

# PUBLIC HEALTH 101: ALASKA



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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 [alpha@alaskapublichealth.org](mailto:alpha@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.

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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

U.S. Institute of Medicine, Committee for the Study of the Future of Public Health, The Future of Public Health (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1988).

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

Schneider, M. J. (2006). Introduction to Public Health (2nd Ed.). Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett.

**PUBLIC HEALTH IS *POPULATION BASED*, WHICH  
MEANS...**

- Focuses on **entire population**
- Grounded in **assessment** of a community's health status and priorities
- Considers the **broad determinants** of health (i.e. social status, support networks, education, employment, poverty etc.)

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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?

## HOW DOES PUBLIC HEALTH DIFFER FROM MEDICAL CARE?

- Both use science and evidence to make decisions or recommendations
- In Public Health, the 'patient' is usually a population, community or group.
- Public Health focuses on **identifying the root causes of disease**, while medicine focuses on diagnosis and treatment

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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

Schneider, M. J. (2006). Introduction to Public Health (2nd Ed.). Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett.

## **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.

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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).

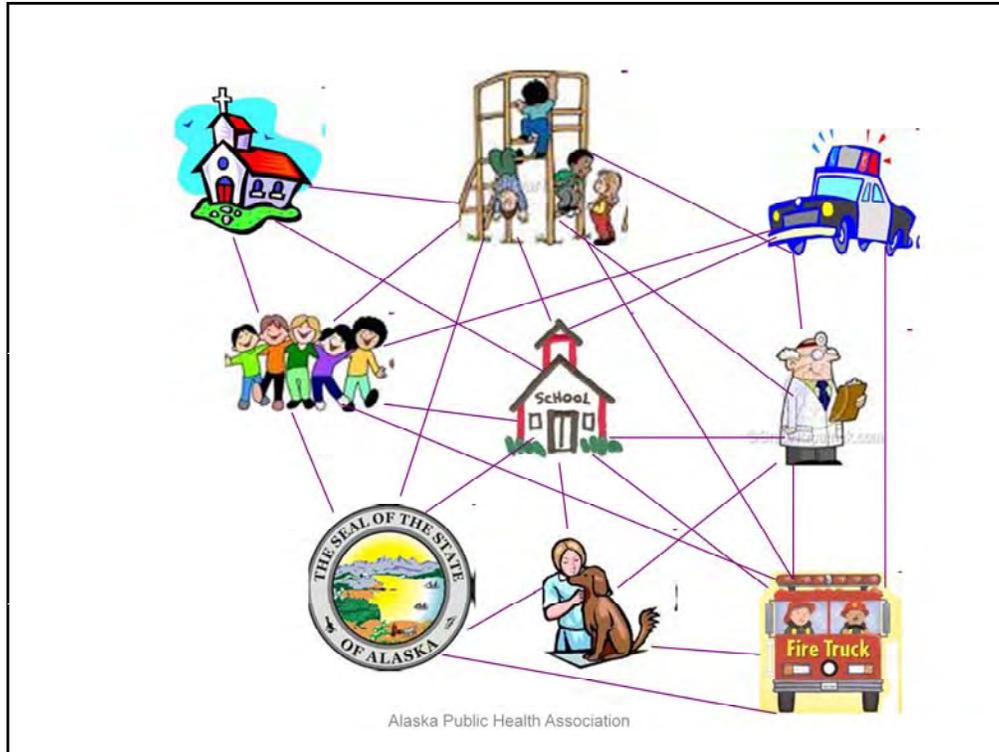
So, the organizational framework of public health is vast and includes any government, private or voluntary agency engaged in promoting the public's health (Schneider, 2006).

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

U.S. Institute of Medicine, Committee for the Study of the Future of Public Health, The Future of Public Health (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1988).

Schneider, M. J. (2006). Introduction to Public Health (2nd Ed.). Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett.



