

CHEAC Legislative Platform 2016

CHEAC is dedicated to the promotion, protection and improvement of the health of California's population.

CHEAC Platform Subject Areas

Programmatic

High Priority

AB 85 Implementation/Health Realignment (HP)

Access to Health Services (HP)

Built Environment and Climate Change (HP)

Chronic Disease Prevention and Wellness Promotion (HP)

Communicable Disease Control (HP)

EMS (HP)

Health Coverage/Health Care Reform Implementation (HP)

- Expansion of Health Coverage: Medi-Cal/Health Insurance Exchange
- California Children's Services Program

Health Equity (HP)

Public Health Infrastructure (HP)

Tobacco Control (HP)

Medium Priority

Dental Health Services (MP)

Drug & Alcohol Services (MP)

Environmental Health (MP)

Health Information Technology (MP)

Injury Prevention (MP)

Jail and Community Corrections Services (MP)

Maternal & Child Health Services (MP)

Medi-Cal Administrative Activities/Targeted Case Management (MAA/TCM) (MP)

Public Health Emergency Preparedness (MP)

Public Health Laboratories (MP)

Public Health Workforce (MP)

Vital Statistics (MP)

Low Priority

Animal Care and Control (LP)

First Five (Proposition 10) (LP)

Administrative

High Priority

Local Health Department Administration and Simplification (HP)

Mandates (HP)

Public Health Funding (HP)

PROGRAM ISSUE AREAS (listed alphabetically)

Priority Key: High Priority (HP), Medium Priority (MP), Low Priority (LP)

AB 85 Implementation/Health Realignment (HP)

Platform: Advocate for maintaining sufficient health realignment funding to ensure that counties have the resources to meet their obligations to fulfill their statutory public health and indigent health care mandates.

Brief Background: Legislation in 2013 made major changes to 1991 Health Realignment. As a result of AB 85, funds are diverted from Health Realignment to offset state General Fund costs for CalWORKS, under the rationale that counties no longer need the funds for indigent care with the implementation of the ACA. However, there are many uncertainties about the continuing indigent health care responsibilities counties will still have under Welfare and Institutions Code Section 17000, and whether the amount of Health Realignment funds retained by counties under AB 85 will be sufficient to serve the residual, uninsured indigent population. Additionally, it is unclear at this time what the impact of AB 85 will be over time on county public health funding, and how public health services in different types of counties will be impacted.

Access to Health Services (HP)

Platform: Support measures that enhance counties' and communities' abilities to deliver services through their hospitals and clinics. Favor proposals that would provide for the continued expansion of both county and community Federally Qualified Health Clinics (FQHCs).

Brief Background: Public hospitals and clinics provide services to all patients in California, regardless of their insurance status or ability to pay. Counties are required to serve the medically indigent under Welfare & Institutions Code Section 17000. California's public hospitals and clinics are the core of the state's health care safety net. Though they represent just 6 percent of all hospitals in the state, public hospitals provide nearly half of the hospital care provided to uninsured patients. Public hospitals also provide comprehensive systems of care, including services that are essential for the entire community; they operate roughly 60 percent of all top-level trauma centers and nearly 45 percent of all burn units. They also deliver 11 million outpatient visits a year, and train 45 percent of all doctors in California.

Some counties operate Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) or FQHC "look-alikes" that provide primary health care to Medi-Cal patients as well as many underserved, underinsured or non-insured Californians. These clinics are eligible for enhanced Medicaid and Medicare reimbursements and reduced costs on both prescription and non-prescription drugs for outpatient care.

Animal Care and Control (LP)

Platform: Support policies that enhance the ability of county animal controllers to provide cost effective and humane animal control services.

Brief Background: Each year almost one million unwanted and abandoned cats and dogs are born in California. Local governments spend more than \$250 million each year to intake and care for those animals and ultimately euthanize over half. Encouraging the spaying and neutering of cats and dogs is a reasonable, proven-effective and necessary means to greatly reduce the number of unwanted animals in California. Furthermore, local governments are responsible for the surveillance, prevention and control of animal rabies in California. This is achieved through local companion animal vaccinations and licensing programs, stray animal control, animal bite reporting, investigation and animal isolation along with public education.

