



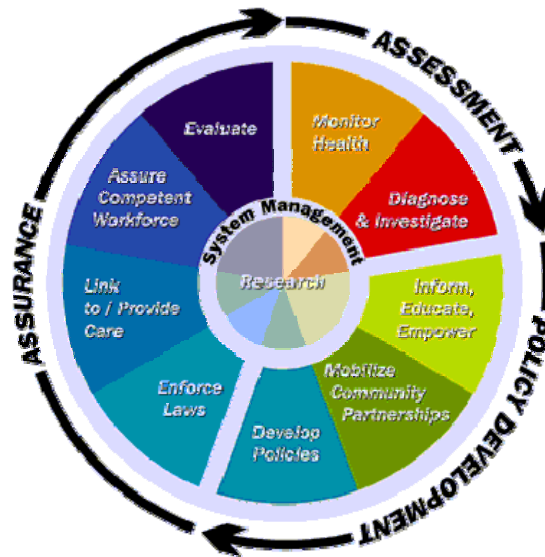
## What is Public Health?

Public health works to make people healthier by doing things to prevent disease, injury and disability.

When you visit a doctor or a hospital you are receiving health care. Health care and public health both try to improve health but they do it in different ways:

- Health care works to improve health one person at a time. Public health works to improve the health of whole communities.
- Public health focuses on stopping sickness and injury *before* it happens. Health care focuses on treating illness or injury *after* it happens.

### CORE FUNCTIONS AND ESSENTIAL SERVICES OF PUBLIC HEALTH



## How Does Public Health Protect Communities?

The diagram shown above describes the things that public health workers do to improve the health of the public. Each slice of the pie is a kind of activity called an 'essential service'.

The activities or 'essential services' are grouped into 3 'core functions':

**Assessment** – Which means collecting information to figure what kinds of health problems need to be solved to make people healthier.

**Policy Development** – Which means making and carrying out plans for fixing the health problems of the community. Examples of this are educating people, organizing communities, creating programs or writing laws.

**Assurance** – Which means making sure that the things done to make people healthy are really working. This is done by:

Making sure laws are obeyed

Helping people get good quality health care

Figuring out if programs that are meant to improve health really work.

## What is an Example of How Public Health Improves Health?

Asthma is the most common chronic disease in children in the US. It is a leading cause of disability among children. Since 1980, the percentage of children with asthma has increased dramatically. Asthma is more common in African-American and Hispanic children than in White, non-Hispanic children. This table shows the kind of things public health does to address the problem of childhood asthma.

Core Function	Public Health Goal	Public Health Actions	Type of Essential Service
<b>Assessment</b>	Find out how much of a problem asthma is in children	Collect information on the percentage of children who have asthma in a community.	Monitor Health
	Find which children are most likely to have a problem with asthma.	Collect information to see if the percentage of asthma varies in different groups of children (for example different neighborhoods or family incomes)	Diagnose & Investigate
		Collect information on the percentage of children exposed to things that may cause asthma (mold, air pollutions)	
<b>Policy Development</b>	Reduce the level of things in the home that cause asthma attacks.	Teach parents about the types of things that can cause asthma in the home	Inform, Educate, Empower
	Make the outside air cleaner	Work with community members to fight for tougher clean air laws	Mobilize Community Partnerships
		Write laws to reduce pollution from cars	Develop Policies
<b>Assurance</b>	Be sure that air quality standards are being met.	Monitor air quality and companies that break the law.	Enforce Laws
	Make sure that children can get treatment for asthma.	Encourage parents to enroll children in health care programs for uninsured children	Link to / Provide Care
	Make sure children receive the right kind of treatment for asthma.	Train doctors and nurses about the best way to treat childhood asthma	Assure Competent Workforce
	Make sure the public health activities for childhood asthma are doing what they are supposed to do.	Study whether or not children with asthma are receiving the correct treatment to prevent attacks.	Evaluate

For more information:

[www.apha.org](http://www.apha.org)

[www.whatispublichealth.org](http://www.whatispublichealth.org)



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*The Yale Center for Public Health Preparedness is funded by the CDC through Cooperative Agreement #U90/CCU1245251-02*

**Mission:** As part of a national network of Centers for Public Health Preparedness that are funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Yale Center for Public Health Preparedness, based at the Yale School of Public Health, works to ensure that frontline public health workers are prepared to respond to public health emergencies including natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and disease outbreaks.

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