



The State of Public Health In Alabama

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.

- Alabama has maintained a relatively high level of per capita public health spending of \$159, but still falls far behind other states. For both 2005 and 2006, the state ranked 45th in the nation.
- The percent of the population lacking health insurance increased from 13.5% in 2005 to 15.4% in 2006, and is currently below the national average, ranking 20th in 2005.
- Alabama has significant health disparities between care received by non-Hispanic white and non-Hispanic black populations. The cost of clinical care is low, yet still many Alabamans are unable to afford insurance or out-of-pocket payments and do not receive any care.
- Alabama is the fourth most obese state in the nation with 28.9% of its population weighing in at a BMI over 30. Alabama also trails behind 43 other states with a large smoking population of 24.8%.

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 Public Health Researcher from Birmingham, Alabama explained, ***"If CDC's budget is cut it will impact their ability to do their job and provide the necessary oversight."***

A Local Public Health Worker 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."***

Another Public Health Worker described: ***"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 number of uninsured continue to grow, services are being reduced. The disparity 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.