Built Environment and Climate Change (HP)

Platform: Support legislation and funding that encourages consideration of public health impacts in the design and planning of healthy communities. Support efforts to develop climate change mitigation strategies to help protect against potential impacts on human health. Support efforts, working with other sectors, to maintain and expand affordable, safe, and stable housing.

Brief Background: Historically, public health has played a role in community design. Before planning became a separate discipline, local health departments performed many "planning" tasks. In the 1900's,

they advocated separating noxious land uses from dwelling units and clamped down on rampant sanitation issues and poor conditions in tenement housing. Today's public health professionals are realizing that our modern built environment with poorly designed streets, lack of transportation options, air pollution and sprawl is negatively impacting health. Physical inactivity levels are significant among Californians of all ages and abilities. Individuals are not able to easily engage in daily physical activity due to unsafe play areas, limited access to recreational facilities and substandard pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure throughout the state. These conditions create and exacerbate the symptoms of many chronic diseases such as heart disease, hypertension, asthma, bronchitis, stroke, diabetes, obesity, osteoporosis and depression while also increasing the risk of serious injury. Increasingly local public health departments are getting involved in helping to mitigate these health risks. From traffic-calming to bike lanes to transit-oriented development, the public health "voice" can help inform land use and transportation decisions to help create safer, healthier communities.

Climate change is a complex phenomenon and diverse ecological effects may result. Human health may be directly or indirectly impacted by changes in water, air, food quality and quantity, ecosystems, agriculture and economy. Local health departments may be confronted with devising new strategies to deal with these unprecedented threats to the overall health of California's population.

A lack of stable and affordable housing affects the health of many Californians. Housing instability is associated with negative behavioral outcomes in children, depression and anxiety; and at the most extreme expression of instability – homelessness – homeless Californians are at sharply increased risk of chronic and acute health problems. Unaffordable housing across the state negatively impacts mental health and reduces the income that households have available for other subsistence needs, including food, transportation, and health care expenses. Housing should be seen as fundamental right for all to have access to a safe, secure, habitable, and affordable home.

Chronic Disease Prevention and Wellness Promotion (HP)

Platform: Support a varied policy agenda addressing the prevention of chronic disease and promotion of wellness. Support a dedicated funding stream to fund preventive health services or activities that improve community health outcomes. Advocate for flexibility for California to design prevention programs to take advantage of California's state and local health department strengths and encourage the provision of base funding to state and local health departments with additional funding available on a competitive basis. Encourage the allocation of new revenue streams in an equitable manner across all local health jurisdictions. Seek to improve nutrition, obesity and fitness education programs as well as health literacy in California's population. Continue to support the goals of the Let's Get Healthy California Framework, the California Wellness Plan, the California State Innovation Model (CalSIM) Initiative, and Advancing Prevention in the 21st Century (P21), and the local public health role in realizing these goals.

Brief Background: In 2010 as part of the federal Affordable Care Act, Congress created the Prevention and Public Health fund that was designed to expand and sustain the necessary infrastructure to prevent disease, detect it early and manage conditions before they become severe. This fund creates an unprecedented opportunity for local health departments to augment and expand existing chronic disease programs or to participate in new programs to address longstanding chronic disease issues in their communities.

Chronic diseases in California such as heart disease, cancer, lung disease, stroke, diabetes and asthma continue to plague our communities in ever larger numbers. In addition, 28% of California's 5th, 7th and 9th graders are overweight. Children who are overweight increase their risk for type 2 diabetes mellitus, asthma and orthopedic problems. They are also more likely to have risk factors for cardiovascular disease. Weight problems are complex with many causes including a person's diet and physical activity level; however, other aspects of everyday environment also can influence them. These may include a lack of recreation facilities, unsafe communities or lack of access to low cost fresh fruits and vegetables. Finally, the growing number of people experiencing food shortages, insecurity and hunger concurrent with the reduction in social assistance programs, has become gradually recognized as a public health concern.

In 2012, the State of California issued the "Let's Get Healthy California" framework, which identified six strategic goals for California to improve the health of residents over a ten year span. Those goals are: Healthy Beginnings for children; Living Well to prevent and manage chronic disease; ways to improve End of Life care; Redesigning the Health System to be more efficient, safe and focused on patient care; Creating Healthy Communities to enable healthier living; and Lowering the Cost of Care to make care more affordable and to reward value and health outcomes. As part of the framework, the state also developed a

Dashboard with nearly 40 indicators to measure California's success. The "Let's Get Healthy California" framework also serves as California's State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP), a component necessary for public health accreditation.

