

CLARK COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH



report to the community

NOVEMBER 2011



Public health in a bad economy

During hard economic times, public health's role in the community is more important than ever. The poor economy is squeezing many. As more people struggle to make ends meet, some are finding it harder to take care of their health and the health of their family.

Clark County Public Health wants everyone in the community to enjoy good health regardless of economic status. It's a matter of health equity and it also makes fiscal sense. The more people who are healthy in a community, the greater the economic and social benefits for everyone. For example, by solving and preventing community health problems, we can reduce the need for costly emergency room visits that everyone ends up paying for.



Here are examples of how our work to protect community health and safety can ultimately save money for individuals and communities:

- A recent Feeding America survey showed that 28 percent of children and 17 percent of adults in Clark County are food insecure, meaning they either don't have enough food or the food they eat lacks adequate nutrition. To address food insecurity, Public Health connects experienced gardeners with residents wanting to grow healthy food they might otherwise be unable to afford. We support community efforts to increase access to neighborhood gardens and our work with the Food System Council promotes food security through local, sustainable food production.
- Obesity and food insecurity sometimes go hand in hand, especially when people rely on inexpensive fast foods. Much of our work supports community efforts to prevent obesity through physical activity and good nutrition. Obesity increases the risk for many chronic health conditions including heart disease, diabetes, cancer, hypertension, and stroke. The cost to treat these conditions could overwhelm our healthcare system.
- We continue to connect low-income individuals and families to health insurance, the lack of which can devastate family finances. We help pregnant women and new mothers navigate the healthcare system to ensure early prenatal care and give young children a healthy start in life.
- We help to increase access to dental care for low-income people. Poor oral health affects overall health and makes it harder for kids to learn in school and for adults to find employment.
- By giving families and communities the tools to prepare for emergencies, we increase the ability of a community to heal quickly after a disaster. This can reduce the need for extra government resources, saving taxpayer dollars.
- Our septic operations and maintenance program helps to protect the community's ground water while protecting property owners' investments.
- By controlling disease outbreaks through prevention, detection and monitoring, public health reduces the amount of time children and their parents are away from school and work. Absenteeism is an economic drain for individuals, businesses and communities.
- At a *Growing Healthier* forum last February, a panel of experts demonstrated how changes to community design can promote or restore economic vitality. Many of the panel's planning ideas will be recommended in the *Health Element* that Public Health is preparing for the Clark County Comprehensive Growth Plan update.

Individual health is supported by the health of the entire community

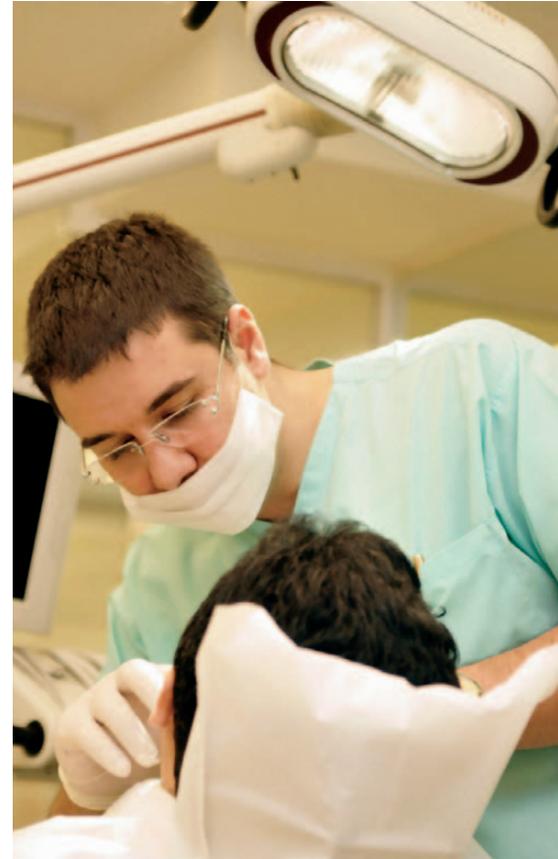
One of the ways Public Health protects the health of individuals is to ensure that community conditions foster good health. As an individual, you are responsible for personal decisions and lifestyle changes that can reduce risks and improve your health.

However, individual behavior is often influenced by social conditions — community norms and values, regulations, and policies. It's also influenced by environmental conditions. For instance, do you have ready access to a healthcare provider, supermarkets, or parks and trails where you can get exercise? Your answer may be an indicator of your health.

