

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS FROM 12/8 FORUM

Public Health Division

What does the public health department need in terms of community support in order to continue to provide services as a county entity? How can the public help?

Douglas County Public Health needs broad community support and involvement of community members, leaders, decision makers to communicate the importance of a strong Public Health infrastructure that works in collaboration as a piece of the overall health care system.

How can the Commissioners be persuaded to adequately fund public health like other essential services?

The Board of County Commissioners operates as the local board of health for Douglas County. The public needs to express their concerns directly to the Board of Commissioners who make funding and policy decisions for Public Health.

Additional information regarding the statutory requirements and responsibilities of the Local Board of Health can be found at:

Oregon Revised Statutes 431.405-510

https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills_laws/lawsstatutes/2013ors431.html

There are very few nutritionally healthy food choices in our schools. What is being done to address this?

Although local Public Health in Douglas County does not currently have the capacity to work with schools on implementing school nutrition standards, we stay in touch on school nutrition issues and opportunities. In 2007 HB 2650 was signed into law, and went into full effect in 2009. According to information provided by the Oregon Public Health Institute (Portland-based independent, nonprofit), the law set nutrition standards for foods and beverages sold outside the National School Meals Program in ALL school locations during regular and extended day. The law set age appropriate portion sizes and calorie, fat and sugar limits for snacks and beverages. This document from the Oregon Public Health Institute provides an overview of the law

<http://ophi.org/download/PDF/overview%20of%20HB%202650.pdf>.

The Oregon Department of Education is charged with implementing school nutrition standards, and there are various local community and school-based efforts to promote healthy foods at school, e.g., Farm to School and School Garden programs. We would encourage those who are interested in this topic to visit the ODE website for more information <http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/results/?id=211> and find out about how you can help your school community participate in some of the school nutrition efforts and funding opportunities. See, for example, the School Garden map at:

<http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=2647>.

We would like to see a group form to address issues of childhood obesity through advocacy and policy similar to Lane Coalition for Healthy Active Youth in Eugene, which takes on a number of issues including school nutrition to reduce childhood obesity.

There have been many changes in health care in Douglas County in recent months and years. In light of all these changes, do you think that residents of this county are served better by the health care community now than they were 3-5 years ago? Why or Why not?

When it comes to protecting our community, the public's health should be a top priority. Unfortunately, funding and decisions at the federal, state and local level have not always prioritized the public's health. Over the past several years, we have experienced decreased funding for public health and increased demand for public health services. This, in addition to the set of circumstances that now threaten public health in Douglas County, has created serious gaps in our ability to safeguard public health, putting our families, communities, states, and nation at risk.

How does your organization measure individual positive health changes/outcomes? Does your organization compensate when people are healthy?

This is a very big question. Each program has specific requirements to measure program outcomes. For example, our Tobacco Prevention & Education Program not only monitors policy and systems change, but monitors tobacco use and tobacco-related chronic disease data to evaluate the effectiveness of our programs. Likewise, our Communicable Disease program monitors reportable disease data to detect increases in the incidence of disease and to respond to issues as they arise. Public health has categorical funding that limits our ability to compensate people for being healthy.

The CDC, APHA, AARP, PTA, American Academy of Pediatrics Oregon Health Authority and others have all spoken out on the necessity of physical activity for good health. How will your organization help promote improvements in our communities in order to make active transportation such as biking and walking safe and convenient?

Our community needs to consider "health" in all policy discussions and decisions. Douglas County Public Health works with a broad range of community partners through our Healthy Communities efforts. There have and continue to be ongoing challenges of funding to support Healthy Communities. Public Health supports active transportation through letters of support for local initiatives.

We have been placing emphasis on treating symptoms. When will your organization begin to treat the roots of disease rather than the symptoms and use programs like the Kaiser whole food plant based nutrition diet?

Douglas County Public Health is focuses on the root causes of disease to improve health outcomes. For example, our WIC, Family Planning and Nurse Family Partnership programs address the risk factors that contribute to poor health, including such things as poverty, food insecurity, education, and the lack of social supports. We are pleased to see growing local interest in innovative nutrition education, including whole food nutrition.