July 2026

MPHTC NEWSLETTER

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MONTANA PUBLIC HEALTH TRAINING CENTER
COMMUNITY HEALTH SCIENCES

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Welcome Denise Higgins to the MPHTC!



We are excited to welcome Denise as our new Montana Public Health Training Center Director! Denise joined MPHTC in May 2026 and brings more than 20 years of experience in public health and healthcare leadership. Throughout her career, she has led multidisciplinary teams, supported strategic statewide maternal and child health initiatives, and developed regional partnerships to improve access to care for patients experiencing high-risk pregnancies. Denise is known for her collaborative approach, grant development and program management expertise, and strong commitment to strengthening public health and healthcare systems across Montana.
Denise also serves as adjunct faculty in the College of Science, where she teaches Hematology and coordinates the Medical Laboratory Science program. Outside of work, she enjoys spending time outdoors on a trail or bike, designing wedding flowers, and working toward mastering the perfect French omelet.

Upcoming Trainings & Learning Opportunities

Public Health Where We Live and Learn: Montana Strategies for School Engagement

This live virtual training introduces local and tribal public health professionals to the Public Health Where We Live and Learn Toolkit: A Practical Toolkit for Montana Health Departments to Engage with Students. Participants will explore practical strategies for building school partnerships, communicating public health concepts in plain language, facilitating ready-to-use classroom activities, and supporting student career awareness. Designed with varying staff capacity and community contexts in mind, this session emphasizes flexible, relationship-driven approaches that help health departments engage students in meaningful and achievable ways. Participants will leave with ready-to-use tools and a clear roadmap for their first school outreach effort.

Trainers: Anna Kiley & Kayla Chipongian
Date: 7/23/26
Time: 1:00PM - 2:00PM MST
Location: Zoom
Register: MPHTC Portal

Budgeting with Excel: Fun with Numbers

This six-module, asynchronous course is designed to help build practical skills and confidence in understanding and managing operating budgets. Through short video lessons and hands-on activities, you'll learn to identify key components of a budget, apply basic forecasting concepts, and strengthen your Excel skills to analyze and present financial information with clarity. By the end, you'll feel more comfortable creating, adjusting, and interpreting budgets as part of your everyday work.

Trainer: Asynchronous
Location: Zoom
Register: MPHTC Portal

Recordings of past training sessions may be found on our website

Recordings

Project ECHO

Disease Intervention Specialists ECHO

Led by Montana public health professionals, ECHO participants engage in a virtual community, sharing support, guidance, and feedback. Sessions begin with a didactic presentation by a subject matter expert, then participants present real (anonymized) cases to the specialist - and each other - for discussion and recommendations. Participants learn from one another, and knowledge is tested and refined through a local lens.
Come enhance your knowledge of communicable diseases, investigations, and reporting - while increasing your state resource base through a feeling of community and partnership with your peers.

WHEN & WHERE

Second and fourth Thursdays of each month at 11:00a MT on Zoom.
There is no cost associated with this.

Register and read more here

Montana Public Health Training Center also hosts a Hepatitis C & Sexual Health ECHO. Click here to learn more.

Upcoming Project Echo Topics

- July 7th OUD in Patients with HCV/HIV presented by Amanda Reed
- July 21 Basic HCV Treatment presented by Cory Lovec, PharmD
- July 23 Re-engaging People in HIV Care presented by Chantz Thilmony and panelists

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Wellness Program

Future of Workplace Wellbeing

A six part series

Session 1: X Marks the Spot: Defining Workplace Wellbeing
July 14, 2026

Session 2: Mapping the Terrain: Understanding How Wellbeing Intervention Happens
July 30, 2026

Session 3: Identifying the Roadblocks: Building Awareness of the Internal and External Barriers
August 6, 2026

Session 4: Creating the Itinerary: Developing the Skills for Wellbeing
August 20, 2026

Session 5: Start the Journey: Removing the Internal and External Barriers
September 3, 2026

