



POLICYTALK

The Latest in Public Policy
Center News and Events

Featured News

Improving Disaster Behavioral Health Preparedness and Response Capabilities Across Nebraska

NEBRASKA DISASTER BEHAVIORAL HEALTH EXERCISE

The Public Policy Center facilitated the 23rd Annual Nebraska Disaster Behavioral Health Exercise on July 22, 2026. The 63 attendees represented state agencies, behavioral health regions, local public health departments, local emergency management agencies, and healthcare facilities. The topic and format of the exercise vary from year to year to support collaboration across state and local agencies and identify improvements to the disaster behavioral health preparedness and response capabilities across Nebraska. This year's exercise included orientation to and discussion of the recently updated Nebraska plan for emergency health and medical volunteers.

Staff Highlight

Welcome Megan Baker

This month, we welcomed our newest Research Specialist, Megan Baker! Megan earned her bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies and Political Science from UNL. She then completed her master's degree at the Bren School of Environmental Science & Management at the University of California, Santa Barbara, specializing in energy and climate, and environmental policy, with a focus in communications. Her research interests include waste reduction, public and environmental health, and decarbonization. Outside the office, Megan enjoys volunteering for her tribe, the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska, swimming, and reading. Welcome, Megan!



Events

Lunch & Learn Series

These sessions will inform schools how to integrate system changes to address issues discovered through safety exercises and drills.

Each session is self-contained; there are no prerequisites:

12:00 to 12:30 p.m. (CT); 11:00 to 11:30 a.m. (MT)

- **Tuesday, August 18, 2026: Completed**
Premiere of two brief videos about drills and teens with psychological challenges with Denise Bulling
- **Wednesday, August 26, 2026: Completed**
Reunification at a Glance with Kurt Mantonya
- **Monday, August 31, 2026:** When it is Beyond Local Control: How, When, and Where Schools Can Access External Assistance with Psychological First Aid for Schools (PFA-S) with Jay Martin and Denise Bulling.

[Register for Lunch & Learn Sessions](#)

Building Bridges for Student Mental Health

Virtual Training via Zoom

Sept. 3, 2026, 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. (CT)

Join this one-hour webinar to learn more about the pilot project conducted by Nebraska Partnership for Mental Healthcare Access in Pediatrics (NEP-MAP) using Community Health Workers (CHW) to support student mental health needs. The pilot team will discuss how local health departments and schools can collaborate to improve access to mental health services and strengthen school-community partnerships through the CHW workforce.

Building Organizational Resilience: A Framework and Tools for Nebraska's Local Health Departments

Presenters: Stacey Hoffman, PhD & Kurt Mantonya, PhD

Sept. 30, 2026, 12:00 p.m. (CT) / 11:00 a.m. (MT)

Organizational resilience involves more than having a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP); it refers to the ability of an organization to remain flexible when encountering challenges. In this webinar, participants will learn about the concept of organizational resilience and why it is an essential part of supporting the public health workforce. Presenters will define the four areas, or pillars, supporting organizational resilience and will share tools for each pillar, incorporating the opportunity for interaction with some tools. Finally, presenters will share how participants can access the organizational resilience assessment and begin the journey to strengthening their organization's resilience.

Register for Building Organizational Resilience

Great Plains Association for Threat Assessment Professionals (ATAP) 2026 Fall Training Event

Attend in-person or via Zoom

**The Lincoln Marriott Cornhusker Hotel
333 S. 13th St. Lincoln, NE 68508**

October 8, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (CT)

October 9, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. noon (CT)

Explore the complexities of assessing and managing threats through multidisciplinary collaboration. This year's theme, Assessing and Managing Threat Across Disciplines, will highlight current research, emerging practices, and cross-sector approaches that strengthen prevention, communication, and coordinated response efforts.

Reserve your room: go.unl.edu/GPATAP-Hotel-Block

Register for GPATAP Training Event

Join Our Team as a Research Specialist

We are currently seeking candidates for a Research Specialist I, II or Sr. Research Specialist with knowledge of and experience with community and statewide public policy issues. Our Research Specialists work with dynamic teams on a variety of public policy projects, including those in behavioral health, public participation, and other applied social sciences endeavors. Interested applicants should apply by Sept. 3rd.



[Apply for this Position Today.](#)

Recent Center Highlights

Conference/Training Presentations:

- At the 2026 American Psychological Association Annual Convention, our team (Jay Jeffries, Jennifer Meek, Janell Walther, and Grant Van Robays) presented findings from a systematic review examining the student outcome measures used in school-based mental health research and the evidence supporting their use.
- At the annual ATAP Threat Management Conference this month, Dr. Mario Scalora presented with Dr. Denise Bulling on violence justification and extremist influences, and with Dr. Adam Cotton on grievances.
- In Ogallala, Drs. Mario Scalora and Denise Bulling trained 30 clinicians on violence risk assessment on August 20, as part of a partnership with Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Behavioral Health.

Research and Innovation:

- NIMBUS Lab, led by co-directors and NUPPC faculty fellows Carrick Detweiler and Brittany Duncan has been selected by AFWERX for an Air Force-funded drone research grant to explore wireless power technology that could allow drones to fly longer for missions. [Read the full story about NIMBUS.](#)

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