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## Public Health Modernization: Frequently Asked Questions

### *Background*

The Task Force on the Future of Public Health Services was created by House Bill 2348 (2013) in order to develop recommendations for a modern public health system in Oregon. The Task Force on the Future of Public Health Services met for nine months and submitted final recommendations to the legislature in September 2014 in the *Modernizing Oregon's Public Health System* report.

Legislators used the recommendations from the *Modernizing Oregon's Public Health System* report to introduce House Bill 3100, which was signed into law in July 2015. House Bill 3100 operationalizes many of these recommendations over the period of 2015-2017. Specifically, House Bill 3100:

- Adopts foundational capabilities and programs for governmental public health.
- Changes the composition and role of the Public Health Advisory Board beginning on January 1, 2016.
- Requires the Oregon Health Authority's Public Health Division and local public health authorities to assess their current ability to implement the foundational capabilities and programs; and requires the Public Health Division to submit a report on these findings to the legislature by June 2016.
- Requires local public health authorities to submit plans for implementing the foundational capabilities and programs no later than December 2023.

### *What does governmental public health do and why is it important?*

Governmental public health protects the health of the entire population. The governmental public health system is responsible for:

- Inspecting restaurants, drinking water systems, health care and other facilities in order to mitigate any potential risks to the public;
- Investigating and controlling disease outbreaks so they are not spread across a community;
- Planning, exercising and responding to emergencies, including man-made and natural disasters; and
- Assuring that community members have the support they need to achieve optimal health by monitoring the burden of chronic disease and changing the environment to prevent disease in the first place.

### *Why modernize Oregon's public health system now?*

Oregon's health system transformation has led to a greater focus on the prevention of disease and the elimination of health disparities.

The role of public health is to protect and promote the health of everyone in Oregon. However, the current situation for public health in Oregon is inhibiting its ability to achieve a population-wide focus on prevention. Some of the issues are:

- A large disparity in level of county funding resulting in limited capacity for public health services in many areas;
- A focus on individual service delivery at the cost of providing community-wide interventions;
- Reliance on Federal categorical funding which dictates what programs need to be provided, regardless of community need; and
- Limited state funding for foundational public health capabilities and programs.

*Is Oregon currently providing foundational capabilities and programs throughout the state?*

Oregon's public health system is not currently able to fully meet this aim due to reliance on federal categorical funding. Further, resources that are invested in public health vary dramatically from community to community.

*What will happen next in the effort to modernize Oregon's public health system?*

In order for everyone in Oregon to have access to these foundational public health protections:

- A new governance structure for Oregon's public health system, the Public Health Advisory Board, was appointed by the Governor and met for the first time in January 2016;
- Clear, measurable definitions of the foundational capabilities and programs for governmental public health were developed using national best practice research and feedback from stakeholders;
- State and local health departments are assessing the extent to which they currently provide the foundational capabilities and programs, what gap exists, and what resources are needed;
- Findings from the modernization assessments will be synthesized into a final report for the legislature that will include programmatic findings, an estimated cost for statewide implementation of the foundational capabilities and programs, and recommendations for next steps;
- Local health departments will determine the most appropriate governance structure for the jurisdiction they serve, so they can successfully implement the foundational capabilities and programs; and
- With communities, tribes and partners, and with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and state public health, local health departments will develop plans to implement the foundational capabilities and programs, based on the findings from their assessments.

*How does the modernization assessment differ from community health assessments?*

The public health modernization assessment is different from a community health assessment. In order to comply with House Bill 3100, state and local public health departments will be responsible for completing a standardized assessment related to the foundational capabilities and programs for governmental public health. The modernization assessment is internally focused on the modernization components contained in House Bill 3100, although health departments may engage their partners to share the assessment findings.

Community health assessments are a requirement that coordinated care organizations (CCOs), nonprofit hospitals and health departments pursuing accreditation share. A community health assessment is a systematic process of collecting data about the health of an entire community in order to identify key health issues and needs. Many CCOs, hospitals and health departments have worked collaboratively on community health assessments over the last few years; some are currently updating their community health assessment.



Where can I find more information?

Contact the Oregon Health Authority's Public Health Division at [publichealth.policy@state.or.us](mailto:publichealth.policy@state.or.us) or visit [www.healthoregon.org/modernization](http://www.healthoregon.org/modernization).