

Role of the Oregon Public Health Advisory Board

This guide explains what the Public Health Advisory Board (PHAB) does, how it fits within Oregon's broader health system, and how people and partners can engage with its work.

It is designed for:

- PHAB members to understand their role and focus
- Partners to know how to bring issues forward
- Community members to know where their voice can have impact

What is PHAB?

The PHAB is a committee of the Oregon Health Policy Board (OHPB) established in state law (ORS 431.122). It serves as an advisory body to the OHPB and OHA, with its recommendations most directly informing the OHA Public Health Division (PHD), to guide public health policy and priorities across the state.

It is a 21-member board, including 18 Governor-appointed voting members representing local public health administrators, community-based organizations, Tribal health, healthcare partners, academia, health equity and metrics experts, and an at-large member. There are 3 ex-officio non-voting members including the Public Health Director, State Health Officer, and an OHPB liaison.

PHAB focuses on improving population health, strengthening public health programs and systems, advancing health equity, and guiding Oregon's public health modernization efforts. PHAB does not make final policy or funding decisions, but its recommendations inform statewide priorities and actions.

Although PHAB's role is advisory, its recommendations have a significant impact on what issues move forward, what gets measured, and how the public health system grows and adapts.

Public Health

Every day in Oregon, people depend on systems they rarely see—clean water flowing from the tap, safe food, policies that ensure tobacco-free public spaces, early warnings about health risks, and support that helps families stay well and navigate challenges before they become more serious, such as communicable disease outbreaks, poor air quality, or limited access to care.

These protections don't happen by accident. They are the result of intentional, coordinated work across communities, the Nine Federally Recognized Tribes in Oregon, local and state agencies, healthcare, businesses, schools, and other partners who share responsibility for preventing harm and promoting well-being. This is public health.

Governmental public health includes state, Tribal and local public health agencies that have legal responsibilities to protect, promote and support people's overall health and the health of communities.

Oregon's public health system is a network of governmental and nongovernmental organizations working together to ensure these protections statewide.

PHAB's Influence

PHAB influences statewide public health work through its recommendations to the OHA and the OHPB. PHAB helps shape public health priorities to move forward, how public health modernization is resourced, and how community perspectives are reflected in statewide decisions.

What PHAB focuses on

These are duties PHAB holds in state law (ORS 431.123).

- Advising OHA and the OHPB on public health modernization, statewide priorities, and emerging issues
- Informing modernization priorities and strategy (statewide assessments, modernization plans, resource alignment, funding)
- Establishing accountability metrics and incentive models that guide how public health performance is measured and improved statewide
- Making funding recommendations for governmental public health including distribution approaches and sustainable funding strategies
- Guiding statewide planning processes such as the State Health Assessment (SHA) and State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP)
- Elevating community, Tribal, and partner perspectives so statewide decisions reflect local needs
- Connecting partners across the system (LPHAs, the Nine Federally Recognized Tribes in Oregon, CBOs, OHA) to strengthen alignment
- Highlighting the importance of public health and the need for sustainable investment through communication with state decision-makers

Where PHAB can contribute

These are areas where PHAB can offer insight, even though it does not have formal authority.

- Health policy
- Social and environmental drivers of health that require cross-system alignment
- Workforce development needs and training opportunities
- Communications and partnership-building to support modernization and raise awareness of public health needs

What PHAB does not do

- Regulate hospitals, clinics, or providers
- Administer Medicaid or federal health programs
- Oversee behavioral health programs
- Make recommendations about individual care
- Award or manage public health funding directly

How PHAB provides recommendations

Most PHAB recommendations follow this flow:

- Topics come to PHAB from OHA, partners, PHAB members, or public comment.
- PHAB receives background information, reviews data, discusses the issue, considers equity impacts, and may hear input from partners or the community
- PHAB may identify an action, change, or alignment with partners. OHA staff may help draft recommendations for PHAB to review.
- PHAB finalizes its recommendation by voting.
 - Approved recommendations are shared with OHA PHD or OHPB. PHAB may provide them in writing, through presentations, or by adopting documents.

PHAB's influence depends on whether a topic falls within its direct or indirect advisory role. PHAB may receive updates from OHA or OHPB including follow-up presentations or status updates.

How to engage

The PHAB meets every 2nd Thursday of each month. The agenda is posted in advance with a regular time for public comment. Partners and community members can review the agenda to decide when their input is relevant. Visit the website for more information: <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/ph/about/pages/ophab.aspx>

Partners

Partners may request time on a future PHAB agenda through OHA staff. PHAB uses partner input to understand what is happening on the ground, identify gaps in statewide strategy, and surface themes that PHAB can elevate.

Community members

PHAB meetings are open to the public. Community members and partners may provide public comment during designated times and share input on public health priorities, modernization efforts, and system needs. This can include concerns, local challenges, suggestions, or simply listening to the discussion. You do not need expertise to comment. Community voice is an important part of PHAB's work.

Contact

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