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

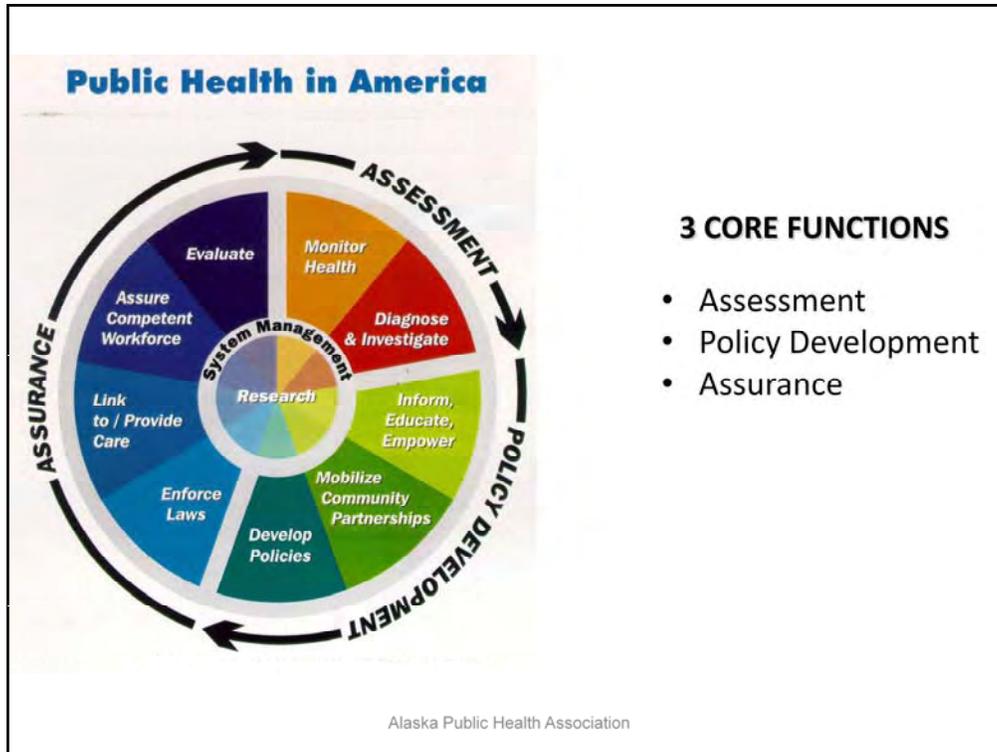
## **PUBLIC HEALTH WORKS TO....**

- 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

Public Health in America Website. Retrieved May 13, 2009 from <http://www.health.gov/phfunctions/public.htm>



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

Public Health in America Website Adopted: Fall 1994 Source: Public Health Functions Steering Committee, Members (July 1995):Retrieved May 13, 2009 from <http://www.health.gov/phfunctions/public.htm>

U.S. Institute of Medicine, Committee for the Study of the Future of Public Health, The Future of Public Health (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1988).

## **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

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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.**

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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

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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

Public Health in America Website Adopted: Fall 1994 Source: Public Health Functions Steering Committee, Members (July 1995). Retrieved May 13, 2009 from <http://www.health.gov/phfunctions/public.htm>

## **THE IMPACT OF PUBLIC HEALTH SUCCESSSES**

- 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

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## References

CDC MMWR. Ten Great Public Health Achievements -- United States, 1900-1999 April 02, 1999. 48(12);241-243.

# POLITICS, POLICY AND PUBLIC HEALTH



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- Using scientific evidence to inform policy and decision making
- Public Health Law

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 we 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

Fielding, J.E. and Briss, P.A. (2006). Promoting Evidenced-based public health policy: Can we have better evidence and more action? *Health Affairs*, 25(4), 969-977.

Schneider, M. J. (2006). *Introduction to public health* (2nd ed.). Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett.

The Alaska Legal Resource Center Website Title 18. Retrieved May 14, 2009 from <http://touchngo.com/lglcntr/akstats/Statutes/Title18.htm>

# ALASKA CONSTITUTION



**Article 7 –  
Health, Education and Welfare**

**§ 4. Public Health**

The legislature shall provide for the promotion and protection of public health

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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.



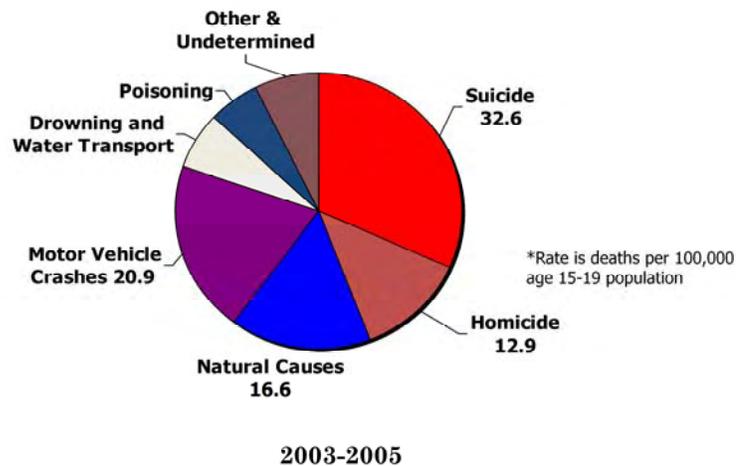
Here we see the top ten causes of death among Alaskan adults in 2006. Cancer and heart disease are the top two.

#### References

Health Risks in Alaska Among Adults Alaska Behavioral Risk Factor Survey 2007 Annual Report. August 2008. Retrieved from <http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chronic/hsl/brfss/pubs/BRFSS07.pdf>

Morbidity and Mortality for Alaska

# LEADING CAUSES OF DEATH ALASKA AGES 15-19



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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 let's 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

2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results. Retrieved May 14, 2009 from <http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chronic/school/YRBSresults.htm>

## 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

*"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**

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## Contact the Alaska Public Health Association

- [info@alaskapublichealth.org](mailto:info@alaskapublichealth.org)
- Sandra Woods, President 2010
- Jennifer Meyer, President 2011
- Sarah Hargrave, Doreen Leavitt, Jordon Lewis, or Masayo Nishiyama, Board members thru 2012
- Website- <http://www.alaskapublichealth.org/>