



CLAY COUNTY

# PUBLIC HEALTH CENTER



800 Haines Drive  
Liberty, MO 64068  
816-595-4200  
clayhealth.com

## Media Contact

Kelsey Neth

Communications Coordinator/PIO

816-200-3107

[kneth@clayhealth.com](mailto:kneth@clayhealth.com)

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Clay County Environmental Health Program Becomes One of Nine in the Nation to Meet FDA's Highest Food Safety Regulation Standards

**LIBERTY, Mo. – January 27, 2025** – The U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) recently recognized Clay County Public Health Center (CCPHC) for its commitment to food safety and continuous improvement within its environmental health program. For the past 10 years, the program worked to successfully pass the verification audit and meet all FDA Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards.

The nine standards require an environmental health program to operate at the highest level. This includes developing a comprehensive training program for regulatory staff, the ability to prepare and respond to emergencies, consistency with national inspection criteria, regular self-assessment, industry and community relations, and more. Overall, participants are always focused on one goal: reducing factors that lead to foodborne illness.

“We want to be the most effective and responsive environmental health program we can be,” said Director of Public Health Darrell Meinke. “The work we’ve done to accomplish these standards will have a positive impact on the health of the people in our community for many years to come. I am extremely proud of our staff, past and present, for their efforts to achieve this recognition.”

Clay County Public Health becomes one of nine programs across the United States to complete all nine standards and receive a Certificate of Achievement from the FDA. There are 3,300 environmental health programs in the nation and 980 are currently enrolled in the FDA Retail Food Program Standards, actively working towards this goal.

“The performance measures specified for each of the nine standards are not minimum criteria, but instead represent a high benchmark to which a regulatory retail food program should aspire,” said Kimberly Destromp, acting office director of FDA’s Office of Retail Food Protection. “Active participation in this program clearly demonstrates a remarkable level of commitment to achieving program excellence.”

Clay County Public Health Center’s environmental health program is currently made up of nine employees and headed by Section Chief Robert Gilliland. They oversee 745 food establishments in Clay County, completing regular and complaint-based inspections, training food handlers and managers, and assisting facilities with any information they need to ensure the public is protected from foodborne illness. The program also provides oversight for pools/spas, hotels, septic systems, and vector (mosquito) concerns.



On Dec. 19, 2024, FDA Retail Food Specialist Becky Steiner (second from left) attended the Clay County Board of Health meeting to officially present the certificate of achievement.

***About Clay County Public Health Center***

*Serving the northeast region of the Kansas City metropolitan area, Clay County Public Health Center is a nationally accredited local public health department that protects health by implementing evidence-based prevention programs and services. This community approach to wellness not only prevents the spread of disease but also provides wellness education to empower people to make healthy choices. To learn more, visit [clayhealth.com](http://clayhealth.com).*

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Through service, partnership, and leadership, we deliver the essential public health services of prevention, promotion, and protection to improve the health and well-being of all communities in Clay County.