

Launching Oregon's Public Health Workforce Plan

WHERE DID IT ALL BEGIN

In 2023, the Oregon State Legislature invested \$50 million to strengthen public health across the state, including support for building and retaining a strong workforce. In response, Oregon Health Authority's (OHA) Public Health Division (PHD), and a Public Health Advisory Board (PHAB) workgroup created a statewide workforce plan.

The [Public Health System Workforce Plan](#) is now complete and being put into action. It focuses on recruiting, retaining, and supporting public health workers through training and development, systems strategy and infrastructure improvements. It brings together OHA-PHD, Tribal Health Authorities, Local Public Health Authorities (LPHA), Community Based Organizations (CBO), and academic partners under one shared vision: helping Oregon build a more coordinated, equitable, and sustainable public health workforce that can meet communities' changing needs.

WHY IT MATTERS

The focus is on strengthening how services are delivered, how communities are supported, and how the state prepares for new challenges: ensuring Oregon has a responsive, equitable, and resilient public health system.

Public health needs are changing quickly, and communities expect clearer communication, faster responses, and services that reflect their experiences. By modernizing systems and aligning work across programs, the people of Oregon are better supported, and a more coordinated, effective public health infrastructure is built. These changes help reduce disparities, improve outcomes, and build trust with the communities who rely on public health every day.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

Training

In collaboration with the Oregon Coalition of Local Health Officials (CLHO), a public health essentials training is being launched. This training is based on PHAB workgroup recommendations. It builds a shared foundation in Oregon's public health system and modernization, centers equity-focused and culturally responsive practices, and includes contributions from OHA-PHD, OHA Tribal Affairs, LPHAs, and CBOs. It means shared messaging, aligned understanding, and equitable access for the public health workforce.

Early Career Pathways

In early 2026, relationships with regional academic institutions expanded, especially those serving underrepresented students. We've allied with a centralized platform for internships through the PH Preceptor Connect & Development Network, led by Tonya Johnson at Oregon State University (OSU) and Jamie Jones with the Oregon Health & Science University and Portland State University (OHSU-PSU), where preceptors share templates, timelines, best practices, and sample agreements.

Youth Outreach

PHD's Take Your Child to Work Day and Nyssa High School visit were re-established to promote early public health careers, particularly for rural students. A partner panel during National Public Health Week in April of this year featured four systemwide panelists to help people see themselves in public health and drew strong attendance and connection.

Looking Ahead to 2027

Priorities include co-developing the Public Health Essentials Training with subject matter experts (SMEs) and CLHO, expanding the Internship Program through stronger academic partnerships and outreach to underrepresented student populations, and aligning with training priorities in the Public Health System Workforce Plan. This ensures remaining grant funds target systemwide training needs before funding ends in November 2027.

STAY ENGAGED

Insight and experience remain essential to build a stronger public health system, one reflecting a shared commitment to every community in Oregon. Updates, feedback opportunities, and ways to shape this work will continue. Quarterly updates will be shared via OHA-PHD communications and Liaisons with Tribal Affairs, LPHAs, CBOs and academic institutions. These updates will be sent by email and posted on the [Public Health System Workforce Plan Oregon.gov site](#).