**Public Health Modernization**

**Oregon’s public health system protects and improves the health of every person in Oregon** *What is public health and why should we care about it?*

* Health is a dynamic state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.[[1]](#footnote-1)
* Public health strategies aim to provide conditions in which people can be healthy and focus on entire populations, not on individual patients or disease.
* Public health works to prevent disease before it becomes a problem.
  + For example, public health organizes vaccination campaigns and monitors where flu cases are occurring so that outbreaks can be stopped quickly. In addition, the public health system works to ensure everyone has access to a flu vaccine if they want one.

*To achieve optimum health for everyone in Oregon, the public health system:*

* Protects the health of entire populations.
  + Public health protects children from lead poisoning and other diseases by inspecting public water systems and ensuring public-serving facilities operate in a healthy and safe manner.
  + Public health protects Oregonians from the harms of second hand smoke by promoting and enforcing smoke-free workplace laws.
* Promotes health.
  + Public health encourages healthy eating by making nutritious foods more widely available for everyone and works with partners to make parks, sidewalks and bike lanes accessible to encourage physical activity.
* Prevents and responds to infectious diseases.
  + Through outbreak investigations, public health quickly identifies communicable diseases (e.g., meningitis, salmonella) and stops the spread through public health interventions, including communication campaigns, food recalls, vaccination clinics, and enforcing public health laws (e.g., isolation and quarantine and immunization laws).

*What is the problem we are trying to solve?*

* Across Oregon, a third of counties lack basic public health protections to keep people safe and healthy.
* Some of the healthiest Oregon communities are those that have ongoing access to a full range of public health protections.
* Just as Oregon’s health care system is transforming, public health is updating how we protect and promote health.
  + The way people live, work, play and learn is changing. This is driven by new technology, as well as a changing environment.
  + Historically, public health has had success with solving population health problems, like access to clean drinking water or protection from vaccine-preventable diseases.[[2]](#footnote-2) Today, we’re faced with increasing threats from natural and man-made emergencies, the confluence of climate change and new viruses (e.g. Zika), increases in chronic diseases and a changing awareness of the importance of culturally-specific interventions.
  + We know that while health is improving for many, not everyone is benefitting equally, and some groups continue to experience worse health outcomes. Certain populations, such as communities of color, immigrants and individuals living with a disability or mental illness, experience a disproportionate burden of disease[[3]](#footnote-3) and are at greater risk from emerging health threats and chronic disease.[[4]](#footnote-4)
    - Low-income families, outdoor workers, children, pregnant women and elders are most vulnerable to the health risks associated with climate change such as vector-borne diseases and hazard-related injuries.[[5]](#footnote-5)
    - Tobacco use remains the number one cause of preventable death in Oregon and nationally. The tobacco industry has targeted African American communities in its advertisements and promotional efforts for menthol cigarettes.[[6]](#footnote-6) Tobacco use prevalence among adults is nearly twice as high among African Americans and American Indian/Alaskan Natives than among the general population (33.3%, 35.3% and 17.8%, respectively).[[7]](#footnote-7)

*Public health modernization is the solution*

* Public health modernization will ensure that every community in Oregon has essential public health protections.
* It also holds the public health system accountable for its contribution to improved overall health.
* Public health modernization requires a shift in how programs are delivered so they are more effective and efficient.
* Oregon’s public health system is aligning around modern approaches to public health.
* We’re realigning our existing resources to best support modern public health.
* A good start is by directing funding to locally-driven, place-based strategies and interventions that eliminate health disparities.
* At the same time, a truly modern public health system – one that meets our needs today and is prepared to conquer new health threats twenty years from now – requires investments in new resources.
* Health happens in communities, where people live, work, play, learn and age. Health is created by the resources in a community, and when the community comes together to address its needs.
* Public health ensures communities have the information they need to bring people together and to focus on eliminating the burden of disease and illness experienced within these communities.
* Public health serves as the chief health strategist for communities. Chief health strategists lead their community’s health promotion efforts in partnership with health care clinicians and leaders in widely diverse sectors- from social services to education to transportation to public safety and community development. Chief health strategists play a vital role in promoting the reorientation of the health care system towards prevention and wellness.

1. World Health Organization (WHO), 1998. Constitution of WHO: principles. Accessed October 22, 2018 from: <https://www.who.int/about/mission/en/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Ten Great Public Health Achievements. United States, 1900-1999. Accessed October 24, 2018 from: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/00056796.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Oregon’s State Health Assessment. 2018. Accessed October 22, 2018 at <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/ABOUT/Documents/sha/state-health-assessment-full-report.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Oregon Climate and Health Resilience Plan. Accessed October 22, 2018 at <https://indd.adobe.com/view/23f48239-7243-4cb3-a855-795fc47c891c> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Oregon Health Authority. Health Equity and Social Vulnerability. Integrating Health Equity Considerations Into Climate Change Planning. Accessed October 22, 2018 at <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/HEALTHYENVIRONMENTS/CLIMATECHANGE/Pages/Climate-Ethics-and-Health-Equity.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Tobacco Industry Marketing. Accessed October 24, 2018 at <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/tobacco_industry/marketing/index.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Oregon State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP) 2015-2019. 2013 Oregon Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS); 2010-2011 Oregon BRFSS Race Oversample. Accessed October 24, 2018 at <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/ABOUT/Documents/ship/oregon-state-health-improvement-plan.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)