

# WE ARE PUBLIC HEALTH

BY CALIFORNIA'S LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS



## BUDGET AGREEMENT SETS CALIFORNIA ON NEW COURSE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH, EQUITY

Governor Gavin Newsom and state lawmakers responded to the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, dedicating historic new funding levels as part of the final budget agreement to reverse the past decade of disinvestment in our core public health services.

The final budget agreement maintains the \$300 million ongoing annual funding commitment made as part of last year's final budget deal, with \$200 million earmarked for local public health departments, and dedicates an additional \$75.6 million in one-time [Public Health Equity Readiness and Opportunity \(PublicHERO\) Initiative](#) workforce development programs to develop the next generation of public health workers needed to keep California's promise of health equity.

CHEAC thanks Governor Newsom, Senate Pro Tem Toni Atkins, Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon, Budget Chairs Senator Nancy Skinner and Assembly Member Phil Ting, Budget Subcommittee Chairs on Health and Human Services Senator Susan Eggman and Assembly Member Dr. Joaquin Arambula, and our [#PublicHealthHeroes](#) Senator Dr. Richard Pan and Assembly Members Cecilia Aguiar-Curry, Dr. Jim Wood and Jose Medina for their leadership and support to rebuild our local public health infrastructure.

Coalition members will continue to push for an additional \$120 million proposed in the PublicHERO Initiative for workforce recruitment and retention stipends that were not included in the final budget agreement.

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"Governor Gavin Newsom and state lawmakers responded to the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, dedicating historic new funding levels to reverse the past decade of disinvestment in our core public health services that left vulnerable communities exposed."

"California now leads the nation with an additional \$300 million annual funding commitment to begin to rebuild and sustain the state and local public health infrastructure that we all depend on to keep diseases at bay and each other safe in our daily lives. The additional \$75.6 million in one-time PublicHERO workforce development funding will help local public health departments develop the future public health lab directors, epidemiologists, microbiologists, public health nurses, and public health professionals needed to address the social determinants of health that give way for poor health outcomes to persist and deliver on the promise of health equity."

**MICHELLE GIBBONS,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**COUNTY HEALTH EXECUTIVES  
ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA**



## LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENTS HIGHLIGHT HEALTHY BRAIN INITIATIVES

In 2020, the California Department of Public Health's Chronic Disease Control Branch Alzheimer's Disease Program [awarded 6 local health departments grants](#) to advance cognitive health as an integral component of public health through the [California Healthy Brain Initiative](#). The Healthy Brain Initiative encourages collaboration between government and community partners to promote brain health and address the increasing number of people living with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (ADRD).

The San Diego County Department of Public Health Services partnered with the County's Aging & Independence Services and their clinical partner, Champions for Health, on their [Healthy Brain Initiative](#). The CDPH grant allowed them to continue ADRD surveillance, increase access to materials on brain health and caregiver support, and expand dementia-friendly trainings. Their work over the past two years has raised awareness of ADRD among public health professionals, incorporated brain health messaging into chronic disease prevention programs, and educated primary care physicians in the community about ADRD screening, care planning, and caregiver well-being.

In Santa Clara County, the Public Health Department's Healthy Brain Initiative launched a [Healthy Habits, Healthy Brain](#) campaign aimed to educate and improve understanding of overall brain health. The campaign focuses on six proactive steps individuals can take to keep their brain healthy with targeted ads seen on social media and online.

# PUBLIC HEALTH PROMOTES WIC PROGRAM TO ENCOURAGE EATING WELL & STAYING HEALTHY

California's local public health departments are often involved in the promotion of the California Department of Public Health's (CDPH) Women, Infant and Children (WIC) program, helping to connect families with nutrition education and healthy eating resources.

In the City of Madera, Madera County Department of Public Health staff participated in the "Neighborhood Farmers Market," providing additional information on the WIC program and distributing WIC Farmers Market Vouchers to help keep families active and healthy. The Neighborhood Farmers Market is a collaboration between the Madera County Department of Public Health WIC staff, Community Wellness staff, Madera Community Hospital, City of Madera, and various Central Valley Farmers.

Due to ongoing supply chain issues and a recent recall of several infant formula products, infant formula shortages continue to be reported across California and the country, prompting Bay Area counties to [issue guidance to families with infants](#).

In response to early indicators of a national baby formula shortage, the Solano County Health & Social Services Department's Public Health, Nutrition Services Bureau quickly established a system to connect with all 44 WIC-approved grocers throughout the county to survey their formula stock. WIC staff compiled and shared information with WIC clients to ensure they have continued access to infant formula. Through a partnership with a medical supply company, Solano County Public Health was able to purchase an order of emergency formula to support the broader community needs.

In Long Beach, the Department of Health and Human Services quickly established a workgroup to develop and target education and communication tools to reach families, particularly WIC program clients. The Department also [launched a website](#) to connect families with infants with up to date information on the infant formula shortage and tips, tools, resources, and advice for how to get through the temporary shortage.

The California Department of Public Health's (CDPH) WIC program responded by [announcing a drastic expansion](#) of the list of formula brands eligible for purchase with WIC benefits from 5 to more than 130 different formula brands.





## CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN STATES APPROVE FEDERAL AUTHORIZATION OF COVID VACCINES FOR CHILDREN

Earlier this month, the Western States Scientific Safety Review Workgroup [approved the FDA and CDC's authorized](#) Moderna and Pfizer vaccines for infants over the age of 6 months, paving the way for California to begin administering vaccines.

CHEAC and California's local public health departments are [launching educational outreach campaigns](#) to encourage families with children 6 months and older to get vaccinated, including [multilingual communications](#), and campaigns to share stories of families who have decided to get their children vaccinated. In addition to these efforts, local public health departments continue to [host vaccine clinics](#) to encourage immunization to targeted populations.

In their review, the Western States Workgroup noted that benefits of both the vaccines substantially outweigh any known or likely risks, noting that immunization can be expected to reduce the numbers of COVID-19-related serious illnesses, hospitalizations, and deaths in infants and young children, while facilitating their participation in normal educational, social and recreational activities.

## TRIPLE DIGIT HEAT WAVES FUELED BY CLIMATE CHANGE DRIVES PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSE

Heat waves and climate change aren't generally the first two things that come to mind about the crucial work local public health departments do, but heat and extreme weather events pose a substantial health risk, making public health response especially important for protecting vulnerable populations including young children, the elderly, those with chronic diseases or disabilities, and pregnant women.

Amid drastic heat waves that hit triple digits last month, the Kern County Public Health Department [issued a press release](#) urging community members to protect themselves and issued tips on how to stay safe from heat risks.

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“Understanding the warning signs of heat-related illness is vitally important, as extreme heat can pose a significant risk to your health.”

“As temperatures begin to rise in Kern County, I urge everyone to practice heat safety to prevent any heat-related tragedies.”

**Brynn Carrigan, Director of Public Health Services, Kern County**

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The Butte County Public Health Department also took action to protect community members from the dangers of extreme heat, releasing warnings about [heat stroke on social media](#) and [launching a website](#) to share information and tips on heat safety.

In the Bay Area, Contra Costa Health Services Agency, which oversees the local department of public health, released a [Heat and Your Health website](#) with resources on heat issues, including how to identify [heat illness](#). Contra Costa Health Services also participates in climate change policy making discussions to revise the [County General Plan](#) connecting specific policies and actions to plan elements that impact health, safety, social determinants of health, and environmental justice.



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