



The State of Public Health In Tennessee

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.

- Tennessee spent \$91 per capita on public health programs in 2006, which is alarmingly lower than the national average of \$162 per capita.
- The rate of uninsured residents increased from 13.2% in 1990 to 14.2% in 2006.
- Although the prevalence of smoking has decreased over all since 1990, Tennessee still has one of highest rates of smoking in the U.S. Ranked 47th in U.S., 27.4% of the population smokes.
- Tennessee has one of the highest rates of obesity in the nation, ranking 42nd in the U.S with 27.4% of adult residents obese in 2006- more than double the rate of 11.8 % in 1990.

Sources: *America's Health Rankings, 2006 Edition: A Call to Action for People & Their Communities*; *Trust for America's Health The State of Your Health Report, 2006 Edition*; *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 Public Health Worker at the Jackson-Madison County Regional Health Department in Jackson told us, *"We have lost an epidemiologist position at our health department due to funding cuts. Epidemiologist positions are critical because they allow us to analyze data and evaluate public health programs to conduct evidence-based practice. Thus, the cuts have negatively impacted our capacity to identify and respond to health threats of all kinds in our community."*

When asked how funding cuts have affected their relationship with the community, a Public Health Worker from the Knox County Health Department in Knoxville responded that while *"other agencies understand the instability of federal funding, clients, on the other hand, think they are being punished and that those decisions are being made by local staff."*

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.