

What is Public Health?

✚ Public health is the center of a medical care system which promotes the health of communities and plays a key role in disease prevention.



✚ It has made a positive impact in improving living conditions, sanitation, and food supply in the 20th century.

✚ Core activities of public health include:

- communicable disease control
- immunizations
- safe food, safe drinking water
- maternity and infant services
- chronic disease prevention and injury prevention
- family planning
- bioterrorism detection and response to concerns such as anthrax, smallpox, plague, and emerging diseases such as West Nile virus and pandemic flu.

✚ Public health is the most cost effective system for disease prevention and health improvement.

✚ Washington spends little on public health compared to other states. (It ranks 39th in per capita spending on public health.)

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Other organizations include: local public health officials, The American Lung Association, The Children's Alliance, City of Seattle, Washington State Parent Teacher Association, Lifelong AIDS Alliance, Association of Washington Cities and others.

"Public Health is our critical but often silent partner in Washington's communities. Without the prudence of a fully funded public health system, we risk disease and illness." — Dr. Kenneth H.Z. Isaacs, President of the Washington State Medical Association



Public Health Matters



Always working for a safer and healthier community.

Public Health is in Jeopardy

✦ Through decades of neglect and erosion in public health funding, the ability of our local public health departments to perform core functions has been reduced.

✦ Severe service delivery deficiencies with respect to disease threats such as E. coli, West Nile, tuberculosis, HIV and chemical/biological terrorism are the consequences of the MVET elimination.

✦ Examples of the deterioration include: a drop in childhood immunization rates; an increase in tuberculosis cases; an increase in sexually transmitted disease rates; an increase in diseases such as measles and whooping cough; and an increase in infant mortality in some groups.

The Answer

✦ To fully fund our public health departments, and state Department of Health, we would need an additional **\$400 million annually (from all sources) or a rough doubling of the current funding level for public health infrastructure.** For the future, a stable funding source is critical.

✦ With proper funding, we can meet the standards created by the Public Health Improvement Plan. **(Presently, we are meeting fewer than half of these standards in state and local health districts.)**

✦ Public health plays a role in keeping the community safe and providing emergency response for chemical and bioterrorism.

Public Health: Our Work is Vital



“As a Public Health Nurse, I work in rural communities. I see the effects of physical, sexual and emotional abuse, violence and substance use in the lives of pregnant and parenting women. Public Health Nurses are on the ‘front line’ in working towards decreasing poor health, abuse, violence and addictions. Ongoing funding for Public Health programs provides preventative health services which improves the health of our society.” — Barbara Bly, Registered Nurse, Snohomish County Health District

“The food safety program provides education and guidance to the public and food service facilities to help promote safe food handling practices and protect the public from food borne illness.” — Ray Byrne, Environmental Health Specialist, Spokane Regional Health District



Public Opinion Supports Public Health

✦ Nine out of 10 Washington voters think public health efforts such as stopping the spread of infectious disease and protecting food and water supplies are important. (Washington Public Health Association poll, 2003)

History of Funding

In 1996, the law changed to relieve cities of financial responsibility. A portion of the cities' Motor Vehicle Excise Tax (MVET) was dedicated to public health, and funding became the sole responsibility of county government.

1996

Prior to 1996, Washington law required city and county governments to have joint responsibility for the funding and delivery of public health services.

In 2000, the MVET was eliminated. However, the State Legislature restored 90% of the 1998 MVET funding level (backfill).

2000

Since 2000, backfill funding has been at risk each legislative session.

**2004 and Beyond =
Public Health
in Crisis**

Federal bioterrorism funding will not backfill public health funding due to the specific category and outcome requirements with money going towards hospitals, development of regional plans and the improvement of state-level capacity such as the state lab.