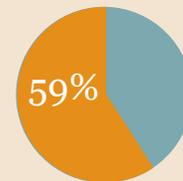
Following are some recent examples of how Clark County Public Health is working with residents of Clark County to promote health at all levels — from individuals, families and organizations to communities and policy makers.

The power of a smile

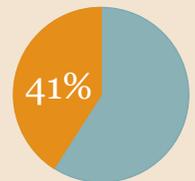
People have the power to turn their lives around, even after they've hit rock bottom. Rick's life went into a downward spiral several years ago when his drug addiction stole his friends, his home, his successful plumbing business — and most of his teeth. That's when he decided to change his life. With help from Share House staff, he kicked his drug habit. He was referred to Public Health's oral health program because it's hard to move forward when you have difficulty eating and your smile repels potential employers. His remaining teeth needed extracting, a service performed by the Free Clinic of Southwest Washington. Fortunately, the New Day Clinic, which opened earlier this year, offered him low-cost dentures, further subsidized by a local dentist. Today Rick smiles confidently and with good reason. Thanks to his determination and help from community partners, he now has a new plumbing job, a car, a townhouse and a new girlfriend. You can't get by on a smile alone, but a nice one sure helps. ■



KINDERGARTENERS WITH CAVITIES and/or fillings



Low-income families



Middle-income families

ADULT DENTIST VISITS in the past year



55% No high school diploma



65% High school diploma or GED



72% Attended college



83% College degree or above

Growing up fast

Denise was only 19 years old when she learned she was HIV positive. The news threw her into a tailspin. She knew she'd been careless, even reckless in the past — but wasn't that just part of being young? Trained staff at Clark County Public Health were prepared to handle her distress. Over the next few months, they provided counseling and education and referred her to case managers, infectious disease doctors, and other sources of community support. At first Denise was withdrawn and depressed. Then she decided it would be easier to take action than to remain a victim. It was an emotional growth spurt. She learned as much as she could about HIV/AIDS, including the recommendation that everyone get tested for

HIV at least once, and high-risk people more often. Denise became an outspoken advocate of testing. Many of her acquaintances got tested, responding to the influence of a peer. Now Denise has a new goal: to start a support group for women living with HIV. ■

Breaking down barriers

Nursing moms often experience barriers to breastfeeding when they return to work. Because breastfeeding promotes health for mothers and babies, Public Health staff spearheaded the creation of a worksite policy to support breastfeeding employees at all county

government offices. The policy encourages a positive, accepting attitude toward nursing mothers and ensures the availability of lactation rooms. In addition to earning the gratitude of many employees, the policy has become a model for other community employers, many of which are working with Public Health to support their breastfeeding employees and comply with new federal laws. The business case for these policies is strong. Research suggests that employers who provide a supportive environment for breastfeeding employees experience lower absenteeism, lower health care costs, better employee retention, higher productivity, and a positive community image. Clark County enjoyed an additional benefit. Last April, we were recognized for our policy with the 2011 Outstanding Employer Award from the Washington State Breastfeeding Coalition. ■

Supportive workplace policies offer:

- Private place to express milk
- Flexible schedule
- Help integrating breastfeeding with work
- Supportive supervisors and staff

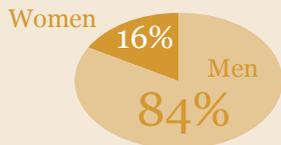
NEW HIV CASES

in Clark County



NEW HIV CASES by gender

2006-2010



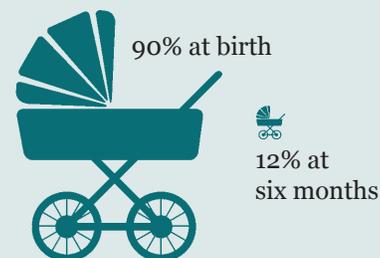
452 RESIDENTS WITH HIV

in Clark County ~ 2010

1 in 6 undiagnosed



MOTHERS WHO BREASTFEED



Moving to prevent obesity

Walking to school almost seems like a relic of a bygone era. The decline of this activity could be one of the reasons this generation’s school kids are heavier than ever — so heavy in fact, that they may not live as long as their parents. Last May, Clark County Public Health teamed up with Endeavour Elementary School and local neighborhood associations to organize a “Walk and Bike to School Day.” The event was a huge success, with 250 students walking and biking to school with their parents, grandparents, siblings and school and public health staff. In addition to exercise, students got a hefty dose of community spirit and a better understanding of healthy living. The event was so well received and attended that Endeavour plans to hold it twice yearly. When the school repeated the event in September, it attracted the same number of enthusiastic participants. That’s moving in the right direction to prevent obesity. ■



