

HB 2348 (2013): Task Force Report
Future of Public Health Services

Modernizing Oregon's Public Health System

Executive Summary

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Oregon
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Executive summary

Oregon is a leader in its innovative approach to health system transformation, which aims to provide better health and better care at a lower cost. This transformed health system requires a strong governmental public health system designed to support individuals outside of the clinical setting where they live, learn, work and play.

There is growing recognition that the community environment is as important to health outcomes as medical intervention. Addressing the social determinants of health — improving educational opportunities, stable housing, improving access to healthy foods and creating walkable communities — are interventions that improve the public's health. While it is clear that addressing the social determinants of health is not the sole responsibility of governmental public health, it is critical that public health departments embrace new tools and train or retrain a workforce with appropriate skills in order to achieve measurable goals that improve population health.

An effective public health system requires a focus on new health challenges, which include emerging and traditional infectious diseases and an increase in chronic diseases. Responding to this shift in disease trends requires a different approach in both the clinical and community settings. Influencing the quality and length of life requires a greater focus on the systems, policies and program changes that will reduce the prevalence of chronic diseases. There is also a need for governmental public health to be prepared to react and respond to known and unknown public health threats. This includes working to prevent, detect and respond to traditional and emerging infectious diseases and to increase the ability of state and local public health agencies to respond appropriately to disease outbreaks, natural and man-made disasters, and other public health incidents.

Oregon's current governmental public health system is primarily funded through county general funds and through categorical federal grants, which are often limited in flexibility and not always responsive to local need in Oregon. Because these federal funds are specific in project scope, these investments do not allow governmental public health to focus strategically on the types of public health programs that can help everyone in Oregon achieve optimal health. Any serious consideration of modernizing the public health system in Oregon must include a dedication of robust and sustained state funding to a core package of public health programs and capabilities. However, the current state investment into the public health system consistently ranks below the national median for per capita funding with Oregon currently ranked 46th in the country for per capita funding (\$13.37 compared to a median of \$27.40).

For these reasons, Oregon needs a modern public health system that can effectively and efficiently provide these protections for everyone in Oregon.

The Task Force on Future of Public Health Services (Task Force) was created by House Bill 2348 (2013) with the directive of providing recommendations for the future of public health. As indicated in HB 2348, the Task Force focused on recommendations that:

- Create a public health system for the future.
- Explore the creation of regional structures to provide public health services that are consistent with the distribution of population and established patterns of delivery of health care services.
- Enhance efficiency and effectiveness in the provision of public health services.
- Allow for appropriate partnerships with regional health care services providers and community organizations.
- Consider cultural and historical appropriateness.
- Are supported by best practices.

The Task Force developed recommendations that will modernize Oregon's governmental public health system. These changes focus on the need to achieve sustainable and measureable improvements in population health; continue to protect individuals from injury and disease; and be fully prepared for the governmental public health system in Oregon to respond to public health threats that may occur. The Task Force identified a framework set of Foundational Capabilities and Programs that are needed throughout the state and local public health system. These include a set of core staff capabilities and programmatic activities that should be delivered throughout Oregon at

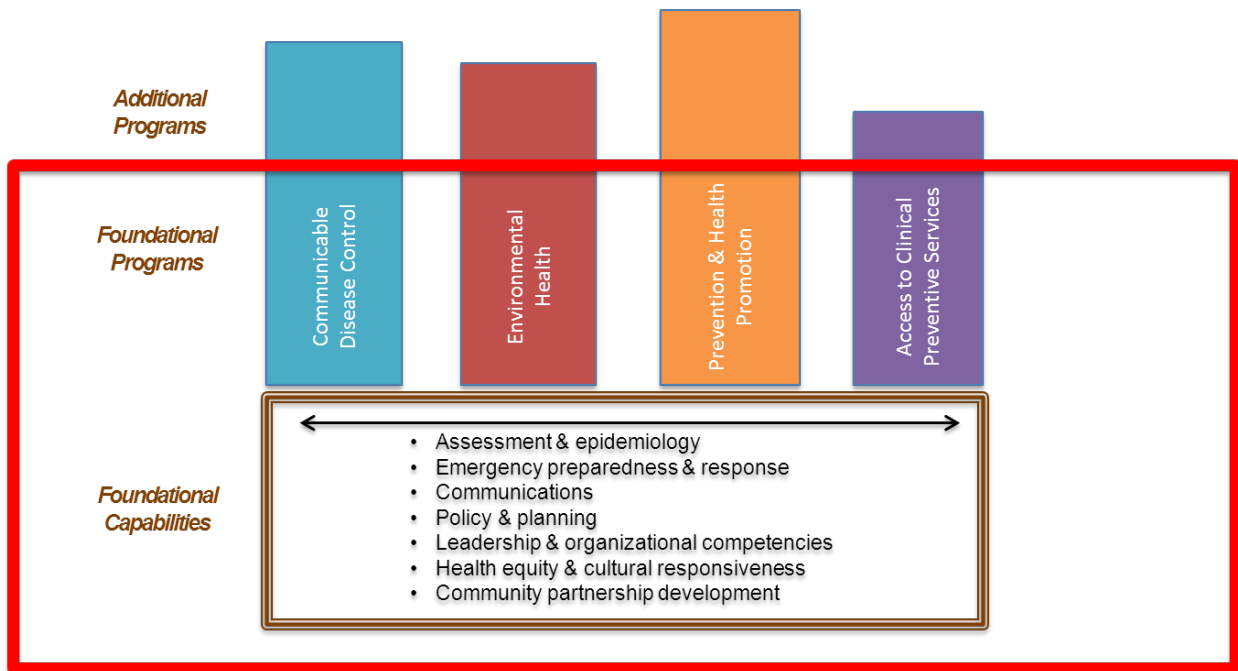
both the state and local level. The Task Force believes that implementation and full operationalizing of the Foundational Capabilities and Programs will achieve this modern public health system.

The Task Force concludes that to begin to modernize the governmental public health system, legislation is necessary to establish the foundational capabilities as the minimum requirements for governmental public health in Oregon and charge the Oregon Public Health Division, in coordination with key partners, with developing a timeline, detailed implementation plan and budget for implementation of the Foundational Capabilities and Programs throughout the state.

Specifically the Task Force recommends:

- The Foundational Capabilities and Programs be adopted in order for Oregon’s public health system to function efficiently and effectively, pending further refinement to allow for successful implementation.
- Significant and sustained state funding for the governmental public health system be identified and allocated for proper operationalization of the Foundational Capabilities and Programs.
- Statewide implementation of the Foundational Capabilities and Programs occur in waves over a timeline to be determined after additional details of the current gaps in Foundational Capabilities and Programs are assessed.
- Local public health will have the flexibility to operationalize the Foundational Capabilities and Programs through a single county structure; a single county with shared services; or a multi-county jurisdiction.
- Improvements and changes in the governmental public health system be structured around state and local metrics, and that these metrics are established and evaluated by an enhanced Public Health Advisory Board, which will report to the Oregon Health Policy Board.

Conceptual Framework for Governmental Public Health Services





Oregon Health Authority

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