

## Agency Purpose

The statutory mission of the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) is to protect, maintain, and improve the health of all Minnesotans.

MDH is the state's lead public health agency, responsible for operating programs that prevent infectious and chronic diseases, promote clean water, safe food, quality health care, and healthy living. The department also plays a significant role in making sure that Minnesota is ready to effectively respond to serious emergencies, such as natural disasters, emerging disease threats, and bioterrorism.

The department carries out its mission in close partnership with local public health departments, tribal governments, the federal government, and many health-related organizations.

Public health programs contribute to longer, healthier lives. According to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, public health is credited with adding 25 years to the life expectancy of people in the United States over the past century. Minnesota is consistently ranked one of the healthiest states in the country, in part because of its strong public health system, led by the Minnesota Department of Health.

## Core Functions

While MDH is perhaps best known for responding to disease outbreaks, the department's core functions are very diverse and far-reaching, and focus on preventing health problems before they occur.

- ⇒ Preventing Diseases: MDH detects and investigates disease outbreaks, controls the spread of disease, encourages immunizations, and seeks to prevent chronic and infectious diseases, including HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, diabetes, asthma, cardiovascular disease, and cancer. The department's public health laboratories analyze some of the most complex and dangerous biological, chemical, and radiological substances known, employing techniques not available privately or from other government agencies.
- ⇒ Preparing for Emergencies: MDH works with many partners – including local public health departments, public safety officials, health care providers, and federal agencies – to prepare for significant public health emergencies. The department takes an "all-hazards" approach to planning so that Minnesota is prepared to respond quickly and effectively to any type of public health emergency, ranging from natural disasters to bioterrorism to an influenza pandemic.
- ⇒ Reducing Environmental Health Hazards: MDH identifies and evaluates potential health hazards in the environment, from simple sanitation to risks associated with toxic waste sites and nuclear power plants. The department protects the safety of public water supplies and the quality of the food eaten in restaurants. It also works to safeguard the air inside public places.
- ⇒ Protecting Health Care Consumers: MDH safeguards the quality of health care in the state by regulating many people and institutions that provide care, including hospitals, health maintenance organizations, and nursing homes. Minnesota has pioneered improvements in the health care system, including the development of policies that assure access to affordable, high-quality care which are models for the nation. The department monitors trends in costs, quality, and access in order to inform future policy decisions. The department also reports to consumers on health care quality through the nursing home report card, adverse health events report and other special projects.
- ⇒ Promoting Good Health: MDH provides information and services to help people make healthy choices. Eating nutritiously, being physically active, and avoiding unhealthy substances, such as tobacco, can help prevent many serious diseases and improve the overall health of the state. The department also protects the health of mothers and children through the supplemental nutrition program Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and services for children with special health needs. Minnesota was one of the first states to regulate smoking in public places, and has developed tobacco prevention strategies used nationwide. MDH programs also address occupational safety, injury, and violence prevention.

## At A Glance

- ◆ MDH is one of the top state health departments in the country.
- ◆ MDH has earned an international reputation for being on the cutting edge of disease detection and control, and developing new public health methods.
- ◆ MDH workforce of approximately 1,300 includes many MD's, PhD's, nurses, health educators, biologists, chemists, epidemiologists, and engineers.
- ◆ MDH program resources are deployed in the Twin Cities and seven regional offices statewide, to better serve the state population.

⇒ Achieving Success Through Partnership: Minnesota has a nationally renowned public health system built on well-articulated state and local government roles. MDH provides both technical and financial assistance to local public health agencies so they can provide programs and services meeting the unique needs of their communities.

## Operations

Many core public health functions are carried out directly by MDH staff. Examples include:

- ⇒ Scientists and epidemiologists who work in the laboratories and the cities and neighborhoods of the state to identify the nature, sources, and means of treatment of disease outbreaks and food borne illness.
- ⇒ Nursing home inspectors who make sure that elderly citizens are provided with safe and appropriate health care, and are treated with respect and dignity.
- ⇒ Environmental engineers who work with cities and towns to assure that municipal water systems provide water that is safe for families to drink.
- ⇒ Laboratory scientists who conduct sophisticated tests to detect treatable metabolic errors in all newborn babies.
- ⇒ Chronic disease specialists who work with health plans, nonprofit organizations and individuals across the state to develop and implement plans and strategies for preventing and reducing the burden of chronic diseases.
- ⇒ Scientists and policy experts who collect and evaluate information about environmental trends, the health status of the public, quality of health services, health disparities, and other emerging issues; and carry out public health improvement programs.

MDH provides technical and financial assistance to local public health agencies, public and private care providers, non-governmental organizations, and teaching institutions. Technical assistance provides partners with access to current scientific knowledge and is commonly in the form of direct consultation, formal reports, and training.

## Budget

MDH receives approximately 84% of its funding from non-General Fund resources – the federal government, dedicated cigarette taxes, fees, the health care access fund, and other revenues. The General Fund accounts for the remaining 16% of the budget. Approximately 60% of the budget is “passed through” to local governments, nonprofit organizations, community hospitals, and teaching institutions in the form of grants; 23% represents the cost of the professional and technical staff that carry out the department’s core functions; and 17% is for other operating costs, primarily for technology and space.

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Agency Overview (detailed) <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/opa/overview.html>

Agency Performance Measures <http://www.departmentresults.state.mn.us/health/index.html>