California's Department of Public Health released the California Wellness Plan (CWP) in 2014, which is in alignment with the "Let's Get Healthy California" framework. As part of the CWP, CDPH organized a statewide chronic disease prevention meeting (P21) resulting in a statewide short-term chronic disease prevention agenda for 2014-2016. The four goals identified by the P21 conference to work on are 1) Healthy Communities, 2) Optimal Health Systems Linked with Community Prevention, 3) Accessible and Useable Health Information, and 4) Prevention Sustainability and Capacity.

Communicable Disease Control (HP)

Platform: Support increased state and federal funding and resources directed at building the capacity of local public health departments to combat and control communicable diseases. Oppose efforts to reduce state and federal funding streams which would create cost shifts to local health departments.

Brief Background: The control of infectious disease, through immunizations, surveillance, disease investigation, laboratory testing and response activities has long been a fundamental and statutorily required responsibility assigned to local government public health agencies. However, resources to support these essential activities have been insufficient for years. Preventing and controlling communicable diseases such as seasonal influenza, vaccine preventable diseases such as measles and pertussis, hepatitis C, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis remain ongoing challenges for local health departments. In addition, new and re-emerging infectious diseases, including pandemic influenza, multi-drug resistant tuberculosis, West Nile Virus, Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA), Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), Ebola, Valley Fever, Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Chikungunya, have increased the need to build capacity.

Dental Health Services (MP)

Platform: Favor proposals to expand access to dental health services for low-income Californians. Support efforts to increase Denti-Cal reimbursement levels to encourage qualified dentists to participate in providing care to low-income children. Support water fluoridation efforts. Encourage dental health education program expansions including adequate funding.

Brief Background: Many Californians, including hundreds of thousands of children, have unmet oral health needs. Untreated dental problems result in days missed at school or work and increased susceptibility to other more damaging health problems such as ear and sinus infections or heart disease. It's estimated that only 30% of California's water supply is fluoridated. Public health strategies such as water fluoridation and dental health education programs are not widely supported or funded.

Drug & Alcohol Services (MP)

Platform: Support the creation of alcohol or other drug mitigation fees with funding dedicated to prevention and treatment services. Enhance the ability of local health agencies to reduce and prevent alcohol and other drug related problems, including the protection of SAMHSA block grant funding for prevention. Support legislation that would make a range of alcohol and drug treatment services available to adolescents. Support efforts to adequately fund Drug Medi-Cal services and ensure access to substance use disorder services.

Brief Background: Alcohol and other drug abuse is a menacing problem in California. It's estimated that the state spends in excess of \$10.4 billion a year to address alcohol and other drug problems with most of the funding directed towards law enforcement and prisons rather than prevention and treatment. Furthermore, demand for treatment far exceeds statewide treatment capacity.

Also, there is a need for substance abuse treatment to deter youth from a lifetime of dependency. Such treatment is often not available now because California's treatment system was developed to serve adults. As a result, costs associated with substance abuse by youth continue to grow. The lack of adequate adolescent substance abuse treatment services threatens the health and safety of the entire community.

In 2011, funding for the Drug Medi-Cal program was realigned as part of a broader criminal justice realignment to counties; in addition, in 2014, the state expanded the scope of Drug Medi-Cal benefits

available to Medi-Cal recipients. Counties are now also responsible for funding the Drug Medi-Cal program through a combination of realigned funding and federal funds.

EMS (HP)

Platform: Maintain existing laws and regulations governing the role of counties in the oversight of pre-hospital emergency medical services including ambulance services. Support legislation or regulatory reform that would enhance county authority and increase funding for such oversight. Oppose any efforts to decrease county authority to oversee the emergency medical services system and to reduce the quality assurance role played by county EMS agencies. Oppose any efforts to limit the authority of the local Emergency Medical Services Medical Director over pre-hospital patient care including disciplinary actions over licensed or certified personnel. Support legislation that will enhance the provision of emergency and/or trauma services and increased funding for the various components of emergency and trauma care systems, including operations, equipment, infrastructure, ancillary services, public health interventions and physician reimbursements.