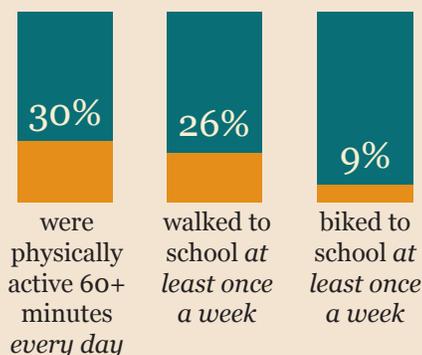
Shielding kids from temptation

In early 2011, a Public Health employee took his three boys to the mall. Amid the sensory stimulation and sales hype, the boys honed in on a kiosk promoting electronic cigarettes — sleek nicotine-dispensing devices that mimic conventional cigarettes and produce a remarkably smoke-like mist. The boys were intrigued by flavor options such as chocolate, raspberry and banana split. Fortunately, the gadget and its accessories were out of the boys’ price

range, not that their vigilant dad would have permitted a transaction. Since this outing, the Board of Health in June adopted an ordinance prohibiting the sale of e-cigarettes to minors in Clark County. The federal Food and Drug Administration intends to regulate e-cigarettes because there is no data about their safety. Until that data is available, Clark County and other jurisdictions must decide what local protections are necessary. Clark County’s board decided not to take chances with children’s health. ■

6TH GRADERS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Clark County, 2010

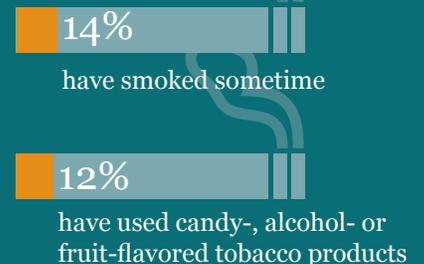


10TH GRADE TOBACCO USE

IN 2010:



IN THE PAST MONTH:



Funding challenges

Public Health’s workforce has shrunk from 150 full-time equivalent employees in 2008 to just 79 today — a 47% reduction. During the same period, our budget was reduced by 33 percent, from \$29.8 million to 18.9 million.

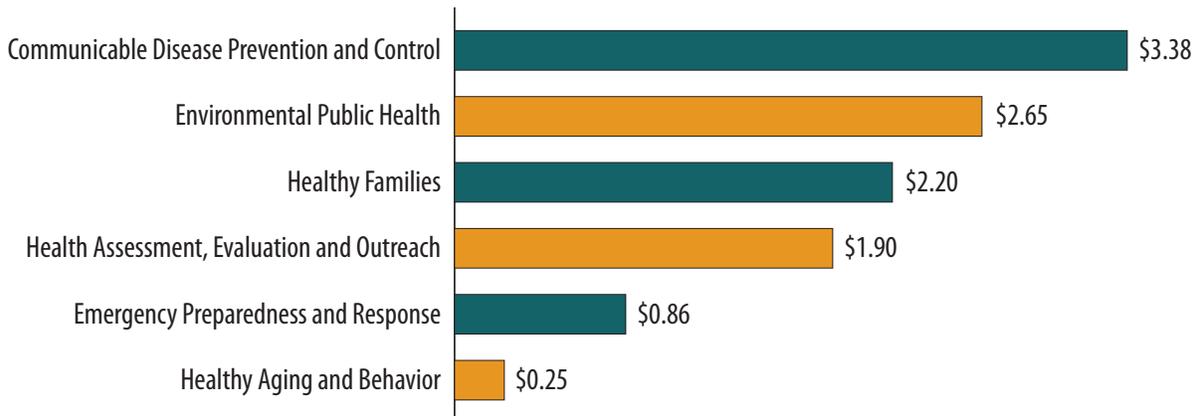
A comparison of federal, state and local public health funding over recent

budget cycles shows that we are increasingly dependent on local funding. In the 2003-2004 budget cycle, local funding comprised 31 percent of our budget. In the 2011-2012 budget cycle, it’s 54 percent of our budget.

