



## *The State of Public Health In Iowa*

Years of cuts to vital public health programs and agencies on both the federal and state levels have taken their toll and further complicate our efforts to support ongoing disease and injury prevention activities and to ensure we are prepared for an infectious disease outbreak, or other public health emergency. The current Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Bill, which funds most federal public health programs, contains increased funding levels for many of these programs for the first time in recent years.

- Iowa spent \$59 per capita on public health programs in 2005 and 2006; however, public health spending in Iowa remains the lowest in the country.
- The percentage of the population without health insurance decreased from 9.5% in 2005 to 8.6% in 2006. As a result, Iowa currently has the lowest rate of uninsured in the US.
- Immunization coverage for children decreased from 86.1% in 2005 to 84.9% in 2006; as a result, Iowa's immunization rate fell from ranking 7<sup>th</sup> nationwide to ranking 9<sup>th</sup>.
- The prevalence of obesity in Iowa rose from 23.5% in 2005 to 25.4% in 2006, placing it below the national average in ranking.

Sources: *America's Health Rankings, 2006 Edition: A Call to Action for People & Their Communities*; *The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation State Health Facts*.

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

A State Public Health Worker from Des Moines, Iowa told us, *"Several counties no longer provide local services.... The public doesn't understand why we can't provide services as we used to."*

Another Public Health Worker from Grinnell, Iowa described, *"We had to eliminate paying for prenatal care for maternal health clients who were under income guidelines but not eligible for Medicaid since they were undocumented. Physicians who were receiving reimbursement at Medicaid rates from our maternal health funding are not pleased to provide prenatal care and hope they get paid on a payment plan. Some physicians will no longer accept these persons as patients."*

A Public Health Worker from Monona County, Iowa noted the public health implications: *"We have more communicable diseases (mumps, TB) and biological threats now than in the last couple of decades, so cutting staff at this crucial point could leave our county terribly unprepared if a biological disaster struck."*

*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](http://www.apha.org).*