Brief Background: In 1980, California enacted major legislation to promote development, accessibility and provision of a statewide system for Emergency Medical Services. Health and Safety Code Division 2.5 became effective January 1, 1981.

The intent of the law is to provide efficient and effective pre-hospital emergency medical care throughout California's 58 counties. In addition to addressing EMS manpower and training, communications, transportation, hospital and critical care centers, public information/education and disaster response, the law emphasizes medical control system organization and effectiveness.

Counties should retain responsibility for local medical control and operational authority to reduce system fragmentation, to ensure system financial viability and to assure that all county residents have access to emergency medical services, even in remote areas of the county. Changing the system to a jurisdiction-by-jurisdiction operation would greatly fragment and threaten the integrity of a system that is currently designed to assure for uniformity of high quality and equity of service level and cost to all citizens regardless of their jurisdiction. A fragmented system would be wrought with a high degree of variability in quality, cost and services level, and would likely also increase overall system cost due the loss of efficiency that currently exists in today's uniform, integrated and coordinated system.

Environmental Health (MP)

Platform: Support legislation and funding that promotes safe and healthy living and working environments for all California residents. Support scientifically proven and best practice efforts that prevent or reduce community exposure to toxins and other environmental contaminants that impact human health. Support efforts to protect and ensure the safety of California's food supply. Support efforts to promote the development of "alternative water" sources, eg: recycled water, storm water, rainwater, and gray water, for both outdoor and indoor use.

Brief Background: The improvements in technology which allow identification of small concentrations of environmental contaminants combined with increasing public concern about adverse health impacts have given rise to an extraordinary quantity of state and federal law and regulation on environmental issues. Local environmental health departments, whether a separate local agency or integrated into local public health departments, enforce these laws on behalf of Californians. This may include air quality, water quality, restaurant inspections, hazardous materials and hazardous waste management, land use, liquid and solid waste and vector control.

Food and water are basic human needs. Public health has long had an interest in the availability of a safe food supply. During the early 20th century, contaminated food, milk and water caused many foodborne infections. Public awareness dramatically increased during this time and led to the passage of the federal Pure Food and Drug Act. In the late 20th and early 21st centuries food safety and security continue to be the focus of public health interest. The national recall of California-grown spinach and the international recall of Chinese produced foodstuffs have proven that food has become a global commodity and that impurities at any step of production can have wide public health impacts. With the severe drought in California, efforts to conserve the water supply have increased. The development of alternative water sources promotes efficient use of available water.

First Five (Proposition 10) (LP)

Platform: Support the efforts of local First Five commissions to enhance the health and early growth experiences of California's children. Oppose any efforts to reduce funding to county-based programs on the assumption that local First Five commissions will fill the revenue gap created by the withdrawal of state funds (i.e. supplantation). Oppose any restrictions on the decision-making authority of the county First Five commissions and Boards of Supervisors as set forth in the text of Prop 10. Oppose any attempts to repeal Prop 10 via legislation or state-wide ballot initiative.

Brief Background: Proposition 10, the California Children and Families Act of 1998, created the California Children and Families Program, now known as First Five, to promote, support and improve the early development of children from the prenatal stage to five years of age.

Health Coverage/Health Care Reform Implementation (HP)

Background: In March 2010, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) was signed into law that for the first time in the United States put in place comprehensive health care reform. The ACA, among other things, expanded Medicaid eligibility to childless adults up to 138% FPL. It also established state health insurance exchanges that would allow individuals to purchase health insurance; in California, the health exchange is known as Covered California.

- **Expansion of Health Coverage: Medi-Cal/Health Insurance Exchange**

Platform: Support efforts to ensure all eligible residents are enrolled in Medi-Cal or Covered California in an efficient and timely manner. Advocate for adequate coverage, access to care, affordability, prevention, streamlining and evaluation components in Medi-Cal and through Covered California. Oppose further Medicaid/Medi-Cal reductions at either the federal or state level.

Also monitor the implementation of simplifying Medi-Cal and enrollment for participants and providers, oppose efforts that create disincentives to enrollment and utilization, such as co-payments and premiums, seek ways to expand access to dental services, maximize federal financial participation and increase provider rates.

Brief Background: The passage of the Affordable Care Act provides a tremendous opportunity to provide health care to all Californians. This historic shift in the provision of health care services will have significant impacts on county health systems. Counties have a strong desire to see effective systems in place to get people enrolled in Medi-Cal or the Health Insurance Exchange (Covered California). In addition, counties, through Welfare & Institutions Code Section 17000, will continue to have a legal responsibility to provide care to "residual" populations that may remain uninsured in California.

