

2021 Legislative Priorities

LHD COVID-19 Response

Local health departments continue to be on the front lines of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes ensuring adequate testing, contact tracing, isolation and quarantine capacity, and instituting measures to protect their communities. In addition, with a vaccine anticipated to be released in the coming months, local health departments will play a critical role in vaccine distribution. CHEAC will continue to advocate for local health departments to be provided sufficient funding to carry out these responsibilities and be engaged in developing state orders, guidance, and plans. CHEAC will also advocate against policies that create barriers to our local response efforts.

Rebuilding and Protecting the Integrity of the Public Health Infrastructure

California's local health departments have been significantly underfunded, resulting in the slow decline in public health infrastructure. As evidenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, public health departments were not well equipped to perform core functions such as contact tracing and isolation. In addition, before COVID-19, insufficient funding has been provided to LHDs to address chronic diseases and the social determinants of health to advance health equity.

Instead, LHDs are provided increments of limited-term, categorical funding that do not allow LHDs to strengthen and ensure the integrity of the public health infrastructure and workforce, including modernizing data and surveillance systems. Further, incremental funding received by LHDs do not allow for improvements in our emergency preparedness capacities for weather-related events or infectious disease outbreaks. CHEAC will advocate for funding to rebuild and strengthen the public health infrastructure across all local health departments.

Addressing Racism and Health Inequities

Racism is a significant driver of the social determinants of health and a barrier to health equity. California's local health departments are committed to protecting and improving our communities' health. Systemic racism threatens the health and well-being of black Americans and communities of color. CHEAC will advocate for policies that support addressing the social determinants of health and for health plans and providers to stratify data by race and ethnicity and close identified disparities.