

## Conceptual Framework for Governmental Public Health Services

Public health is defined as “a set of organized interdisciplinary efforts to protect, promote, and restore the public’s health. It is the combination of assessment, policy development and assurance that is directed to the maintenance and improvement of the health of all the people through collective or social actions.”<sup>1</sup> In this regard, governmental public health aims to improve the health of the entire population and to reduce health inequities among population groups. Governmental public health departments and health districts are responsible for activities which include, but are not limited to, preventing, identifying and responding to disease outbreaks and epidemics; establishing and maintaining standards for environmental health protections; and promoting healthy behaviors through policy, systems and environmental changes. The activities undertaken by governmental public health apply to the entire population of a jurisdiction or state and are focused on improving the health status and well-being of the population. While this document focuses on governmental public health it is clear that these objectives cannot be achieved going forward without close collaboration between governmental public health and Oregon's system for delivering personal medical care services.

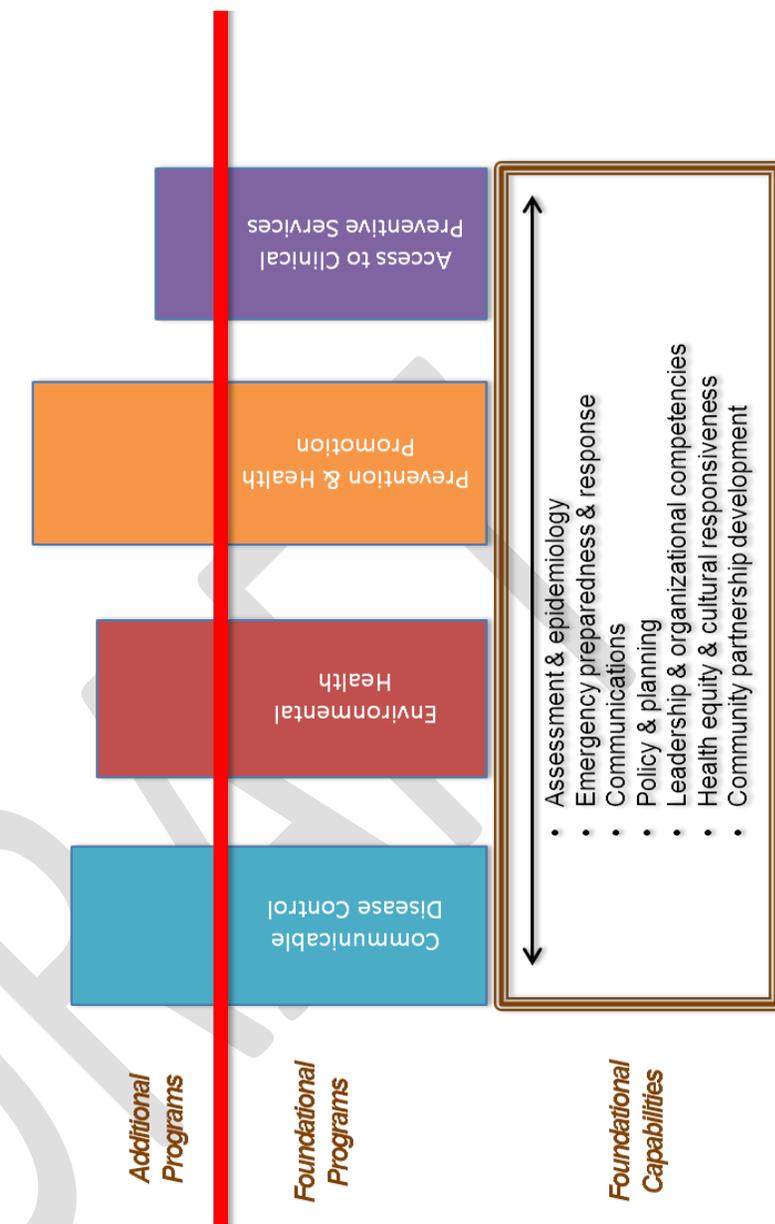
The Conceptual Framework for Governmental Public Health Services is a narrative and visual description of the core, foundational elements of a governmental public health system. It is the role of governmental public health--through the combined efforts of state and local public health and in collaboration with coordinated care organizations (CCOs), community partners, and others--to assure these functions. It is the role of governmental public health to maintain a population-wide perspective on improving, protecting and monitoring the health of everyone in Oregon.

