



A look at the 10 Essential Public Health Services

Overview: What ARE the Public Health 10 Essential Services?

The 10 essential services of public health are a product of the Public Health Functions Project. This Project, developed in 1995 in response to President Clinton’s Health Security Act (1993), help define what public health does.

The Project refined and expanded the 3 core functions of public health, developed by the Institute of Medicine in 1988, to include and define 10 essential services that should be provided by every public health department in the United States.

The Office of Prevention and Health Promotion, Office of Public Health Science, Office of the Secretary, and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services worked together and, in the process strengthened the public health infrastructure of our nation. Today, the 10 essential public health services help guide all public health activities across the country.

The three core functions of public health are: 1) Assessment, 2) Assurance, 3) Policy Development

Timeline:



Essential Public Health Service 1:

Monitor Health Status to Identify and Solve Community Health Problems

This service includes accurate diagnosis of the community’s health status; identification of threats to health and assessment of health service needs; timely collection, analysis, and publication of information on healthcare access, utilization, costs, and outcomes of personal health services; and attention to the vital statistics.

Monitoring conditions that influence health are decentralized across our PH departments and the community. A few of the many examples include: fire departments collecting information on smoke detectors, fire-related injuries, and locations of toxic chemicals in the community, hospitals tracking patient discharge data and schools tracking attendance, student immunizations, and graduation rate data.

When analyzed together, this data helps us better understand the health of the community and aids decision-makers when making decisions about policies, plans and interventions to improve our health.

Ask yourself: What data does your program collect, or could collect, which would benefit our ability to monitor the health status of Ventura County?



Essential Public Health Service 2

Diagnose and Investigate Health Problems and Hazards in the Community

This service asks us to identify and respond to health problems or threats. This includes epidemiological identification of emerging health threats; public health laboratory capability using modern technology to conduct rapid screening and high volume testing; active infectious disease epidemiology programs; and technical capacity for epidemiological investigation of disease outbreaks and patterns of chronic disease and injury.

What is our capacity to investigate outbreaks and/or patterns of:

- Infections;
- Chronic diseases
- Injuries;
- Environmental hazards;
- Other health threats

This service includes a system to communicate with the community in a manner that is sensitive, effective, and professional.

Ask yourself: Is your program ready to support the emerging health needs of your population? Are we ready to respond to a health problem or threat? How quick do we learn of the problem? Then; How effective is our response?



Essential Public Health Service 3

Inform, educate, and empower the public about current and emerging health issues

Essential services 1 and 2 comprised the public health core function of assessment.

Essential service 3 uses the knowledge gained from the core function of assessment to begin the process of policy development. This service focuses with our work to empower people to make informed decisions regarding individual and community health matters. Essential service 3, 4 and 5 facilitate our ability to develop strategies for the health of our community.

This service involves:

- Making health information and educational resources accessible;
- Providing health information and education activities that shape attitudes and build knowledge necessary to reduce health risk and promote better health;
- Establishing health communication plans and activities consistent with the different populations in our community;
- Facilitate informed decision-making among individuals in making health choices and among our leaders who have the ability to establish health policies in our community.
- Maintaining health education and promotion program partnerships with schools, faith communities, work sites, personal care providers, and others to implement and reinforce health promotion programs that shape attitudes, knowledge, skills, and behaviors needed in a healthy community population.

This service includes a system to communicate with the community in a manner that is sensitive, effective, and professional. It involves our ability to leverage partnerships to implement and reinforce health.

Ask yourself: “How well do we keep all people and segments of our county informed about health issues?? Do we know the cultural needs of our community? Can we effectively empower our communities to address their health issues?”



Essential Public Health Service 4

Mobilize community partnerships to identify and solve health problems

Improving the health of our community is a collaborative effort. Mobilizing our communities is a key service within the public health core function of policy development. Essential service 4 engages people and organizations around a health issue.

This service involves:

- Identifying the different communities in our county, who are the stakeholders?;
- Develop partnerships, both formal and informal;
- Coalition development: Convening and facilitating partnerships and strategic alliances among groups and associations (including groups not typically considered a health related group);
- Maintains relationships and linkages with partners to assess the effectiveness of the mobilizations activities.

