

Assistant Director Letter

PHD provides an array of services with the common purpose of improving and protecting the health of everyone in Oregon. That goal is achieved through an emphasis on prevention and early intervention.

PHD operates more than 100 prevention-related programs aimed at halting the spread of disease, protecting against environmental hazards, promoting healthy behaviors, ensuring effective health services for all communities and making sure that all Oregonians have equal access to the benefits of public health.

PHD and its local partners provide a range of services to protect the health of Oregonians including:

- Preserving and building upon prior public health achievements, especially in the control of preventable diseases and injuries.
- Addressing new and emerging threats. These include new or resurgent infectious diseases, environmental hazards and public health emergencies.
- Developing and implementing programs to ensure the health of pregnant women, mothers, infants, and children.
- Operating the State Public Health Laboratories, which identifies disease-causing microorganisms and screens every Oregon newborn for more than 40 metabolic disorders.
- Promoting access to high-quality, safe health care.
- Supporting the work of county health departments which provide public health services at the local level.

The need for these services

In recent years the world has seen the emergence of new and potentially catastrophic threats to the health and physical well-being of the population.

PHD provides the front-line defense against such threats as pandemic influenza, novel infections such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and bioterrorism.

Heart disease, cancer and stroke continue to be the major causes of death and disability. In addition, injury contributes to the burden of pain and disability and is the leading cause of death for children and young adults.

A new challenge is the obesity epidemic and its attendant chronic illnesses which pose an enormous challenge for public health and the health care system.

Tobacco use continues to be the leading preventable cause of death and disability, contributing to more than 7,700 deaths per year in Oregon.

Here are some examples of the need for preventive programs in Oregon:

- Oregon is experiencing an epidemic of obesity which opens the door for diabetes, a chronic disease with huge financial and social costs. Sixty percent of Oregon adults are overweight or obese. Obesity in adults has more than doubled between 1990 and 2005.
- Although an estimated 20,000 Oregon women need help in pregnancy or early motherhood, Oregon's public health nursing program can provide services to only about 5,500 of them.
- Oregon's suicide rate is 37 percent higher than the national rate. Suicide rates increase with age and are highest among older men.
- School-based health centers are the only source of medical care for rising numbers of uninsured children and teens. Without expansion of the program more and more youngsters will fall through the cracks in the health care system.

- Oregon is fighting a threat from lead-based paints. More than 60 percent of all Oregon housing was built before 1978, when use of lead-based paint was common. A new federal law requires that by April, 2010, all individuals and firms doing renovation work on pre-1978 housing will require special certification. More than 10,000 firms and individuals will need that certification.
- Oregon’s emergency medical system is in desperate need of upgrading. A 2006 federal study cited “dramatic deterioration” of the system during the previous 14 years.
- Children’s oral health remains a significant public health problem in Oregon. According to the Smile Survey 2007, by first grade, 59.3 percent of children have already had at least one cavity and one-in-five children have rampant decay. Statewide coordination of school-based fluoride tablets and dental sealants is critical in the fight to decrease cavities.

Responding to public health needs, Oregon’s state and local public health system:

- Certifies 8,000 emergency medical technicians every two years;
- Ensures safe drinking water in Oregon’s 3,600 public drinking water systems;
- Licenses and inspects more than 18,000 food facilities and trains more than 61,000 food workers;
- Oversees 45 school-based health centers in 19 counties serving nearly 21,000 children through more than 69,000 visits annually;
- Provides more than 50,000 home health nurse visits to pregnant women and infants identified as being at high risk for medical, social or economic reasons
- Distributes 872,612 doses of vaccine annually to private and public providers;
- Provides family planning services to 119,605 clients at approximately 165 clinics;
- Supports 43 schools to participate in the School-Based Dental Sealant program;
- Provides breast and cervical cancer screening and diagnostic services to approximately 6,975 medically underserved women.
- Issues 160,000 birth and death certificates;

- Investigates 100 disease outbreaks, several of which affect more than 100 people;
- Performs more than 16.5 million laboratory tests biennially on 869,000 samples submitted by local public health departments, community clinics, hospitals and others;
- Helps assure access to care for nearly 100,000 patients through community health centers.

Reductions in federal funding and the threat of diminished resources to support county health departments pose additional challenges for public health.

One important goal is to strengthen the relationship between the state and counties to bring more consistent access to public health services across the state and improve community health outcomes. This will require additional financial resources for local health departments and improved PHD capacity to provide assistance, oversight, and workforce development.

Strengthening service delivery through a needs-based budget

Key requests contained within this budget:

- Improve local public health system support to ensure consistent statewide capacity to carry out basic public health activities;
- Obesity prevention and education to stem a growing tide of diabetes and other chronic illnesses;
- Core capacity for Environmental Public Health, supporting cross-agency and gubernatorial initiatives;
- Breast and cervical cancer screening to serve the 37,000 Oregon women who are now unable to get services because of program funding limitations;
- Suicide prevention activities across the lifespan;
- Improve the state's emergency medical services system;
- Establish a birth defect registry;

- Hepatitis C virus screening program;
- Public health data system improvements;
- Hospital and health care facility inspection standards;
- Sustain an Oral Health Program to provide overall agency oral health coordination and leadership;
- Expand the Public Health Nursing (PHN) program;
- Expand the Child Care Health Consultation (CCHC) program.