This document builds on recommendations put forward in the Institute of Medicine’s 2012 report *For the Public's Health: Investing in a Healthier Future* and on work done in Washington, Ohio, and other states on identifying the core, foundational elements of a public health system. As with those works, this draft framework includes a number of program-specific skills and activities beyond those that are cross-cutting and also need to be considered “foundational” to governmental public health departments.

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<sup>1</sup> : Institute of Medicine (1988). *The Future of Public Health*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

## DRAFT Conceptual Framework for Governmental Public Health Services



### FOUNDATIONAL CAPABILITIES

- **DEFINITION:** Foundational capabilities are critical knowledge, skills and abilities that are necessary to carry out public health activities efficiently and effectively. They are needed to identify and analyze public health problems, and to address these problems through public health programs and policies. They are key to protecting and improving the community's health, and achieving effective and equitable health outcomes. For Oregon's public health system to function well, these foundational capabilities need to be present

broadly in our state and local health departments: they are the essential capacities.

- Foundational capabilities include: Assessment & Epidemiology; Emergency Preparedness and Response; Communications; Policy & Planning; Leadership & Organizational Competencies; Health Equity and Cultural Responsiveness; and Community Partnership Development.

### **FOUNDATIONAL PROGRAMS**

- **DEFINITION:** Basic areas of public health expertise and activity that are essential to assess, protect, and improve the community's health. These programs can be appropriately implemented at the state or local levels or as a state-local partnership. However these programs are implemented, their benefits must be available to all Oregon's residents and visitors. Foundational public health programs are considered the baseline services of our public health system.
- Foundational programs include: communicable disease control, environmental public health, prevention and health promotion; and access to clinical preventive services.
- When available, best practices should be used in providing or establishing a foundational capability or program. When evidence is either lacking or an evidence-based practice is not appropriate for a given community, here also needs to be room for innovation to either develop new or improve upon best practices.

### **ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS**

- **DEFINITION:** Public health programs and activities that are implemented in addition to foundational programs; they are implemented to address specific identified community public health problems or needs. Additional public health programs are supported by the foundational capabilities and may be supported by and integrated with foundational programs.
- Additional programs are of two fundamental types:
  1. Enhancement or expansion of a foundational program. For example, a jurisdiction might decide it is important for the local health department to provide testing and/or treatment for certain sexually transmitted disease beyond those addressed by the foundational communicable disease program. This kind of program may not be necessary in other jurisdictions based on differing needs and/or other organizations' roles, commitment of resources to conduct related services.
  2. A new program to address a need not addressed by a foundational program. For example, a county might direct its health department

to implement a program in partnership with the local Coordinated Care Organization and other medical providers to reduce drug overdose and other harms resulting from prescription pain killers.

## **FOUNDATIONAL CAPABILITIES *BASIC ELEMENTS***

### Assessment & Epidemiology

This core capability includes the knowledge, skills and abilities to gather and analyze data to produce clear and usable understandings of the causes and contributors to important diseases, premature death, and injury in the state. The focus of these activities may be statewide for all Oregonians, for a selected community or a specific population that may be at additional risk. Elements of this capability include the capacity to:

- Identify and respond to disease outbreaks and epidemics
- Conduct and assess core health behavior surveys (e.g. Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS), or school-based youth surveys)
- Collect and maintain vital records (birth and death certificates)
- Utilize data from sources such as vital records, administrative data sets, electronic health records, insurance data, hospital data, and non-traditional community and environmental health indicators
- Analyze and provide timely, statewide, and locally relevant and accurate data on the burden and cause of diseases, disability and death
- Analyze and respond to information based on reports to the notifiable conditions list and provide rapid detection when needed
- Analyze key health indicators for a state or community health profile
- Prioritize and respond to data requests and translate data into basic information and reports that are accurate, statistically valid, and usable by the requester.
- Identify conditions and causes of death, injury and diseases that disproportionately affect certain population, including by race, ethnicity or socioeconomic status
- Conduct a basic community health assessment with partners and identify health priorities arising from that assessment. Utilize this data in the development of community health improvement plans Evaluate public health programs

### Emergency preparedness & response

This core capability ensures the ability to protect the public by being able to respond to the public health aspects of natural and man-made disasters and emergencies. Elements for this capacity include the knowledge, skills, and ability to:

- Develop, exercise, improve, and maintain preparedness and response plans

- Communicate and coordinate with medical care, emergency management, and other response partners
- Ability to activate staff for events and recognize if public health has a primary, secondary or ancillary role in response activities
- Activate emergency response personnel and communications systems during a public health emergency
- Maintain and execute a continuity of operations plan that includes a plan to access resources to execute an emergency and recovery response
- Issue and enforce emergency health orders
- Be notified of and respond to potential public health events at all times
- Address needs of vulnerable populations in the event of an emergency