Medicaid is a joint state/federal healthcare program for eligible low-income individuals. California's Medicaid program, Medi-Cal, is administered by the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS). Under the ACA, California has expanded Medi-Cal eligibility to all adults up to 138% FPL. In 2015, as part of the State Budget, California extended Medi-Cal to all undocumented individuals under the age of 19 starting no sooner than May 2016. California has continued to under fund Medi-Cal such that California ranks 47th in total Medi-Cal spending per Medi-Cal patient, one third below the national average. Furthermore, due to low reimbursement rates, California has the lowest percentage of physicians participating in the Medicaid program of any state in the union.

- **California Children's Services Program**

Platform: Support strategies to streamline funding and program complexities of the California Children's Services (CCS) program in order to meet the demands of the complex medical care and treatment needs for children in California with certain physically disabling conditions. Monitor the CCS program and seek protections against increased county program costs. Oppose any efforts to require counties to provide funding for the CCS program beyond their Maintenance of Effort (MOE). Explore opportunities to "realign" county share of cost for CCS back to the state. Advocate for CCS pilot project implementation strategies that do not destabilize the current CCS program.

Brief Background: The California Children’s Services (CCS) program provides diagnostic and treatment services, medical case management, and physical and occupational therapy services to children under the age of 21 with CCS-eligible medical conditions. The CCS program is administered as a partnership between county health departments and the California Department of Health Care Services.

The growth in CCS caseloads and program costs has steadily increased over time. This increase places demands both on the service delivery side (particularly due to a decreasing pool of specialists and/or therapists and because county staff must review each case in order to authorize services) and on the financing of the program. As fiscal pressures have increased on the California State Budget, the State CCS program is now limiting the state’s financial participation in the program, which is further de-stabilizing the program.

In 2015, the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) released a proposal to move CCS children in the County Organized Health System (COHS) counties, and potentially four local initiative counties, fully into managed care.

Healthy Equity (HP)

Platform: Seek to reduce health disparities and inequities by working to eliminate barriers to good health for California’s diverse population.

Brief Background: Health disparities and inequities result from numerous interactions between community environments, social pressures, lifestyle factors and economic conditions. Furthermore, these social determinants of health or the conditions in the environments in which people are born, live, work, play, and age affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks. In California, minority and rural populations have a well-documented higher incidence of chronic diseases, higher mortality rates and poorer health outcomes. In addition, low-income residents, regardless of race, lack access to regular medical care and lack adequate health insurance coverage, if any at all. Local health departments have begun to emphasize programs to reduce these disparities; however, resources, staff and community awareness must be increased in order to be effective.

Health Information Technology (MP)

Platform: Monitor and advise the statewide development of a health information exchange system, the Medicaid Electronic Health Record (EHR) Incentive Program and the Health Information Technology Extension Program for hospitals and providers. Support proposals to provide funding to local health departments and health systems to support infrastructure and the staff development necessary to support the meaningful use of health information data and particularly the use of health information to advance understanding and improvement in population health strategies. Ensure any state HIT legislation is consistent with federal statute and regulatory requirements.

Brief Background: As part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009, the HITECH Act (Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act) authorized nearly \$36 billion in federal funding for the nationwide development of health information technology. California developed an Operational Plan in early 2010 outlining the state’s specific actions and roles of various stakeholders in the development and implementation of Health Information Exchange (HIE) services in the state. California’s plan recognizes that Health Information Technology and HIE can support public health goals by allowing for the monitoring of population health outcomes, increasing outreach for and identifying priority prevention services and supporting bio-surveillance and emergency response services throughout the state. Additionally, an increasing interest has been expressed at the local and regional level to better understand the health status of cohort populations, how those cohorts are utilizing a myriad of health, social, safety, and community services as well as monitoring the impact of population health strategies. In 2014, federal HITECH grant funding expired; however, California’s HIT efforts continue through the California Association of Health Information Exchange (CAHIE), which is continuing work to establish a self-governance function for the trusted exchange of health information in California.

Injury Prevention (MP)

Platform: Support efforts to prevent injuries to California residents.

