



## *The State of Public Health In Arkansas*

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.

- Arkansas spent \$64 per capita on public health programs in 2005, up from \$63 in 2004; Public health spending in Arkansas is one of the lowest in the country, ranking 49<sup>th</sup> in 2005.
- The percent of the population lacking health insurance increased from 16.4% in 2005 to 17.9% in 2006, placing it at a lower ranking of 41<sup>st</sup> nationally in 2006.
- Arkansas has made major strides in combating infectious disease: it has decreased the number of cases per 100,000-population from 37.0 to 15.8 since 1990. However, immunization coverage decreased from 82.4% in 2005 to 67.8% in 2006 and is now ranked second worst in the nation.
- Arkansas has one of the highest rates of obesity in the nation, ranking 44<sup>th</sup> in prevalence. The prevalence of obesity in Arkansas has more than doubled since 1990.

Sources: *America's Health Rankings, 2005 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 from Texarkana, Arkansas told us that *"[As a result of budget cuts] we have cut our outreach activities that were aimed at wellness, obesity, and diabetes education. Four percent [of our staff have been cut] overall, including nearly 25% of our outreach staff."* In response to a follow up question about the effect of these cuts on the community: *"We expect to see patients going to the ER for care and long term complications."*

Another Public Health Worker responded that, *"Additional cuts may cause us to continue to reduce the number of clients served even though the need exceeds current funding levels. Additionally, I anticipate having to reduce at least one or two positions hours to part-time. As the under and uninsured continue to grow, services are being reduced. The disparity between the insured and under/uninsured continues to grow. More funds need to be placed toward preventative health care not less."*

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).