### Policy & Planning

This core capability includes the ability to identify, develop, implement and maintain public health policies that are necessary to protect and improve the public's health. Elements for this capacity include the knowledge, skills and ability to:

- Serve as a primary and expert resource for using science and best practices to inform the development and implementation of public health policies
- Provide guidance, participate in leadership, and coordinate planning among partners to support development, adoption and implementation of public health policies
- Develop policy options as needed to protect and improve the health of the population in general or specifically for adversely impacted certain populations
- Understand and utilize the principles of public health law for improving and protecting public health
- Analyze and disseminate findings on the intended and unintended public health impacts of policies and systems
- Develop, implement, monitor/evaluate and revise a community health improvement plan. These plans must be developed with partners, including Coordinated Care Organizations, hospitals, behavioral health providers, schools, and other community partners

### Communications

This core capability is based in the ability to communicate effectively with the diverse members of the public as well as a wide variety of governmental, business, and other non-governmental organizations in order to achieve the identified public health outcomes. Elements for this capacity include the knowledge, skills, and ability to:

- Engage in two-way communication with members of the public through various communication channels

- Effectively utilize mass media and social media to transmit and receive routine communications to and from the public
- Communicate with a wide variety of community and organizational audiences in a manner that is culturally and linguistically appropriate.
- Develop and implement proactive health education/health prevention strategies (e.g. health warnings in the event of disease outbreak, informational public service announcements, focused social media prevention messages)
- During a disease outbreak or public health emergency, provide accurate, timely and understandable information, recommendations and instructions to the public through the media and other channels.

#### Leadership & Organizational competencies

This core capability includes the ability provide leadership, direction and effective implementation to achieve public health goals and objectives. These competencies within all health departments are essential for effective and efficient action as well as good stewardship of public resources. Basic elements of this capacity include:

- **Organizational Leadership and Governance** that defines the strategic direction and goals for public health, provides executive decision-making and direction for the agency and is able to align and lead internal and external stakeholders and leaders to achieve public health goals.
- **Access and appropriately use public health law principles** and legal services in planning, implementing, and enforcing, public health initiatives, including relevant administrative rules and due process.
- **Performance Management, and Quality Improvement** – maintain a performance management system to promote and monitor achievement of organizational objectives and sustain an organization-wide culture of achievement and quality improvement. It emphasizes the knowledge, skills and abilities to implement new and revised activities and processes to achieve each health department’s objectives.
- **Information Technology** – implements and maintains the hardware and software needed to support the health department's operational needs. In doing this, it is critical to appropriately manage confidential health information and other protected personal information members of the public.
- **Maintain Effective Workforce** –maintain a competent workforce, through recruitment, retention, training, and succession planning to ensure continuity of operations. This includes: enhancing workforce capacity through providing ongoing continuing education and other training opportunities; developing partnerships with institutions of higher education to continually build the public health workforce; ensuring all public health staff, officials and boards of health have training in public health, making

efforts to ensure that public health staff, officials and boards of health reflect the community being served and the changing demographics in Oregon.

- **Financial Management, Contract, and Procurement Services** – ability to operate an effective overall financial system in accordance with established accounting and business practices. Specific areas include budgeting, financial tracking, billing and auditing. It also includes the ability to secure grants and other external funding, and to distribute funds to other governmental and non-governmental partners, and to manage all funds as required by local, state and Federal law.

### Health Equity and Cultural Responsiveness

This capability includes the knowledge, skills and abilities which promote understanding of factors within each culture that impact health and a commitment to achieving equitable outcomes for all populations that make up our communities. Basic elements for this capacity include:

- A commitment to attaining health equity in all programs and supporting policies that promote health equity. This requires recognizing and addressing health inequities to realize the highest level of health for all people.
- Transparent and inclusive communication with internal and external stakeholders (members and organizations of culturally-defined communities, staff, partner organizations, etc.), as well as the public at large
- Community access to data and to participation in community health planning processes

### Community partnership development

This core capability includes the ability to foster, leverage, and maintain relationships with government and non-governmental partners both within and outside to the governmental public health system. These community partnerships are important to achieving the triple aim, realizing health equity and supporting other goals of public health. Elements for this capacity include the knowledge, skills, and ability to:

- Convene and sustain strategic relationships with traditional and non-traditional partners and stakeholders to collectively advance health. These relationships should be at the overall organizational level (not limited to a specific public health activity or program).
- Engage community members in developing and monitoring a community health improvement plan that draws from community health assessment data and establishes a plan for addressing public health priorities.
- Foster structures that support genuine community involvement and partnerships.

