



Chapter 4: Heat & Health



Why this matters

Nationally, heat is the leading cause of weather-related deaths. Humidity on top of heat makes it even harder for the body to cool itself, amplifying the risk of heat-related illness. Warmer conditions also allow mosquitoes and ticks to expand their ranges, spreading vector-borne diseases.

Heat-related climate changes can also heighten anxiety, aggression, and other mental health disorders. Our physical and mental states are interconnected, so these adverse outcomes driven by climate change feed one another and compound human health impacts over time.

What's happening here?

Built-up areas with few trees, limited green space, and lots of buildings and paved surfaces hold more heat than natural areas. This “urban heat island” effect is why cities experience even higher temperatures than less developed rural areas. Infants, older adults, and people without adequate cooling and hydration are at greatest risk from heat-related illness. Younger generations are especially vulnerable to climate anxiety — fear and stress about climate impacts — but people of all ages can benefit from learning to cope with these added pressures.

The CAP focuses on three approaches for protecting human health in a warmer world:

Increasing awareness of heat risks

Preventing the spread of vector-borne diseases

Expanding mental health resources

What does the CAP include?

The County monitors vector-borne diseases through its Department of Health and provides mental health support through its Crisis Center. Strategies prioritized in the plan include:

- **Increasing heat safety awareness**
- **Expanding cooling centers countywide and sharing clear information on how to access them**
- **Preventing vector-borne diseases with education, monitoring, and school health training**
- **Boosting County services for climate-related mental-health impacts**

Program Highlight

The Alachua County Crisis Center won the 2025 National Association of Counties Achievement Award for the work of their >100 volunteers. They offer 24-hour telephone crisis and counseling services, including support for climate-induced stress.

How can residents contribute?

Educate yourself on heat safety

- Know the signs of heat exhaustion and stroke
- Locate cooling centers near you by searching “Alachua County Extreme Heat”

Prevent the spread of disease vectors

- Drain standing water to reduce mosquitoes from multiplying around your home

Ask for help

- Contact the Alachua County Crisis Center at (352)-264-6789
- Find peer support by connecting with local climate organizations such as Climate Café