Session 6: Sustaining the Journey: Strengthening Wellbeing Through Connection
September 17, 2026



Shari Morin-Degel, LCPC
Shari Morin-Degel is the Wellness Program Director in the Montana Public Health Training Center. She is a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor and Certified Wellness Coach with over 20 years of experience in mental health leadership. Shari created My Work BALANCE, a workplace wellness program that combines training, mentorship, data, and digital platforms to support organizations both statewide and beyond. Shari is a Gallup Certified Strengths Coach and Mindset Mentor and is passionate about helping people reduce stress and build high-performing, fulfilling work environments. Shari specializes in supporting professionals and leaders in health and human services, and she brings a unique blend of lived experience, clinical expertise, personal or organizational failure, it's an opportunity for growth for individuals and systems.

All Sessions are 11 am –12 pm



There is **no cost** for participation and will be hosted on Zoom.

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Register through the MPHTC Portal

Sponsored by the DPHHS Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities Division

Public Health in Schools Initiative

Public Health Where We Live and Learn Toolkit, Training, and Student Engagement Opportunities

We are excited to share the release of the *Public Health Where We Live and Learn Toolkit*, a practical resource designed to help local and tribal health departments connect with students and schools through classroom activities, career exposure, job shadowing tools, and school partnership strategies.

Health departments can also join our live virtual training, *Public Health Where We Live and Learn: Montana Strategies for School Engagement*, on July 23 at 1:00pm MT via Zoom to explore the toolkit and leave with a clear path for school outreach.
The toolkit is already being put into action. At a recent Sidney High School career fair, MPHTC and Richland County Health Department used the *I Spy Public Health* activity to engage students in recognizing public health in their community. More than 300 students attended. 96 connected directly with the Health Department booth, and four students expressed interest in job shadowing. Richland County also adapted the activity for younger students, reaching more than 200 kindergarten through second grade students at a school event.
Looking ahead, we are preparing to launch Made in Montana: Our Stories Told Our Way, a student art campaign that will invite young people to share their perspectives on public health, community, and the places they call home.
Access the toolkit here
Register for the July 23 training here



Image description: Richland Health Department Director, Brittney Petersen, and Montana Public Health Training Center Program Manager, Kayla Chipongian, stand in front of an I Spy Public Health banner which displays a community and various community features.

UM Technical Assistance Center

The University of Montana Technical Assistance Center (UMTAC) is excited to host the Substance Use Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery Support (SUPTRS) Mini Conference at the Missoula Public Library on August 25 & 26. This two-day event will bring together professionals and partners to explore topics including coalition development and sustainability, effective facilitation strategies, law enforcement and substance misuse prevention, workplace and personal wellness, emerging drug trends, and more. If you want to learn more or are interested in attending, please contact Kristen Crane and Maria Hamm.

News From Our Public Health Partners

MONTANA HEALTH & CLIMATE

MONTANA PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTE

Montana Public Health Institute's Capacity Enhancing Grant opportunity opens on July 1, 2026. Applications will be accepted July 1-22, 2026, and funding decisions will be made by September 2, 2026 or sooner. Health departments may request up to $15,000 to work on projects that enhance organizational capacity. MTPHI will host an informational session on July 1 @ 10am to provide an overview of this opportunity. Learn more & apply here: Capacity Enhancing Grants

The capacity enhancing grants are offered on a quarterly basis - the next application cycle will open in October 2026. As a reminder, MTPHI accepts applications for community engagement projects on a rolling basis.

Questions? Please contact grants@mtphi.org

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SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AND COMMUNITY HEALTH SCIENCES

The MPHTC newsletter is your monthly gateway to the latest public health insights—featuring timely updates, upcoming trainings, events, resources, and more to help you grow, lead, and make an impact in your community. Explore more opportunities and stay connected on our website.

MPHTC Website

University of Montana, 32 Campus Drive, Missoula, Montana 59812
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