



The State of Public Health in Washington, DC

Years of flat funding and budget cuts to vital public health agencies and programs at both the federal and state levels have taken their toll on Washington, DC and the nation as a whole, complicating public health efforts. Additional resources are needed to adequately support improving access to care, controlling diseases, eliminating health disparities, and other public health activities. Make public health a priority this year and help us move towards developing a healthy society.

The Facts:

- **Public Health Funding:** Washington, DC spends \$112.22 a year on the public health needs of each resident, which is the 3rd highest amount when comparing DC to the other 50 states.
- **Health Indicators:** Washington, DC has the third highest rate of asthma (15 percent of adults). It also ranks first and third in rates of syphilis (21.1 per 100,000 adults) and chlamydia (611.8 per 100,000 adults), respectively.
- **Children's Health:** The District has the second highest rates of infant mortality (10.2 per 1,000 live births) and low birth weight babies (11.5 percent) and the fourth highest percent of babies born preterm (15.9 percent). It also has the highest rate of childhood obesity in the nation (22.8 percent).
- **The Road Ahead:** Washington, DC has made some recent improvements in public health, such as reducing the prevalence of smoking from 20 percent to 17.9 percent of the population in the last year. However, the state still faces many public health challenges.

Sources: United Health Foundation's State Snapshots; Trust for America's Health, The State of Your Health Report, 2008 Edition

In response to an informal electronic survey sent out to our membership and 53 state affiliates:

A Public Health Worker told us *"Funding cuts mean reducing the scope of services we can provide and also shifting some paid positions to contracted, un-benefited positions."*

Another Public Health Worker expressed that *"as a result of five full time staff cuts, in response to the budget, morale and program size are both at an all time low."* In response to a follow up question about how cuts affected relationships with the community: *"Credibility often follows dollars, and when there is none to share, partnerships are difficult at best and fall apart at worst."*

Founded in 1872, APHA is the oldest, largest and most diverse organization of public health professionals in the world. The association aims to protect all Americans and their communities from preventable, serious health threats and strives to assure community-based health promotion and disease prevention activities and preventive health services are universally accessible in the United States. www.apha.org.