- Develop, strengthen and expand connections across disciplines, including partnerships with the health care delivery and education systems and external groups with an interest or governance of public health including, boards of health, public health advisory boards, and elected officials.
- Foster a culture of listening and cultivate an environment that honors the wisdom and multiple intelligences of communities that experience the greatest health disparities. Communities of diverse geographic, income and ethnic background- often have the most practical, insightful and responsive strategies to improve health outcomes and the health of our state can only improve from listening and engaging these communities as assets and resources.

## **Foundational Program Elements**

### **Communicable Disease Control**

Communicable Disease Control programs work to promptly identify, prevent and control infectious diseases that pose a threat to health of the public. These diseases are caused by a multitude of bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites. They included well known infections, as well as new (“emerging”) and reappearing infections, pandemics, and intentionally-caused infections (e.g., bioterrorism). Key activities of this foundational program include the knowledge, skills, and ability to:

- Recognize, identify, and respond to communicable disease outbreaks
- Maintain a list of disease that must be reported to public health
- Conduct (as part of the public health laboratory), receive and analyze laboratory results, physician reports for notifiable conditions in accordance with local, state and national law
- Conduct disease investigations and interventions using the Oregon Investigative Guidelines
- Support recognition of outbreaks and illnesses of public health importance including rare and severe disease
- Conduct community-based prevention of communicable diseases

### **Environmental Health**

Environmental health is based in protecting the public from illness, disability and death caused by exposure to physical, chemical or biological factors in the environment that adversely impact health. Venues where a large number of people can be exposed (e.g., restaurants, drinking water, etc.) are especially important. Because of their historical long success, environmental public health interventions are not always recognized. But traditional environmental health efforts need to continue in order to maintain current results and also to evolve practices to take advantage of the latest scientific evidence. Core programmatic activities include:

- Public health laboratory testing and analysis
- Licensure, inspection, and education of operators of
  - Restaurants and other food service establishments
  - Recreation sites, lodging, and swimming pools
  - Septic systems
  - Drinking water systems
  - Radioactive materials and equipment (e.g. x-ray machines, tanning beds)
  - Animal bites and vector illnesses
  - Hospitals and other medical facilities
- Environmental health hazard prevention and investigation activities, including ability to provide timely and accurate information and recommendations on exposures and related health impacts to the public, health care providers, and others as appropriate. Examples include but are not limited to identification and response to foodborne illness incidents, environmental toxics such as pesticides, lead and radon, and air quality issues related to air toxics, wildfires, and other pollutants.
- Participate in land use planning and sustainable development activities in order to encourage policies and actions that promote positive health outcomes. Areas for this work include housing and community development, recreational facilities, and transportation systems.

### **Prevention and Health Promotion**

Prevention and Health Promotion seeks to prevent disease before it occurs, detect it early, or reduce disability when prevention isn't fully effective. The leading causes of death and disease include chronic diseases, which can be prevented or managed by creating healthier community environments. These changes are often most effectively supported through changes in policies, the built and natural environment, and community systems. Based on data on current and anticipated future needs, the following activities are likely to be important focuses of prevention and health promotion for the next several years:

- Tobacco use prevention and control. Improving nutrition and increasing exercise/physical activity. This will reduce risk for heart disease, diabetes and other chronic conditions.
- Decreasing the occurrence and impacts of intentional and unintentional injuries and deaths such as suicide and motor vehicle crashes.
- Improving oral health.
- Reproductive, maternal and child health. This includes a range of prevention activities that create healthy and safe children, families and communities.

Programmatic activities should follow expertise and best practice guidelines for preventing the leading causes of death, disease and injury in Oregon. These

programs will maintain core capability at a population-wide level and have the ability to:

- Identify and implement evidence-based policy, systems, and environmental changes that will improve related health outcomes at a population-wide level.
- Develop and implement strategic goals and coordinate activities among partners.

### **Access to Clinical Preventive Services**

Clinical preventive services, such as immunizations, prenatal care and screening for preventable cancers and sexually transmitted infections, are important for reducing preventable deaths and disability, and for improving the population's health. These services are aimed at preventing illness and/or detecting illnesses in their earlier, more treatable stages.

A key role for the public health system is to assure that Oregonians receive recommended cost effective clinical preventive services. Key activities include:

- Assessing access to cost-effective, high impact preventive care services.
- Assuring access to laboratory services.
- In partnership with the medical care delivery system and communities, addressing barriers to access and use of preventive services.

## **SOURCES for Conceptual Framework:**

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