

# Colorado Public Health System Transformation

## Brief | August 2018

### Why should we transform public health in Colorado now?

Enormous progress has been made throughout Colorado to improve the health and longevity of our population since the passage of Colorado's Public Health Act (SB 08 194) in 2008. The Act's purpose was to ensure that core public health services, which are critical to ensuring the health and safety of Coloradans and preventing public health emergencies, are available with a consistent standard of quality, to every person in Colorado, regardless of where they live.

However, implementation of this Act has also created frustration as it created unfunded service mandates for already underfunded governmental public health authorities. Without significant additional funding, the Colorado governmental public health system cannot fully implement core public health services, increasing the health risks faced by Coloradans. These increased public health risks have placed additional demands on the governmental public health and clinical health care systems, such that our chronically under-resourced public health system is in crisis. Without significant attention the governmental public health system may collapse under the strain of the next wildfire or flood, the opioid epidemic, or rising suicide rates. **It is time for Colorado to invest in a strong, resilient public health system, and deliver on the state's promise to create the healthiest state in the nation.**

### Who is leading this effort?

Colorado's governmental public health system is made up of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and 53 local public health authorities, collectively represented by the Colorado Association of Local Public Health Officials (CALPHO). Since funding for public health is a shared responsibility of state and local government, in 2015, state and local public health staff began meeting to explore issues surrounding public health funding in Colorado. The group ultimately recommended focused action on modernizing and funding public health, building on lessons learned from several states pursuing public health system transformation through the nationally-recognized Foundational Public Health Services framework.

Upcoming legislative sessions provide significant opportunities to make progress toward fully funding Colorado's public health system. As such, Colorado's governmental public health system is exploring opportunities to align its core services with the national Foundational Public Health Services framework, and pursue public health system transformation through Foundational Public Health Services as a means of obtaining and implementing additional funding.

### Foundational Public Health Services

The Foundational Public Health Services framework is the result of the 2013 Public Health Leadership Forum, which explored the recommendation of the Institute of Medicine report, *For the Public's Health: Investing in a Healthier Future*, to create a "minimum package of services" that must be available in health departments everywhere for the health system to work anywhere. As such, the framework is a "minimum package model" organized into the following categories:

- ▶ **Foundational areas.** The substantive areas of expertise or program-specific activities in each state and all local health departments, essential to protect the community's health (e.g., environmental public health).
- ▶ **Foundational capabilities.** The cross-cutting skills and capacities needed to support the foundational areas and other programs and activities, key to protecting the community's health and achieving equitable health outcomes (e.g., communications).

The Public Health National Center for Innovation currently houses the Foundational Public Health Services framework; more information can be found on their website, <https://phnci.org/fphs>.

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## What does public health system transformation mean for governmental public health in Colorado?

Previous governmental public health fiscal sustainability efforts, in Colorado and elsewhere, have had limited success, in large part because they are too narrowly focused on increasing funding. Foundational public health services as a public health system transformation model is different from those efforts in that it entertains all of the governmental public health system's opportunities to improve its fiscal balance – not just increasing funding, but also efficiency and effectiveness – through:

- ▶ “right-sizing” governmental public health’s role and scope of services;
- ▶ optimizing the efficiency and effectiveness in delivery of services;
- ▶ defining level of service standards; and,
- ▶ increasing funding and aligning funding responsibility to accountability for services throughout the system.

As of January 2017, eight states have adopted and customized this foundational public health services framework to match their state contexts, as a first step to implementing foundational public health services as a public health system transformation model. These states include: Kentucky, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Texas and Washington.

There is great support in aligning Colorado’s core public health services with the foundational public health services framework, and pursuing the foundational public health services public health system transformation model.

As a first step, we have compared the Core Public Health Services framework to the national framework. What we found is that they are very similar. The national framework includes five “foundational areas” that only government provides and six cross-cutting “foundational capabilities” that must be present to support these services; meanwhile, Colorado’s model has seven core public health services that

speak to the whole public health system. However, both frameworks speak to the minimum public health services that should be provided to all. It is expected that minimal changes will be needed to fully align the core public health services to foundational public health services.

## What's Next?

CALPHO and CDPHE are working together to identify one-time public and private funding to:

- ▶ support aligning the core public health services with the national Foundational Public Health Services model;
- ▶ conduct an assessment to identify the gap in funding that exists to support a comprehensive public health system that ensures service equity for all Coloradans;
- ▶ identify the most effective and efficient public health service delivery system for Colorado;
- ▶ develop and execute a communications strategy and plan to convey the value of public health for all Coloradans;
- ▶ increase funding and align funding responsibility to accountability for services throughout the system; and,
- ▶ track implementation and evaluate the effectiveness of the new and improved public health system.

For more information, please contact:

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