

Overview

Health departments provide public health protections in a number of areas, including: preventing the spread of communicable disease, ensuring food, air, and water quality are safe, supporting maternal and child health, improving access to clinical care services, and preventing chronic disease and injury. In addition, public health departments provide local protections and services unique to their community's needs.

The infrastructure needed to provide these protections strives to provide fair opportunities for all to be healthy and includes seven capabilities: 1) Assessment/Surveillance, 2) Emergency Preparedness and Response, 3) Policy Development and Support, 4) Communications, 5) Community Partnership Development, 6) Organizational Administrative Competencies and 7) Accountability/Performance Management. Practically put, health departments have to be ready 24/7 to serve their communities. That requires access to a wide range of critical data sources, robust laboratory capacity, preparedness and policy planning capacity, and expert staff to leverage them in support of public health protections.

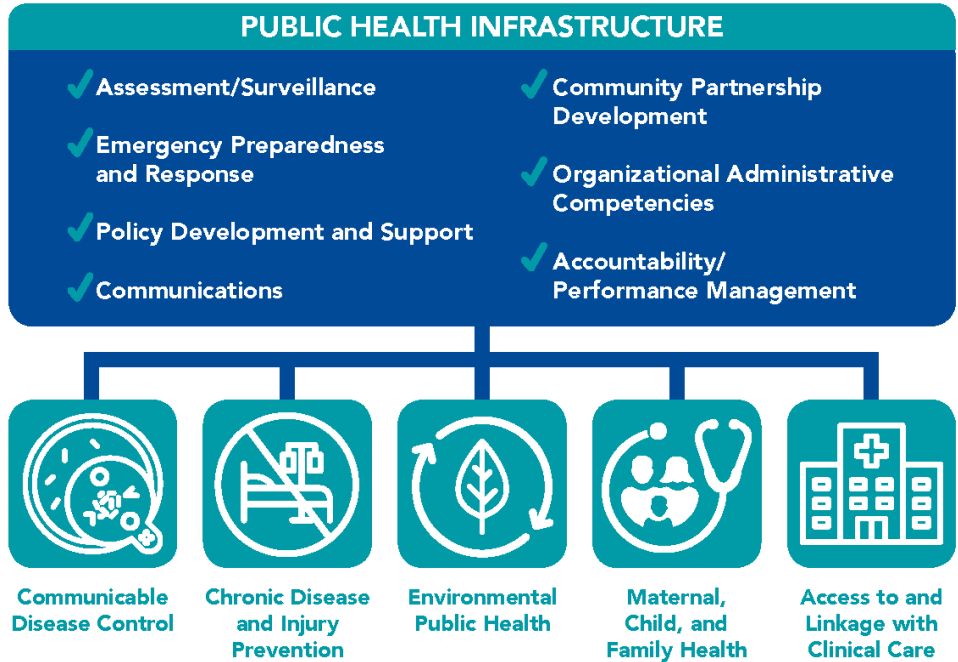
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Public health infrastructure consists of the foundational capabilities, which are the cross-cutting skills and capacities needed to support basic public health protections and other programs and activities that are key to ensuring the community's health and achieving equitable health outcomes.

Public health programs, or foundational areas, are those basic public health, topic-specific programs that are aimed at improving the health of the community affected by certain diseases or public health threats. Examples of these include, but are not limited to, chronic disease prevention, community disease control, environmental public health, and maternal, child, and family health.

Local protections and services unique to a community's needs are those determined to be of additional critical significance to a specific community's health and are supported by the public health infrastructure and programs. This work is essential to a given community and cannot be visually depicted because it varies by jurisdiction.

Public Health Infrastructure (Foundational Capabilities)

Assessment/Surveillance

- ❖ Ability to collect sufficient foundational data to develop and maintain electronic information systems to guide public health planning and decision making at the state and local level. Foundational data include Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS), a youth survey (such as YRBS), and vital records, including the personnel and software and hardware development that enable the collection of foundational data.
- ❖ Ability to access, analyze, and use data from (at least) seven specific information sources, including (1) U.S. Census data, (2) vital statistics, (3) notifiable conditions data, (4) certain health care clinical and administrative data sets including available hospital discharge, insurance claims data, and Electronic Health Records (EHRs), (5) BRFSS, (6) nontraditional community and environmental health indicators, such as housing, transportation, walkability/green space, agriculture, labor, and education, and (7) local and state chart of accounts.

- ❖ Ability to prioritize and respond to data requests, including vital records, and to translate data into information and reports that are valid, statistically accurate, and accessible to the intended audiences.
- ❖ Ability to conduct a community and statewide health assessment and identify health priorities arising from that assessment, including analysis of health disparities.
- ❖ Ability to access 24/7 laboratory resources capable of providing rapid detection.

