



American
Public Health
Association



APHA PHACT Campaign

PUBLIC HEALTH ACTION CAMPAIGN



The State of Public Health in Idaho

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 Idaho 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 Idaho spends an average of \$76.04 a year on the public health needs of each resident. Although this is the 6th highest amount in the nation, it still falls short of the \$100+ allocated by other states. When this state funding is combined with federal sources of public health funding, such as money from HRSA and CDC, Idaho spends an average of \$115.62 per person.
- **Infectious Disease:** Idaho has a low rate of childhood immunization, with over 22 percent of children ages 19 months to 35 months not receiving complete immunizations. Idaho has the 9th highest rate of West Nile disease, with 131 new cases reported in 2007.
- **Access to Care:** 15.4 percent of Idaho residents are uninsured. Among children, 13 percent have no health insurance, giving Idaho the 14th highest percentage of uninsured children in the nation.
- **The Road Ahead:** Idaho has made recent improvements in many public health areas, such as decreasing the number of children who live in poverty. However, the state still faces many public health challenges, including a shortage of primary care physicians with only 79.9 primary care physicians per 100,000 people.

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 Idaho Falls, Idaho told us, *"Our program has been trimmed every year for the last 5 years. Now we've gone to using LPN's in place of RN's in our junior highs who are supervised by their principal without input of an RN.... People are not aware but it certainly affects RN morale."* In response to a follow-up question on finding alternative funding, she described, *"We take what we get. We are so low on the totem pole and have little say."*

Another State Public Health Worker from Boise, Idaho explained, *"We had to eliminate programs and staff, eliminate contract with our local health departments (our implementation arms in all 44 counties of Idaho), and reorganize our Bureau to accommodate the fickleness and fragileness of federal funding. With federal funds coming to states very categorically, we do not have the luxury of being creative with how we implement and integrate our programs to suit our local needs."*

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.