Greetings and Welcome,

This presentation was put together by the Alaska Public Health Association. ALPHA is an affiliate of the American Public Health Association. We have approximately 200 members who come from a variety of public health specialty areas.

The purpose of our organization is to promote the advancement of public health professionals who work to promote improved health and quality of life for Alaskans. We exercise leadership among public health professionals and the general public in developing sound health policy, reducing health disparities and improving health outcomes for Alaskans.

If you have questions or want to contact someone from our organization, you can e-mail us at info@alaskapublichealth.org
or visit our website: http://www.alaskapublichealth.org/
DEFINITIONS OF PUBLIC HEALTH

- Fulfill society’s interest in **assuring conditions** in which people can be healthy

- Organized **community efforts** aimed at the prevention of disease and promotion of health

- The art & science of promoting and protecting good health, preventing disease, disability, and premature death, restoring health when it is impaired, and maximizing the quality of life when health cannot be restored.

The Institute of Medicine wrote a report in 1988 stating the public health infrastructure was in disarray and in terrible need of both workforce and agency reorganization. The IOM states “the purpose of public health is to fulfill society's interest in assuring conditions in which people can be healthy” (IOM, 1988).

And the IOM defines the ‘Substance’ of Public Health as, “organized community efforts aimed at the prevention of disease and promotion of health. It links many disciplines and rests upon the scientific core of Epidemiology” (IOM, 1988).

References


Last, John M., A Dictionary of Public Health, Oxford University Press. 2007

Another term you might hear frequently is the term ‘population based’. A critical factor that helps to differentiate public health from medical practice is its focus on the entire population.

You might wonder if public health is population based how does it compare to medical practice?
So how does public health differ from medical care?

As you can imagine both use science, data and evidence to make decisions or recommendations.

However, in medicine the health professional considers the individual the patient, while in public health the professional considers the community or population the patient. Medicine focuses on healing patients through diagnosis and treatment, while public health focuses on preventing illness (Schneider, 2006).

So, in other words, public health is very concerned about finding the root causes of morbidity and mortality in a population and preventing them before the problem starts, this is also called primary prevention.

References
WHO IS PUBLIC HEALTH?

- Any organized community effort aimed at the prevention of disease or the promotion of health.
- Includes government, private and voluntary entities engaged in promoting the public’s health.

It is important to realize the IOM 1988 report defines public health work as, any organized community effort aimed at the prevention of disease or the promotion of health (Schneider, 2006).

So, the organizational framework of public health is vast and includes any government, private or voluntary agency engaged in promoting the public’s health (Schneider, 2006).

You might then ask, who does all of this work? How is Public Health organized within the State of Alaska to promote health and prevent disease in our state?

References

Example of the ‘interdependence’ of community partners to prevent disease or the promote health.

Requires collective action by society; collaborative teamwork involving physicians, nurses, engineers, environmental scientists, health educators, social workers, nutritionists, administrators and an effective partnership with ALL levels of government.
PUBLIC HEALTH WORKS TO....

- Prevent the spread of disease
- Protect against environmental hazards
- Prevent injuries
- Promote healthy behaviors
- Respond to disasters and assist in recovery
- Assures quality and accessibility of health services

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Reference
This wheel illustrates the three core functions and ten essential services of Public Health. It was developed by the Public Health Functions Steering Committee in 1995 and helps to explain ‘at a glance’ how the core functions and essential services of Public work together.

References

ASSESSMENT

- Regularly and systematically collect, assemble, analyze and make available information on the health of the community (IOM, 1988, p.7)

- Includes statistics on health status & community health needs

Some agencies do this themselves and of course others partner or collaborate to achieve this recommendation.
POLICY DEVELOPMENT

• Every public health agency has the responsibility to “develop comprehensive public health policies by promoting use of the scientific knowledge in decision making” (IOM, 1988, p.8).
ASSURANCE

- Public health agencies assure services to their constituents by encouraging actions by others and requiring action through regulation or provision of services directly.

- Each public health agency involves key policy makers and the general public in determining high priority personal and community health services that governments will guarantee to every member of the community.

This guarantee includes subsidization or direct provision of high priority personal health services for those unable to afford them” (IOM, 1988, p.8). For example, here in Alaska the Division of Public Health / Section of Public Health Nursing provides some preventative services (immunizations and well child exams) when and where there is no other provider available.
10 ESSENTIAL SERVICES OF PUBLIC HEALTH

- Monitor health status
- Diagnose and Investigate health problems
- Inform, educate, and empower people about health issues
- Mobilize community partnerships
- Develop policies that support individual & community health efforts
- Enforce laws and regulations that protect health
- Link people to health services and assure care when otherwise unavailable
- Assure a competent workforce
- Evaluate personal and population-based health services
- Research to identify innovative prevention strategies

These are the services and activities you can expect from your state and local public health centers here in Alaska. Public Health professionals are obligated to take into consideration all aspects of these 10 essential services when intervening in a population or community. In addition to the core functions and essential services lets talk about some other important terms.

References
THE IMPACT OF PUBLIC HEALTH SUCCESSES

- Average lifespan increased by nearly 30 years during the past century

- Behavioral & environmental risk factors have replaced infectious diseases as the leading causes of premature death
  - smoking
  - poor diet
  - lack of exercise
  - increased pollution
  - stress and
  - unsafe sexual practices
10 GREAT PUBLIC HEALTH ACHIEVEMENTS FROM THE LAST CENTURY

- Vaccination
- Control of infectious diseases
- Motor-vehicle safety
- Safer workplaces
- Decline in deaths from coronary heart disease and stroke
- Safer and healthier foods
- Healthier mothers and babies
- Family planning
- Fluoridation of drinking water
- Recognition of tobacco use as a health hazard

References
There are clear challenges many public health professionals struggle with in using scientific evidence to inform policy and decision making. Occasionally, we are not familiar with the specialty such as economics or education and this requires us to reach out to colleagues in other fields to work with us (Fielding and Briss, 2006). Additionally, we are sometimes required to explain findings and recommendations to politicians who may not be familiar with scientific language or the purpose of public health. Lastly, using evidence to inform policy takes time. But at the end of the day the best way to protect the health of our citizens is to work together to craft strong public health policy and enforce public health laws in our state.

We have many public health challenges to face here in Alaska. From access to clean running water in Southwestern villages to the recent issue of health care reform for our State. Together we can make a difference in the lives of all Alaskans.

References


The Constitution of the State of Alaska, adopted by the Constitutional Convention February 5, 1956 and ratified by the People of Alaska April 24, 1956 clearly states the responsibility of the legislature in Article 7 section 4 – “The legislature shall provide for the promotion and protection of the public health.” At 12 words this is one of the shortest sections of the Constitution.
Here we see the top ten causes of death among Alaskan adults in 2006. Cancer and heart disease are the top two.

References

Morbidity and Mortality for Alaska
The information here is available from the Bureau of Vital Statistics. It illustrates the leading causes of death for Alaskans ages 15-19. We see suicide and motor vehicle crashes are the top two causes of death. Now lets say we want to know more about why suicide is such a problem for this age group. The YRBS survey will help us understand the behaviors that contribute to the major causes of morbidity and mortality.

References
WHAT YOU CAN DO

• Assess the health impact of ALL impending bills and legislation

  – Economic Policy is Public Health Policy
  – Housing Policy is Public Health Policy
  – Transportation Policy is Public Health Policy

Alaska Public Health Association
"Health care is vital to all of us some of the time, but **public health** is vital to all of us all of the time."

– C. Everett Koop
Contact the Alaska Public Health Association

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