



The State of Public Health In Hawaii

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.

- Hawaii spent \$499 per capita on public health programs in 2006; public health spending in Hawaii remains the highest in the country although it has decreased over the past few years.
- The percent of the population without health insurance decreased from 9.6% in 2005 to 9.1% in 2006. Currently, Hawaii has the third lowest rate of uninsured in the US.
- Immunization coverage for children decreased from 81.2% in 2005 to 80.1% in 2006; as a result, Hawaii's immunization rate is now below the national average, ranking 28th.
- The prevalence of obesity in Hawaii has more than doubled since 1990; however, between 2005 and 2006 the percentage was brought down from 20.9% to 19.7%.

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 Worker with the Hawaii State Department of Health noted, *"Currently, there is less involvement in community efforts due to less funding and staff. Further funding cuts or elimination of funding will deny the non-English and limited English speaking population of the state access to health care services- thus causing a public health concern."*

Another Public Health Worker from Honolulu, Hawaii told us: *"We rely on health care professionals who volunteer in our public and professional education programs. Since their organizations have been affected, they are less likely to have the time to work with us."*

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.