



The State of Public Health In Idaho

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.

- Idaho spent \$70 per capita on public health programs in 2006, a decrease from \$72 in 2004. Currently, public health spending in Idaho is one of the lowest in the country, ranking 48th.
- The percent of the population lacking health insurance remained at 15.4% in 2005 and 2006; nevertheless, the rate of uninsured in Idaho is still below average, ranking 29th.
- Immunization coverage for children decreased from 80.6% in 2005 to 78.1% in 2006; currently, Idaho's immunization rate is far below the national average, ranking 39th.
- The prevalence of obesity in Idaho jumped sharply from 20.8% in 2005 to 24.5% in 2006.

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 from Idaho Falls, Idaho told us, *"Our program has been trimmed every year for the last 5 years. Now we've gone to using LPN's in place of RN's in our junior highs who are supervised by their principal without input of an RN.... People are not aware but it certainly affects RN morale."*

In response to a follow-up question on finding alternative funding, she described, *"We take what we get. We are so low on the totem pole and have little say."*

Another State Public Health Worker from Boise, Idaho explained, *"We had to eliminate programs and staff, eliminate contract with our local health departments (our implementation arms in all 44 counties of Idaho), and reorganize our Bureau to accommodate the fickleness and fragileness of federal funding. With federal funds coming to states very categorically, we do not have the luxury of being creative with how we implement and integrate our programs to suit our local needs."*

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.