Summary

These initiatives are intended to improve the Division's ability to assist Oregonians and their families to become independent, healthy and safe by:

- Reducing the personal, economic and social burden of preventable illness, injury and death;
- Encouraging healthy behaviors;
- Assuring the quality and accessibility of health services;
- Responding to emergencies and helping communities with recovery efforts.

Michael Skeels,
Interim Director

PHD program narratives

PHD protects, preserves and promotes the health of all Oregonians by preventing unnecessary illness, death and disability, by improving the health of Oregon's communities and reducing the need for costly medical care.

PHD works closely with the state's health care community to extend public health services to every corner of the state. Most public health services are provided through county public health departments under contracts and agreements with PHD.

PHD is also the primary source for information about the health of Oregonians. This information is critical for the design of effective and appropriately targeted prevention efforts

Prevention of disease and disability is a main goal of PHD to ensure that Oregonians remain independent, healthy and safe. This goal is carried out through six major programs that are designed to address key aspects of the PHD mission:

Office of the State Public Health Director

This office manages the Public Health Emergency Preparedness Program which ensures that each community and hospital has an ever-increasing level of preparedness for public health emergencies including terrorist attacks and pandemic influenza. The office also provides technical support and oversight to local health departments which deliver public health services at the local level.

The office conducts emergency readiness training to prepare state and local public health officials for such events as terrorist incidents and pandemic influenza.

Office of Disease Prevention and Epidemiology

This Office is the primary source of information about rates of communicable diseases, chronic diseases and injuries, as well as about risk factors for these diseases. This information is shared with policymakers and with Oregonians in all walks of life through printed reports, the internet, newsletters and public presentations, and it is essential for effective policymaking and program development.

This Office supports communicable disease outbreak investigation by our county health department partners throughout the state. Typically the public health system investigates more than 100 disease outbreaks each year, several of which affect more than 100 people. Preventing tobacco use, obesity, suicide and the spread of HIV and tuberculosis are some of the other important areas addressed by this Office. Oregon's vital records system (i.e., birth, death and marriage certificates) is also run by this Office. In 2006 about 160,000 birth and death certificates were issued for Oregonians

Office of Environmental Public Health

The Office of Environmental Public Health (OEPH) is the State's leader to protect Oregonians from both acute and chronic health effects of environmental hazards, whether human-made or naturally occurring, in our air, land, water and built environment. Toxicology, epidemiology, data analysis, surveillance, risk communication, technical assistance, case management, regulatory oversight, and emergency preparedness and response are among the key tools necessary to accomplish OEPH's mission.

In some areas, OEPH provides services directly (e.g., assuring protection from unsafe radiation exposure); in other areas, OEPH partners with local health departments (e.g., oversight of food facilities and some drinking water systems). In still other areas, OEPH provides scientific expertise to natural resource agencies and local

governments to ensure their work protects human health (e.g., setting air toxics standards, or approving water re-use applications). In all, the work of OEPH affects every person in Oregon, and includes 18,000 restaurants, 13,600 radiation sources, 3,600 drinking water systems, 3,400 swimming pools, 2,300 tourist facilities, and 362 miles of coastline.

Office of Family Health

The Office of Family Health (OFH) supports the local delivery of a wide range of preventive health services to improve overall health of Oregon's women, children and families. Objectives and activities include collecting and sharing data through the FamilyNet data system to assess the health of women, children and families, developing and implementing public health policy based on these data, and ensuring the availability, quality and accessibility of health services and health promotion. It also reduces and eliminates disparities and provides technical assistance, consultation, and resources to local health departments and other community partners. The major program areas within OFH include: Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Programs that encompass Perinatal, Child and Oral Health, Adolescent Health and Genetics, Women's and Reproductive Health, Nutrition and Health Screening (WIC), and Immunization.

Last year, the Office of Family Health programs provided over:

- 50,000 home visits
- 872,612 doses of vaccine
- 5,721 dental sealants to 1,847 school children
- 195,540 family planning visits
- 20,831 children with services through more than 69,034 visits at School-Based Health Centers
- 168,000 women, infants and children with nutrition services from the WIC Program.

Office of Oregon State Public Health Laboratories

The laboratory supports state and local public health programs to control communicable diseases, identifies metabolic disorders in newborn infants and oversees the quality of testing in the state's clinical and environmental laboratories. During the 2007-2009 biennium the laboratory will perform 16.5 million tests on 869,000 samples submitted by local health departments, community clinics, hospitals, physicians and others. The office also provides rapid response to threats ranging from pandemic influenza to bioterrorism.

The newborn screening program tests all infants born in Oregon, Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, and New Mexico for more than 40 metabolic disorders and certifies 2,000 clinical laboratories in Oregon.

