



The History of Public Health in Iowa

Public health in Iowa dates back to 1866. Included here is a summary of legislation, plans, and reports that have shaped public health in Iowa.

1866 - Original Local Health Law

The Original Local Health Law designated the mayor and members of the town council or the township trustees in the rural areas as the local board of health. The law gave board members the authority to establish regulations for public health and safety, to control nuisances, and to regulate sources of filth and causes of sickness in communities.

1880 - State Board of Health Law

This law created the state board of health for the purpose of collecting vital statistics, establishing duties of local boards of health, and punishing neglect of duties. The law required each town, city, or township board to appoint a physician as a health officer for the community.

1967 - New Local Health Act

Chapter 137 of the Code of Iowa marked the beginning of a new era of public health in Iowa. Each county was required to establish a local board of health with one member being a physician licensed by the State of Iowa. The county board of supervisors would appoint additional members to the local board. The law provided cities with populations greater than 25,000 with the option to establish a city board of health. Counties and cities could form district boards of health.

1988 - The Future of Public Health

This report, published by the Institute of Medicine, provided a contemporary definition of public health, "*what we, as a society, do collectively to assure the conditions in which people can be healthy.*" The core public health functions of *Assessment, Policy Development, and Assurance* provided a framework for public health in Iowa.

1993 - Healthy Iowans 2000

A health plan for Iowa, including health promotion and disease prevention goals and actions steps, was published.

1994 - The Essential Public Health Services

The Public Health Functions Steering Committee, representing 17 national organizations, further defined the core public health functions by adopting 10 essential public health services.

1995 - Iowa Code Chapter 137 – Local Boards of Health

The Local Health Act was renamed Local Boards of Health.

1998 - Iowa Administrative Code Chapters 77 and 78

The Administrative Rules in Chapter 641.77 incorporated the core public health functions and the essential public health services into the roles and responsibilities of the local boards of health. Chapter 641.78 itemized rules for district health departments.

2000 – Healthy Iowans 2010

Approximately 550 Iowans, representing more than 200 separate organizations, developed an updated health plan for Iowans.

2001 – Transformation of the Public Health Delivery System in Iowa

This initiative was an effort to chart a course for the 21st century and develop strategies to strengthen the delivery of public health services in Iowa. An inclusive process, both local and state public health professionals, as well as representatives of private and public sector were engaged in dialogue and planning for changes. Six core areas were addressed they included:

1. Marketing the relevance of public health
2. Maximizing available resources through increased flexibility and aggregation of resources
3. Having an adequate local public health infrastructure
4. Focusing needs on achievement of goals established in Healthy Iowans 2010 through core public health programs
5. Encouraging regional linkages
6. Establishing accountability and performance measures.

2004 – Redesigning Public Health in Iowa

After a set of regional meetings between local public health partners and the leadership team of the Iowa Department of Public Health, a group of 25 (13 local and 12 state) public health practitioners was assembled to address commonly heard issues affecting the public health system. This group decided it was necessary to develop standards for public health in Iowa. These standards would begin to assure that a basic set of public health services was available to all Iowans.

2007 – Iowa Public Health Standards

The Iowa Public Health Standards were finalized by the Redesigning Public Health in Iowa Work Group. This was the culmination of two years of work by 150 local and state public health practitioners. The standards were developed in 11 component areas and included both local and state criteria.

2009 – The Public Health Modernization Act

The Public Health Modernization Act was signed by the governor. This law established the timeline for a voluntary accreditation system to be put in place for Iowa's local and state public health departments. It also established the Public Health Advisory Council and Public Health Evaluation Committee to serve as oversight bodies for the implementation of the law.

2010 – Iowa Code Chapter 137 Updated

A major revision of this law, the first since 1967, updated the roles and responsibilities of the local board of health; provided greater enforcement capability to the local board of health; and clarified language around the development of district boards of health.

