



The State of Public Health In Florida

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.

- Florida spent \$143 per capita on public health programs in 2006; public health spending in Florida is slightly below the national average.
- The percent of the population without health insurance increased from 19.9% in 2005 to 20.7% in 2006; currently, Florida has the second-highest rate of uninsured nationwide.
- Immunization coverage for children dropped significantly from 88.5% in 2005 (then the second highest rate in the country) to 79.3% in 2006, well below the national average.
- The prevalence of smoking in Florida increased from 20.2% in 2005 to 21.7% in 2006, while the rate of obesity remained steady at 22.8% of the population.

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 Sarasota County Health Department told us, "We were actively involved in the community-level dissemination of the VERB youth media campaign. The research and materials available through this campaign provided substantial support to our youth obesity prevention efforts. Additionally, though the cut will not be felt until September or October, many job positions focused on chronic disease prevention will be in jeopardy due to the elimination of the Block Grant."

Another Public Health Worker from Tampa, Florida described how her agency is trying hard to adapt to funding cuts: *"Head Start received a 1% cut this year. We do what we can to ensure that services to families are not reduced and cut costs elsewhere."*

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.