end-of-2020/](https://gazette.com/premium/colorado-had-americas-highest-nursing-home-coronavirus-death-rate-at-end-of-2020/article_67b97448-a7ba-11eb-bdae-53ac857bd313.html)
- 6 Svaldi, A. (2020). "Colorado lost more than a Wyoming's worth of jobs in April." The Denver Post. <https://www.denverpost.com/2020/05/22/colorado-unemployment-rate-april-covid/>
- 7 Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2021). [https://data.bls.gov/timeseries/LASST080000000000003?amp%253bdata\\_tool=XGtable&output\\_view=data&include\\_graphs=true](https://data.bls.gov/timeseries/LASST080000000000003?amp%253bdata_tool=XGtable&output_view=data&include_graphs=true)
- 8 Email from Rica Molet, Community Engagement Manager of TESSA
- 9 Whittington, L. (2020). "Colorado's 2019 Overdose Data Already Looked Bad, 2020 Could Be Worse." Colorado Health Institute. <https://www.coloradohealthinstitute.org/blog/colorados-2019-overdose-data-already-looked-bad-2020-could-be-worse>
- 10 Colorado Department of Human Services. (2020). "Colorado crisis line continues record-breaking volume during COVID-19 pandemic" <https://cdhs.colorado.gov/press-release/colorado-crisis-line-continues-record-breaking-volume-during-covid-19-pandemic>



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The Colorado Health Institute is a trusted source of independent and objective health information, data, and analysis for the state's health care leaders. CHI's work is made possible by generous supporters who see the value of independent, evidence-based analysis. Those supporters can be found on our website [coloradohealthinstitute.org/about-us](http://coloradohealthinstitute.org/about-us)