Brief Background: A great variety of laws or programs exist in California to protect residents from harm. These include car passenger restraint and child safety seat laws, helmet laws for both motorcycles and

bicycles, poison control centers and swimming pool fencing laws among others. Local health departments provide some injury prevention programs to their communities, including fall prevention programs, child passenger safety programs, youth & gang violence prevention, intimate partner/domestic violence programs; however, resources are scarce.

Jail and Community Corrections Services (MP)

Platform: Support efforts to require state financial participation in the funding of medical facilities and medical care for inmates in county correctional facilities that were realigned to counties on October 1, 2011. Support the ability of counties to pull down federal Medicaid matching funds for offsite inpatient hospital services to inmates.

Brief Background: The growing number of inmates in state and local correctional facilities has had major impacts on public expenditures for facility development and operations. County costs have been rising not only because jail populations are expanding, but also due to court-mandated standards for care and the increasing prevalence of medical, mental health and substance abuse disorders among inmates. The resources required to provide necessary medical care for these inmates is continually overlooked as the focus is on law enforcement and incarceration rather than medical treatment. Counties have a substantial financial commitment for jail medical services including emergency room evaluation or emergency hospitalization of individuals in the custody of police or sheriff prior to booking, medical screening of all inmates after booking and outpatient and inpatient medical care of individuals in the custody of the sheriff after booking.

In October 2011, California realigned certain offenders and parolees from state institutions to county facilities and/or oversight. This increase of inmates and parolees that may require medical, behavioral and social services support could significantly impact counties ability to serve existing populations and stretch existing resources.

Maternal & Child Health Services (MP)

Platform: Support programs designed to maximize the health and quality of life for all women, infants, children and adolescents and their families in California.

Brief Background: Local health departments are responsible for the administration of a variety of programs designed to address the health priorities and primary health needs of infants, mothers, fathers, children, adolescents and their families. These programs include Black Infant Health, breastfeeding support, Women, Infants & Children (WIC), childhood lead poisoning prevention, children's health initiatives and newborn screening.

Medi-Cal Administrative Activities/Targeted Case Management (MAA/TCM) (MP)

Platform: Oppose proposals from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), Congress or the Legislature to deny, reduce, cap or eliminate MAA/TCM reimbursement or to make claiming more administratively burdensome.

Brief Background: Counties provide Targeted Case Management (TCM) services to assist specific Medi-Cal eligible populations (including the severely mentally ill, women and children or frail seniors) in accessing needed medical, social, educational and other services.

The federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has added additional administrative requirements for the TCM claiming process and have recently disallowed \$19 million in claims. County administrative costs are rising including increasing costs for State positions to administer the program.

The Medical Administrative Activities (MAA) program allows counties to receive federal reimbursement for providing certain qualified activities targeting and improving the availability and accessibility of Medi-Cal services to Medi-Cal eligible and potentially eligible individuals and their families. These services include Medi-Cal outreach, assisting individuals to apply for Medi-Cal, transporting Medi-Cal beneficiaries to non-emergency Medi-Cal covered services and improving access to and the delivery of Medi-Cal covered services.

Public Health Emergency Preparedness (HP)

Platform: Continue to pursue and support fair and equitable funding to local health departments for public health emergency preparedness. Oppose any funding reductions for Public Health Emergency Preparedness at the federal level. Oppose any efforts to shift program costs to local health departments.

Brief Background: The anthrax attacks post-September 11 identified the need to increase preparedness efforts and local public health jurisdictions response capabilities for dealing with terrorism (including bioterrorism) at the local level. Hurricane Katrina identified the impact of natural disasters on local, state and federal medical/health response capabilities also. Pandemic influenza threatens to overrun an already fragile medical and public health system. Funding for these activities is most appropriate from either federal or state sources to ensure consistency across the state. Increases in funding are needed to augment local programs to prepare for, and respond to, all forms of terrorism, natural disasters and other related public health emergencies.

Public Health Infrastructure (HP)

Platform: Support legislation that would provide continued funding and support for core local public health services and public health laboratories. Advocate for the distribution of federal funding to state and local health departments in order to maintain and build core public health infrastructure.

Brief Background: Public health infrastructure can be understood to be the capacities and resources that make the provision of essential public health services possible in a community. This includes an adequate and trained workforce to provide services, public health laboratories, communication and disease tracking systems, community involvement, partnerships and other components of contemporary public health practice. Public health capacities vary widely in California due to geography, population and the availability of resources among other factors.

