



The State of Public Health In California

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.

- California spent \$132 per capita on public health programs in 2006. Public health spending in California is below the national average, ranking 29th that year.
- The percent of the population lacking health insurance increased from 18.4% in 2004 to 19.4% in 2006, and is currently one of the highest in the country, ranking 46th in 2005.
- Immunization coverage decreased from 81.3% to 77.9% of children ages 19 to 35 months receiving complete immunizations. California was ranked 29th in 2005, but now stands at 41st.
- The prevalence of obesity in California decreased from 23.2% in 2004 to 22.7% in 2005, one of the lower rates that can be found nationwide.

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 county Public Health Worker from California told us, *"Bioterrorism funding and HRSA grants were supposed to build infrastructure for public health. They have sapped the core functions and imposed additional duties on all staff in all programs. The public health nursing shortage is desperate. I think the situation is worse than dire."* He also described the impact of reduced services on the public health department's credibility in the community: *"Unless [the public] directly interfaces with us due to a sanitary inspection or a disease they do not even know we exist."*

Another Public Health Worker from Salinas, California concluded by noting: *"How can public health departments work with little or no money to implement programs plans that seem to be just ink on paper?"*

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.