This service includes a system to communicate with the community in a manner that is sensitive, effective, and professional. It involves our ability to leverage partnerships to implement and reinforce health.

Ask yourself: “How well do we really get people and organizations engaged in health issues?”, “Do you know the stakeholders for your program?”



Essential Public Health Service 5

Develop policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts

This service summarizes the core function of Policy development with the work in essential services 3 and 4 to guide policy. Policies have positive or negative influences on health. Examples of health policies include safety standards, which influence the incidence of injuries; tobacco regulations affect personal health; and safe city parks can affect the ability for people to be active. It is a systematic process to utilize appropriate data, develop and track measurable health objectives, establish strategies and actions to guide the targeted improvements. The targeted strategies may be laws, codes, regulations and/or ordinances.

This service involves:

- Facilitating a dialogue with groups affected by (or lack) of a policy prior to the adoption of a policy;
- Policy development to protect health and guide public health practice
- Community and city planning AND monitoring of the plans
- Alignment of resources to assure successful planning
- Implementing a policy

Our work for this service includes having available and reliable data; developing measurable health objectives; and proposing strategies to implement the policy.

Our ability to influence policies can be in many settings. A policy, which influences health, can be in the schools, in the workplace, or in a business.

Ask yourself: “What does your program do to implement essential service 5?”, “What policies promote health in our county? “Do you know your policy partners?” then...”How effective are we with planning and facilitating health policies?”



Essential Public Health Service 6

Enforce public health laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety

A public health department has the responsibility to know regulations, which may affect the health of their communities. They must also assess the legal authority and effectiveness of regulations. The purpose of a public health regulation is for compliance to protect health – not to punish.

This service involves:

- Review, evaluation, and revise (or influence) legal authority, laws and regulations
- Education about laws and regulations
- Advocacy for regulations with the goal to protect and promote health
- Support of compliance efforts and enforcement

Public health departments employ the use of education and other methods to enable individuals and organizations to comply with health and safety regulations. If there is failure to comply, it is essential that public health use its enforcement authority to protect the public.

Our ability to influence policies can be in many settings. A policy, which influences health, can be in the schools, in the workplace, or in a business.

Essential services 6, 7, 8, and 9 combine to provide the necessary components for the core function of assurance.

Ask yourself: “How does your program enforce health regulations?” “When we enforce health regulations are we up-to-date?” “Is the law effective?”

How often do you review laws related to your program?



Essential Public Health Service 7

Link people to needed personal health services and assure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable

A public health department has the responsibility to know regulations, which may affect the health of their communities. They must also assess the legal authority and effectiveness of regulations. The purpose of a public health regulation is for compliance to protect health – not to punish.

This service involves:

- Identifying barriers to care (either as a group or individually)
- Assisting a coordinated system of clinical care
- Ongoing care management
- Culturally appropriate and targeted health information for at risk population groups
- Availability for transportation and other enabling services
- Providing technical assistance to community providers to assure the proper provision of health strategies

Public health departments identify and address potential barriers to health. These may be cultural, linguistic, or physical barriers.

Ask yourself: “Does the population your program serves receive the medical care they need?”, “Are we referring our population to the added care they need beyond what my program provides?, and “Are our populations effectively accessing health preventive and/or care?”

Essential Service 7 is an assurance service. With all assurance services we must perform the activities of the Public Health core functions to efficiently and effectively provide essential service 7. Are we identifying the right services? Have we collaborated with the right community resources and partners? Do we have our measurements in place for continual quality improvements?



Essential Public Health Service 8

Assure a competent public and personal health care workforce.

Essential Service 8 assures standards of knowledge in the workforce. A public health department must have a current workforce competent in his/her trade and in knowledge to work in a public health department. This includes projecting workforce needs to assure there a future workforce appropriate for the health of the community.

This service involves:

- Assessment of the public health and personal health workforce
- Maintaining public health workforce standards with efficient processes for licensing / credentialing requirements and the use of public health competencies;
- Creating a culture of quality improvement and life-long learning through leadership development
- Cultural competence
- Encouraging careers in public health – beginning in K – 12 grades

VCPH has a workforce Development Plan. VCPH identified the model from the Council of Linkages Between Academia and Public Health Practice to develop our plan. Look for it in Policy Tech.