Recognizing that federal and state governments are contributing less

money to fund local public health programs, the Clark County Board of Health last December voted unanimously to increase the 2011 General Fund property tax levy by one percent, or about \$540,000 countywide, and dedicate the revenue to public health.

2010 actual expenditures ~ by service unit (\$ millions)



Looking forward

A recent study looked at changes in spending by local public health agencies over a 13-year period and found that death rates fell between 1.1 and 6.9 percent for each 10 percent increase in local public health spending.¹ This suggests that increased public health investment can produce measurable improvements in health, especially in low-income communities. However, the study also suggests that money alone is unlikely to generate significant and sustainable health gains unless accompanied by improvements in public health practices.

Although our spending has varied over recent years, Clark County Public Health is always working to improve public health practices. Continuous improvement is a necessary guiding principle on many levels, especially when our staffing has been reduced to its core.

One of our improvement models involves strengthening our ties to the community. We are always looking for opportunities to develop public health partnerships that can maximize efficiency in delivering services and improve community health. We strive to provide guidance for other community groups, connecting local health efforts to one another.

Our Partnerships for Healthy Neighborhoods effort involves working with residents and community organizations to create neighborhood conditions that better support the health and safety of babies and children. We are currently engaged in community efforts in an area of central Vancouver where

we found that children are more at-risk.

Our recently launched Let's Move campaign, based on the national campaign, promotes healthy eating and active living among children. To help curb the alarming obesity trend among our youth, we're connecting people to local resources and activities and sharing success stories.

Community groups, neighborhood leaders, and interested individuals are providing Public Health essential input as we create a Health Element for the county's Comprehensive Growth Management Plan update. These partnerships are helping to guide our policy recommendations and strategies for improving the long-term health of Clark County.

By pursuing partnerships such as these, capitalizing on what's already going on and minimizing duplication of efforts, we are giving residents more value for their taxpayer dollars. Although the months and years ahead promise to be fiscally challenging, we are confident that our emphasis on partnerships is an effective strategy to protect the health and safety of our residents.

¹ Glen P. Mays and Sharla A. Smith: "Evidence links increases in public health spending to declines in preventable deaths," *Health Affairs*, no. (2011): doi: 10.1377/hlthaff.2011.0196.

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Clark County Board of Health

Marc Boldt
Tom Mielke
Steve Stuart

Public Health Director

John Wiesman

Health Officer

Alan Melnick

Public Health Advisory Council (as of Dec. 1, 2011)

Renate Atkins Marilyn Darr Bob Richardson
Jonathan Avery Jeremy Diehl David Seabrook
Betsy Brownfield Dawn Doutrich

Joan Caley Trevor Evers *Others who served in 2010*
Paul Childers Joanne Huffman John Williams Joe Sepe
Justin Clary Laurie Lebowsky Lucille Deslandes Tom Griffith
Mark Collier Sandra Mathewson Kris Bockmier
Nicole Covrett Justin Plummer Garry Lucas

CLARK COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH Organization chart

CLARK COUNTY RESIDENTS

Board of Health
County Administrator

**Public Health
Advisory Council**

Public Health Director
John Wiesman

▪ **Emergency Preparedness and Response**
▪ **Region 4 Public Health Emergency
planning**

Health Officer
Alan Melnick

**Healthy Community
Planning Element**

**Administrative
Services**

▪ **Customer Service**
▪ **Vital Statistics**

Deputy Director
Marni Storey

Healthy Families

- Children with Special Health Care Needs
- Health Systems
- Pregnancy Support
- Nurse Family Partnership
- Oral Health

Communicable Disease Prevention and Control and Outreach

- Immunization Quality
- Communicable Disease
- Tuberculosis
- HIV/AIDS Prevention
- HIV Case Management

Chronic Disease Prevention

- Healthy Eating & Active Living
- Partnerships for Healthy Neighborhoods (P4HN)
- Tobacco

Environmental Public Health

- Drinking Water
- Solid/Hazardous Waste
- On-Site Septic Systems
- Food
- Pools/Beaches (Water Recreation)

Health Assessment and Evaluation

- Assessment
- Evaluation
- Health Impact Assessment

Clark County Public Health ~ Center for Community Health

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Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.