In addition, public health facilities in California were constructed in the 1960's or earlier and are now outdated and insufficient to support current state-of-the-art public health efforts. Federal public health preparedness funds have been used to rebuild and strengthen local public health infrastructure through the modernization of surveillance and communicable disease data systems, recruitment of community volunteers and disaster service workers, training of local staff and community healthcare workers in emergency response, preparation of hospitals and community clinics to address surge capacity issues and the development of public risk communication plans. However, this federal infusion of funds is on the decline while rebuilt infrastructure needs are ongoing and need to be maintained in order to be effective in the long term.

Public Health Laboratories (MP)

Platform: Support legislation that increases state and local public health laboratory infrastructure, workforce, and technology to provide comprehensive and efficient public laboratory services at the local level. Support efforts to allocate funding to enact or support training programs for public health laboratory personnel.

Brief Background: County public health laboratories play a critical role in the control of infectious diseases, a core function of public health departments. Public health laboratories are essential in the management of West Nile Virus, tuberculosis, influenza, food-borne illnesses, and public health labs are vital for public health emergency preparedness at the local and regional level.

There is a critical shortage of qualified public health laboratory directors in California. As current public health lab directors retire, local health departments are facing challenges finding qualified candidates. Efforts are needed to increase training for and pathways to become a California public health laboratory director.

Public Health Workforce (MP)

Platform: Support development of the Public Health Workforce through both state and federal advocacy efforts. Work with universities and community colleges to develop viable public health work force programs.

Brief Background: The current public health workforce is aging rapidly with many local health departments struggling to fill critical positions including public health laboratory directors, public health microbiologists, public health and medical nurses, and registered environmental health specialists (REHS)

among others. A study by the National Center for Health Workforce Analysis found that recruitment difficulty for public health professionals is widespread, and these recruitment problems affected the existing public health workforce. This inability to fill vacant positions typically has led to chronic understaffing and difficult working conditions. Many local public health departments report that they have learned to 'do more with less', but in many instances they are unable to maintain necessary service levels.

Tobacco Control (HP)

Platform: Continue to support efforts to prevent or reduce the use of tobacco and its accompanying health and economic impacts on the state and its residents. Support efforts to reduce second hand smoke exposure in our communities. Maintain local health department tobacco control capacity and infrastructure. Oppose efforts to exempt electronic nicotine delivery systems, such as e-cigarettes, from current tobacco control laws and regulations. Enforce and/or enact federal and state laws that aim to regulate the sales and marketing of smokeless tobacco products.

Brief Background: Each year, more than 35,000 Californians die due to tobacco-related illnesses. With tobacco use rates on the decline in the state, a renewed focus on prevention education and smoking cessation programs should be encouraged. The use of electronic smoking devices, and other smokeless tobacco products, has been on the rise throughout the country, and the CDC recently reported that the use of electronic cigarettes by US middle and high school students has more than doubled from 2011 to 2012. Furthermore, the safety of electronic smoking devices has not yet been demonstrated, and the manufacture and marketing of these products is not yet regulated by the federal government. In the Spring of 2014, the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) released a proposed rule to extend their regulatory authority over these new types of tobacco products; however, these rules are not expected to be finalized until 2015 at the earliest.

Vital Statistics (MP)

Platform: Support efforts to ensure local health departments have the infrastructure necessary to both provide quality vital records services to their constituents and to ensure robust health data collected from vital records to appropriately monitor the health of their communities. Support efforts to ensure counties and local health departments have access to a variety of security paper vendors in order to carry out the issuance of vital records.

Brief Background: Vital records and the statistics gleaned from them provide critical information for understanding public health and examining key health indicators such as fertility, mortality, and causes of death. Local health departments in California register all births and deaths within their jurisdictions, and issue birth and death certificates to their residents. Vital statistics also allow local health departments to use locally collected data to understand the overall health of the communities they serve and to target programs and services to those most disproportionately impacted by bad health outcomes. Recently, the only domestic manufacturer of the type of security paper required under California statute went out of business. County clerk-recorder offices and local health departments were left to scramble to find an alternative international source for this type of security paper and some had to limit the number of records constituents could request.

