



American
Public Health
Association



APHA PHACT Campaign

PUBLIC HEALTH ACTION CAMPAIGN



The State of Public Health in Arkansas

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 Arkansas 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:** The state of Arkansas spends an average of \$25.99 a year on the public health needs of each resident, which is well below the national median of \$33.26 a year. Total public health spending in Arkansas, including federal sources such as money from HRSA and CDC, amounts to an average of \$64 per person, the second lowest level in the nation.
- **Disease and Access:** This low funding level has led to many negative health outcomes in the state. Adults in Arkansas have the 8th highest rate of obesity (27 percent) and the 5th highest rate of hypertension (29.8 percent). Additionally, 18.9 percent of the population does not have health insurance, one of the top 10 highest rates.
- **Health Disparities:** African Americans in Arkansas are 47 percent more likely to experience premature death. African Americans also are 25 percent more likely to die from cancer than are whites.
- **The Road Ahead:** Arkansas has made some recent improvements in public health, such as reducing the obesity level and increasing the number of children who receive vaccinations. However, the state still faces many public health challenges, including an increasing number of children who live in poverty.

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 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.