



The State of Public Health in Iowa

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 Iowa 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 Iowa spends an average of \$16.97 a year on the public health needs of each resident, placing Iowa 37th in the nation. Total public health spending in Iowa, including federal sources such as money from HRSA and CDC, amounts to an average of \$59 per person, placing Iowa 50th in the nation.
- **Preparedness:** Iowa has only 81.8 primary care physicians per 100,000 people, the 4th lowest ratios in the nation, putting Iowa at risk if a health crisis were to occur. Likewise, Iowa is one of the least prepared states for a severe pandemic and would suffer an estimated \$6.7 billion in financial losses.
- **Health Disparities:** African Americans living in Iowa experience 64 percent more premature death than whites. Deaths from cancer are 45 percent more common among African Americans than whites.
- **The Road Ahead:** Iowa has made recent improvements in many public health areas, including decreasing the rate of infectious disease. However, the state still faces many public health challenges, including rising rates of smoking, binge drinking and violent crime.

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 State Public Health Worker from Des Moines, Iowa told us, *"Several counties no longer provide local services.... The public doesn't understand why we can't provide services as we used to."*

Another Public Health Worker from Grinnell, Iowa described, *"We had to eliminate paying for prenatal care for maternal health clients who were under income guidelines but not eligible for Medicaid since they were undocumented. Physicians who were receiving reimbursement at Medicaid rates from our maternal health funding are not pleased to provide prenatal care and hope they get paid on a payment plan. Some physicians will no longer accept these persons as patients."*

A Public Health Worker from Monona County, Iowa noted the public health implications: *"We have more communicable diseases (mumps, TB) and biological threats now than in the last couple of decades, so cutting staff at this crucial point could leave our county terribly unprepared if a biological disaster struck."*

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.