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUE AREAS

Local Health Department Administration and Simplification (HP)

Platform: Advocate for and support a simplified process of contracting with the State Department of Public Health to allow local health departments to develop a system for the delivery of comprehensive and coordinated public health services to their communities. And:

- Ensure that legislation and regulation be considered from a county health system perspective, recognizing program and population interaction and overlap.
- Discourage complex administrative requirements or request for proposal (RFP) processes in favor of basic plan submission, subventions or contractual obligations.
- Ensure local health departments are given maximum discretion as to how they implement or achieve the objective set by legislation; focus should be on performance expectations, not organizational structure, personnel, process or procedure.

- Encourage funding consolidation (e.g., block grants) over categorical funding for target populations or problems to promote practical implementation.
- Seek maximum flexibility and avoid “strings” whenever possible.
- Legislative efforts aimed at “system” reform should specify objectives, funding commitments and ultimate responsibility. Avoid attempts to split responsibility at the county level (county versus CBO, county versus state, etc.).
- Avoid creating new and independent governance and administrative structures at the local level to create or implement new social/health programs. Program initiatives can be better planned, organized, staffed, directed and controlled by existing governmental structures that understand the historical, legal and policy context of California local government. Counties meet these standards best. They bring a regional and population-based perspective to programs which equip them to adapt to the needs of ethnically and culturally diverse constituents. Governmental programs should be accountable to the public through elected representatives, which is a function the Board of Supervisors is already equipped to provide, and which is widely recognized by the public.

Brief Background: California’s county and three city health departments have a basic legal responsibility to protect the public health of all state residents. In addition, on behalf of the state local health departments administer a myriad of state and federal categorical public health programs. Each of these critical programs is part of the overall mission for California’s local health departments.

Most of these public health programs have historically been developed and organized around categorical funding streams and target populations, rather than on core public health functions and sound principles. The result is a maze of contracts and administrative requirements. Each public health program has its own reporting, training and staffing – with little consistency in program or administrative requirements.

CHEAC has been working collaboratively with the California Department of Public Health for a number of years on a various ways to simplify public health funding and claiming, including the development of a uniform indirect cost rate for all CDPH programs.

Mandates (HP)

Platform:

- Oppose new mandates without specified, stable and adequate funding commitments.
- When new mandates are accompanied with new or expanded funding, ensure those mandates are limited to funds available and/or allocated; avoid vague references to responsibilities or open ended obligations.
- Ensure that if state subvention funds are reduced or redirected, whether through legislative or administrative action, state mandates or obligations should be similarly and correspondingly reduced.
- Seek to add language to tie existing mandates, standards or requirements to the available funds or allocations.
- Ensure that funding increases for ongoing mandates is adequate.

Brief Background: The fiscal constraints being faced by most governments demand that all federal, state and local budgets be viewed together as a single public budget bounded by voter preferences and resource limits. It is impossible and inappropriate to shift costs from one government’s budget to another without overall adjustments in the revenues and priorities of the total public budget.

Public Health Funding (HP)

Platform:

- Protect and optimize funding for county/city health services.
- Avoid the creation of “winners and losers” among the counties when evaluating the allocation/subvention of funds or state benefits, formula development and adjustments to existing allowances. Seek processes, concepts or funding allocations that are equitable and fair so that county consensus is possible – both short term and long term.
- Advocate for the protection of the Public Health and Prevention Fund and timely distribution of funding to state and local health departments in order to maintain and build core public health

infrastructure. Prevention Fund programs must not supplant funding for core public health programs such as Ryan White, Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health (MCAH) and Woman, Infants and Children (WIC).

Brief Background: California's local health departments are mandated to provide a broad array of core public health services to their communities, and they provide these services through a variety of funding sources, including Health Realignment, county general funds, and state and federal categorical program funding. Local health departments are also responding to the changing healthcare landscape including focusing local efforts on chronic disease prevention and wellness promotion activities. It is essential that local health departments are provided the resources necessary to carry out their mandated public health activities as well as allow for the development of chronic disease prevention programs for their communities. Meanwhile, federal categorical public health funding has been in decline and prevention funding through the Public Health and Prevention Fund has mostly been competitively based. Finally, many core health programs have seen an increase in administrative costs mandated by the State though funding remains flat or is declining.

As revised by CHEAC General Membership December 3, 2015