Emergency Preparedness and Response

- ❖ Ability and capacity to develop, exercise, and maintain preparedness and response strategies and plans, in accordance with established guidelines, to address natural or other disasters and emergencies, including special protection of vulnerable populations.
- ❖ Ability and capacity to lead the Emergency Support Function 8 – Public Health & Medical for the county, region, jurisdiction, and state.
- ❖ Ability to activate the emergency response personnel and communications systems in the event of a public health crisis; coordinate with federal, state, and local emergency managers and other first responders; and operate within, and as necessary lead, the incident management system.
- ❖ Ability to maintain and execute a continuity of operations plan that includes a plan to access financial resources to execute an emergency and recovery response.
- ❖ Ability to establish and promote basic, ongoing community readiness, resilience, and preparedness by enabling the public to take necessary action before, during, or after a disaster.
- ❖ Ability to issue and enforce emergency health orders.
- ❖ Ability to be notified of and respond to events on a 24/7 basis.
- ❖ Ability to function as a Laboratory Response Network (LRN) Reference laboratory for biological agents and as an LRN chemical laboratory at a level designated by CDC.

Policy Development and Support

- ❖ Ability to serve as a primary and expert resource for establishing, maintaining, and developing basic public health policy recommendations that are evidence-based, grounded in law, and legally defensible. This ability includes researching, analyzing, costing out, and articulating the impact of such policies and rules where appropriate, as well as the ability to organize support for these policies and rules and place them before an entity with the legal authority to adopt them.
- ❖ Ability to effectively inform and influence policies being considered by other governmental and non-governmental agencies within your jurisdiction that can improve the physical, environmental, social, and economic conditions affecting health but are beyond the immediate scope or authority of the governmental public health department.

Communications

- ❖ Ability to maintain ongoing relations with local and statewide media including the ability to write a press release, conduct a press conference, and use electronic communication tools to interact with the media.
- ❖ Ability to write and implement a routine communication plan that articulates the health department's mission, value, role, and responsibilities in its community, and support department and community leadership in communicating these messages.
- ❖ Ability to develop and implement a risk communication strategy, in accordance with Public Health Accreditation Board Standards, to increase visibility of a specific public health issue and communicate risk. This includes the ability to provide information on health risks and associated behaviors.
- ❖ Ability to transmit and receive routine communications to and from the public in an appropriate, timely, and accurate manner, on a 24/7 basis.
- ❖ Ability to develop and implement a proactive health education/health prevention strategy (distinct from other risk communications) that disseminates timely and accurate information to the public in culturally and linguistically appropriate (i.e., 508 compliant) formats for the various communities served, including through the use of electronic communication tools.

Community Partnership Development

- ❖ Ability to create, convene, and sustain strategic, non-program specific relationships with key health-related organizations; community groups or organizations representing populations experiencing health disparities or inequities; private businesses and health care organizations; and relevant federal, tribal, state, and local government agencies and non-elected officials.
- ❖ Ability to create, convene, and support strategic partnerships.
- ❖ Ability to maintain trust with and engage community residents at the grassroots level.
- ❖ Ability to strategically select and articulate governmental public health roles in programmatic and policy activities and coordinate with these partners.

- ❖ Ability to convene across governmental agencies, such as departments of transportation, aging, substance abuse/mental health, education, planning and development, or others, to promote health, prevent disease, and protect residents of the health department's geopolitical jurisdiction.
- ❖ Ability to engage members of the community in a community health improvement process that draws from community health assessment data and establishes a plan for addressing priorities. The community health improvement plan can serve as the basis for partnership development and coordination of effort and resources.

Organizational Administrative Competencies

- ❖ **Leadership and Governance:** Ability to lead internal and external stakeholders to consensus, with movement to action, and to serve as the public face of governmental public health in the department's jurisdiction. Ability to directly engage in health policy development, discussion, and adoption with local, state, and national policymakers, and to define a strategic direction of public health initiatives. Ability to engage with the appropriate governing entity about the department's public health legal authorities and what new laws and policies might be needed.
- ❖ **Health Equity:** Ability to strategically coordinate health equity programming through a high level, strategic vision and/or subject matter expertise which can lead and act as a resource to support such work across the department.
- ❖ **Information Technology Services, including Privacy and Security:** Ability to maintain and procure the hardware and software needed to access electronic health information and to support the department's operations and analysis of health data. Ability to support, use, and maintain communication technologies needed to interact with community residents. Ability to have the proper systems in place to keep health and human resources data confidential.
- ❖ **Human Resources Services:** Ability to develop and maintain a competent workforce, including recruitment, retention, and succession planning; training; and performance review and accountability.
- ❖ **Financial Management, Contract, and Procurement Services, including Facilities and Operations:** Ability to establish a budgeting, auditing, billing, and financial system and chart of expense and revenue accounts in compliance with federal, state, and local standards and policies. Ability to secure grants or other funding (governmental and not) and demonstrate compliance with an audit required for the sources of funding utilized. Ability to procure, maintain, and manage safe facilities and efficient operations.
- ❖ **Legal Services and Analysis:** Ability to access and appropriately use legal services in planning, implementing, and enforcing, public health initiatives, including relevant administrative rules and due process.

