

May 2026

UNIVERSITY OF
Nebraska PUBLIC POLICY
CENTER



POLICYTALK

The Latest in Public Policy
Center News and Events

Featured News

Recovery Efforts Ongoing for Largest Nebraska Wildfire in History



This spring's largest-to-date wildfire in Nebraska was brought on by drought, heat, winds, and dried-out grasses that created “perfect storm” conditions for major spring fires, says University of Nebraska expert and University of Nebraska Public Policy Center (NUPPC) faculty fellow, Dirac Twidwell.

Though destructive, fire is a natural part of the region’s prairie history. Recovery efforts are ongoing for the impacted individuals and communities through the [Nebraska Strong Recovery Project](#). In partnership with NUPPC, Behavioral Health Regions 1 and 2 (in the Panhandle and Central) are at the forefront of offering project resources.

[View the full NUPPC article.](#)

Collaboration Between Schools and Primary Care Related to Mental Health



As part of the [Nebraska Partnership for Mental Healthcare Access in Pediatrics](#) (NEP-MAP) project, a free, short, self-paced course was created that helps primary care and schools collaborate to support Nebraska's school-aged youth's mental health. The [Connecting Primary Care & School Mental Health course](#) is open to everyone and covers key roles, privacy laws, and best

practices for information sharing and care coordination. The course is designed with primary care providers, school mental health teams, nurses, and administrators in mind, but may also be useful for community partners working with children and adolescents.

Events

Suicide Safety Planning Workshop

with Dr. Kate Speck

Virtually Via Zoom

Time (all): 9 a.m.–12 p.m. (Central) / 8–11 a.m. (Mountain)

Dates:

- Thursday, June 11, 2026
- Thursday, June 18, 2026
- Thursday, June 25, 2026



Join this free workshop to learn more about how safety planning can potentially to significantly reduce the risk of suicide. Learn more and register by contacting Kim Fries, kfries@region1bhs.net.

Workforce Resilience Series for Public Health and Their Partner Organizations

with Melissa Taylor

Virtually Via Zoom

Time: 12–12:30 p.m. (Central) / 11–11:30 a.m. (Mountain)

Date:

Workplace Culture - Wednesday, June 17, 2026



Join this free Lunch & Learn Series to learn more about how to support workplace resilience. Learn more about [Resilience for Organizations](#).

[Register for Workforce Resilience Sessions](#)

Psychological First Aid for Schools

with Dr. Melissa Brymer

Free, in-person training

Date/Time: June 16, 9 a.m.–3 p.m. (Central) / 8 a.m.–2 p.m. (Mountain)

- [ESU 10 – educator registration](#)
- [ESU 10 and ESU 11–Regional Disaster Behavioral Health Workforce](#)

Participants are eligible for [travel reimbursement](#).

Center News

Congrats to our Undergraduate Research Assistants

Congratulations to many of our student research assistants on graduating this May! Their outstanding dedication and hard work support the high-quality research at NUPPC.

- Reem Ahmed, College of Arts and Sciences and College of Education and Human Sciences, Highest University Honors, psychology and community health and wellness
- Ruth Bailey, College of Arts and Sciences and College of Journalism and Mass Communications, University Honors, journalism and political science

Strategic Planning for Disease Prevention

Senior Research Manager Dr. Stacey Hoffman received \$377,785 for two years from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services to support strategic planning and related activities for the prevention and treatment of infectious diseases, including HIV, Hepatitis, and STIs. This was recognized as a top award for February 2026 by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Office of Research and Innovation.

Center Researchers Engage University Students in Community Discussions

Dr. Janell Walther and Taylor Smith recently presented the Lincoln Vital Signs project in April to the Intern Foundry program, a partnership between the

Foundry and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Honors Program.

Research Manager's Academic Article Wins an Award

Congrats to Lisa PytlikZillig (NUPPC and UNL) and co-authors, Kristen Blankley and Ashley Votruba (UNL)! Their article on ***Barriers and Facilitators to Implementing Restorative Justice in Nebraska*** received enough views to be a Top Viewed Article on Wiley in Research.

University of Nebraska Public Policy Center

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