Office of Community Health and Health Planning

Ensuring high-quality, safe health care is an essential part of the PHD mission. By working with public and private partners the office ensures that hospitals and other institutions providing medical care meet state standards. It oversees other providers and activities including emergency medical technicians, ambulance services and trauma systems. It certifies about 8,000 emergency technicians biennially, licenses 140 ambulance services, and supports the Patient Safety Commission.

The PHD also promotes access to health care services, particularly for vulnerable populations. It helps establish and expand community health centers (serving about 100,000 patients each year) and rural health clinics, and helps place physicians in needy communities (currently about 120 doctors).

PHD environmental scan

To make sure all Oregonians live healthy and safe lives, PHD works with local public health departments, physicians, hospitals, health care systems and community groups. The challenges facing public health include those brought on lack of funding, changing disease patterns and unhealthy behaviors on the part of individuals.

Challenges

- Implementing program to strengthen relationship between PHD and local health departments;
- Reducing the burden of disease and disability related to obesity;
- Deterioration of the state Emergency Medical System;
- Fulfilling the requirements of new federal rules governing lead-based paint renovation;
- Inadequate funding for public health nurses to provide home visiting services to at-risk pregnant women and new mothers;
- Lack of funding for a sustainable State-based Oral Health Program;
- Investigating citizen complaints against health facilities in a timely manner;

- Lack of coordinated statewide early childhood cavity prevention programs;
- Lack of ability to track birth anomalies;
- Inadequate protection of those under the care of hospice programs;
- Inadequate funding for the Oregon Healthy Teens Survey, the major instrument used to track the health and health risk factors among Oregon teens;

- Lack of comprehensive effort to protect Oregonians from environmental contamination;
- Maintaining efforts in light of reduced federal funding for some critical programs such as Emergency Preparedness.

- Absorbing the loss of timber revenues that will reduce local public health services and potentially shift responsibilities to the state.

Opportunities

- Align authority, performance and incentives within the public health system by reviewing the currently complex and opaque relationship between state and county health agencies.
- Establish a comprehensive program to fight obesity.
- A comprehensive package will address the needs for preparedness planning for emergency medical systems and trauma systems.
- Establish support infrastructure to provide essential environmental Public Health expertise to other state agencies, local health departments, businesses, schools and the public.
- Expand state and local capacity to provide public health nursing to at-risk children and pregnant women.
- Provide support for expanding and sustaining the School-Based Health Center Model.
- Improve the health and safety of children in child care settings through the Child Care Health Consultation (CCHC) program.
- Incorporate public health principles into current health care reform activities (SB 329 – Oregon Health Fund Board).
- Address liability issues for health responders during declared disasters and other emergencies.

Response to critical challenges addressed by this budget

Reshaping the state public health system to bring a higher degree of collaboration between PHD and local county health departments is a top priority within this budget request. Resources are needed to bring clarity to a currently opaque relationship between PHD and the county health departments which, under contract with the state, provide on-the-ground public health services to local areas. Among the important elements of this request are provisions to rewrite Oregon administrative rules. The aim is to explicitly detail public health services to match up with contracts; rationalize and standardize service contracts under one umbrella and improve frequency, reliability and transparency of data flow between PHD and the counties.

This budget establishes, for the first time, a minimally credible, comprehensive effort to protect Oregonians from 21st Century health risks posed by environmental contamination. The investment would transform Oregon from a “back of the pack status” among other states. Oregon would emerge in the top quartile of states, for its size, in the country. Pollution and contamination of our environment pose significant risks to health and well-being of Oregonians. Thus, our food, air, water, land and products can cause or contribute to both short-term and life-long preventable disease and disability. Seventeen restrictive federal grants and more than a dozen fee-for-service programs leave significant and growing gaps in PHDs ability to protect Oregonians from environmental contamination.

Many of the challenges to Oregonians’ independence, health and safety center on unresolved public health issues. Public health is based on science and focuses on the health of populations and communities. As such, the programs emphasize the prevention of illness and injury rather than treating medical conditions that have already occurred. Many public health activities are invisible to the public while the programs work quietly in the background. But they quickly become apparent when wide-scale threats emerge such as communicable disease outbreaks, bioterrorism alerts and contamination of air, food or drinking water. PHD seeks funding programs including:

- Breast and cervical cancer screening for the estimated 37,000 Oregon women who can't get screened because of program fund limitations.
- Testing many of the 48,000 Oregonians who are unknowingly infected with hepatitis C virus (HCV).
- Obesity prevention and education.
- Expansion of school-based health centers, providing health and mental health services to an additional 3,000 to 7,000 students.
- Expansion of public health nursing services to at-risk children and pregnant women.
- Coordination of early childhood cavities programs statewide.
- Support the continuation of school-based dental sealant and fluoride supplement program, reaching an estimated 145,000 elementary school children.
- Expand the Child Care Health Consultation (CCHC) Program to a regional model supporting over 4,000 child care providers.