Accountability/Performance Management

- ❖ **Quality Improvement:** Ability to perform according to accepted business standards and to be accountable in accordance with applicable relevant federal, state, and local laws and policies and to assure compliance with national and Public Health Accreditation Board Standards. Ability to maintain a performance management system to monitor achievement of organizational objectives. Ability to identify and use evidence-based and/or promising practices when implementing new or revised processes, programs and/or interventions at the organizational level. Ability to maintain an organization-wide culture of quality improvement using nationally recognized framework quality improvement tools and methods.

Public Health Programs (Foundational Areas)

Communicable Disease Control

- ❖ Provide timely, statewide, and locally relevant and accurate information to the health care system and community on communicable diseases and their control.
- ❖ Identify statewide and local communicable disease control community partners and their capacities, develop and implement a prioritized communicable disease control plan, and seek funding for high priority initiatives.
- ❖ Receive laboratory reports and other relevant data, conduct disease investigations, including contact tracing and notification, and recognize, identify, and respond to communicable disease outbreaks for notifiable conditions in accordance with local, national and state mandates and guidelines.
- ❖ Assure the availability of partner notification services for newly diagnosed cases of syphilis, gonorrhea, and HIV according to CDC guidelines.
- ❖ Assure the appropriate treatment of individuals who have active tuberculosis, including the provision of directly-observed therapy in accordance with local and state laws and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines.
- ❖ Support the recognition of outbreaks and other events of public health significance by assuring capacity for the identification and characterization of the causative agents of disease and their origin, including those that are rare and unusual, at the appropriate level.
- ❖ Coordinate and integrate categorically-funded communicable disease programs and services.

Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention

- ❖ Provide timely, statewide, and locally relevant and accurate information to the health care system and community on chronic disease and injury prevention and control.
- ❖ Identify statewide and local chronic disease and injury prevention community partners and their capacities, develop and implement a prioritized prevention plan, and seek funding for high priority initiatives.
- ❖ Reduce statewide and community rates of tobacco use through a program that conforms to standards set by state or local laws and CDC's Office on Smoking and Health, including activities to reduce youth initiation, increase cessation, and reduce secondhand smoke exposure, as well as exposure to harmful substances.
- ❖ Work actively with statewide and community partners to increase statewide and community rates of healthy eating and active living through a prioritized approach focusing on best and emerging practices aligned with national, state, and local guidelines for healthy eating and active living.
- ❖ Coordinate and integrate categorically-funded chronic disease and injury prevention programs and services.

Environmental Public Health

- ❖ Provide timely, statewide, and locally relevant and accurate information to the state, health care system, and community on environmental public health issues and health impacts from common environmental or toxic exposures.
- ❖ Identify statewide and local community environmental public health partners and their capacities, develop and implement a prioritized plan, and seek action funding for high priority initiatives.
- ❖ Conduct mandated environmental public health laboratory testing, inspections, and oversight to protect food, recreation sites, and drinking water; manage liquid and solid waste streams safely; and, identify other public health hazards related to environmental factors in accordance with federal, state, and local laws and regulations.
- ❖ Protect workers and the public from chemical and radiation hazards in accordance with federal, state, and local laws and regulations
- ❖ Participate in broad land use planning and sustainable development to encourage decisions that promote positive public health outcomes (e.g. housing and urban development, recreational facilities, and transportation systems) and resilient communities.
- ❖ Coordinate and integrate categorically-funded environmental public health programs and services.

Maternal, Child, and Family Health

- ❖ Provide timely, statewide, and locally relevant and accurate information to the health care system and community on emerging and on-going maternal child health trends.
- ❖ Identify local maternal and child health community partners and their capacities; using life course expertise and an understanding of health disparities, develop a prioritized prevention plan; and seek funding for high priority initiatives.
- ❖ Identify, disseminate, and promote emerging and evidence-based information about early interventions in the prenatal and early childhood period that promote lifelong health and positive social-emotional development.
- ❖ Assure newborn screening as mandated by a state or local governing body including wraparound services, reporting back, following up, and service engagement activities.
- ❖ Coordinate and integrate categorically funded maternal, child, and family health programs and services.

Access to and Linkage with Clinical Care

- ❖ Provide timely, statewide, and locally relevant and accurate information to the health care system and community on access and linkage to clinical care (including behavioral health), healthcare system access, quality, and cost.
- ❖ Inspect and license healthcare facilities, and license, monitor, and discipline healthcare providers, where applicable.
- ❖ In concert with national and statewide groups and local providers of health care, identify healthcare partners and competencies, develop prioritized plans for increasing access to health homes and quality health care, and seek funding for high priority policy initiatives.
- ❖ Coordinate and integrate categorically-funded clinical health care.

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