Ask: How does your program carry out essential service 8?



Essential Public Health Service 9

Evaluate effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population based health services

Essential Service 9: This service calls for ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services. It encompasses assessing program effectiveness through monitoring and evaluating implementation, outcomes, and effect. This provides information necessary for allocating resources and reshaping programs

Components:

- **Evaluation must be ongoing and should examine:**
 - Individual health services
 - Population based services
 - The public health system
- **Quality Improvement:**
 - Are evaluated against established standards
 - Clients are informed and give input to services
- **Performance Management:**
 - Bases for critical review of health program effectiveness
 - Health status indicators and utilization of services

Evaluation is a constant daily factor for all public health activities at all levels. A mechanism for evaluation is developed with all implementation plans. This accomplished in many forms such as customer service feedback, quality improvement programs that examine the process of service delivery, or rigorous case control evaluation. Evaluation necessary for effective decision-making and resource allocation. .With evaluation comes the ability to improve services and processes.

Essential Service 6, 7, 8, and 9 comprise the core function of assurance.

Ask: Are you measuring performance milestones? Are there relevant benchmarks for expectations? What is your evaluation methodology?



Essential Public Health Service 10

Research for New Insights and Innovative Solutions to Health Problems

Public Health supports innovation while identifying and uses best practices.

Essential Service 10 includes:

- Continuous collaboration with research institutions and academic settings
- Assistance with development of comprehensive research
- Identification and monitoring of innovative solutions and cutting-edge research to advance public health
- Epidemiological studies, health policy analyses and health systems research

Public health has the opportunity to develop information needed to better understand how community health can be improved. This places us on the leading edge and requires us to identify innovative solutions to health problems. Public health at the State and local level must develop the capacity to participate in and guide health services research.

This need brings up to the use of:

- Best practices. Best practice comes from a rigorous process of peer review and evaluation that indicates effectiveness to improve public health outcomes for a specific target population.
- Promising practices have strong quantitative and qualitative data showing positive outcomes. Promising practices do not yet have enough research or replication to support generalized positive public health outcomes.
- Emerging practices are based on guidelines, protocols, and standards that have proven to provide effective positive public health outcomes. It does not yet have evaluation data to demonstrate effectiveness of positive outcomes.

CDC and Healthy California Department of Public Health (CDPH) place research with assurance. Research does interface with all three core functions. In the concept of quality improvement, all essential services interface with each other.

For essential service 10 we must:

Ask: Are we using new ways to get the job done? Are these new ways backed with sound and current research? Does all VCPH staff have the concept of evaluating effectiveness (mission and cost)?

Putting it all Together The 3 Core Functions of Public Health

The 10 essential services are activities within the 3 core functions which is the fundamental purpose of public health:

- Assessment;
- Policy development; and
- Assurance.



Tools to accomplish the 3 Core Functions:

Tools to include our community:

- **Community Health assessments (CHAs):** provide information for problem and asset identification and policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation. CHAs also help measure how well a public health system is fulfilling its assurance function. A community health improvement process uses CHA data to identify priority issues, develop and implement strategies for action, and establish accountability to ensure measurable health improvement, which are often outlined in the form of a community health improvement plan (CHIP)
- **Community Health Improvement Plans (CHIP)** – Developed from the data and priority issues identify during CHAs. CHIPs are systematic and includes how a public health department works with the community to improve the health of the population. CHIPs are created by stakeholders and partners.

Tool for an organization:

- **Strategic Plans (SP):** Is an organizational plan based on its mission, strengths, and weaknesses. It utilizes information from the CHA and CHIP. It communicates priorities and provides guidance for decision-making. Because a public health department must be nimble to changing environments and needs, the strategic plan must be flexible and continuous.

These three documents work together. The CHIP and SP uses and gets information from the CHA. All three are components for a performance system to improve community health performance and organizational performance. Information is a continuous cycle requiring close monitoring, reassessing, and revision of plans.

Ventura County is pleased to have a CHA, CHIP, and SP in place to facilitate a public health system is working to meet the three public health core functions.