

Connecting Health to Municipal/Regional Policy

What Allows for Good Health?

Good health comes from what we do as a society to **create conditions in which people can be healthy**. Public policy is one of the most effective approaches to protecting and improving the health of residents as a whole—by shaping the conditions in which we live, work and play.

The conditions you create and support help determine how strong and healthy your citizens can be. Examples include:

- ◆ **Transportation systems that support walking and biking**
- ◆ **Access to healthy affordable food**
- ◆ **Public gathering spaces to support social connectedness**
- ◆ **Environments free of toxins and hazards**



When you **prioritize the conditions that lead to good health, you improve the health of all residents.**

What Does Poor Health Cost?

Poor health is costly to our communities. It is associated with lower productivity and absenteeism in the workplace, decreased academic success, lower life expectancy, and increased transportation costs— all of which impact a community's economic vitality.

When people are less healthy, they need more from their government throughout their lives: more help in school, more sick time off from work, more use of ambulances, less ability to pay taxes, earlier entry into nursing homes, and more.

Health care costs on a state level also reduce state funds for communities, roads, bridges, and schools. **A preventative approach to health saves money in the long term.**



Gill Elementary School Principal Kathleen Bailer posting tick/Lyme's disease awareness signs on the school grounds.



Franklin Regional
Council of Governments
Cooperative Public Health District



Communities that Care
COALITION

Who Contributes To Healthy Communities?

Everyone in government has a role to play in improving the health of our communities.

Public health and other departments can work together to identify mutual goals, and integrate health considerations upfront into their own work and values. **Coordinating efforts among departments improves the efficiency of government processes and services.**



A Deerfield patrolman participates in a drive-through flu clinic offered through a collective of South County Boards of Health with the help of law enforcement and DPW's.

How Can You Support Community Health?

- ◆ Are there existing or newly forming local projects that could potentially affect residents' health?
- ◆ Which department projects could benefit from other departments' participation?
- ◆ Are any community groups concerned about a particular health issue? Are they asking for something to be done about it?
- ◆ How does your town government plan projects and how can health be considered in the planning?
- ◆ Are there neighborhoods or areas in your communities that have health disparities, or lesser access to the conditions that promote health?

How Differing Government Departments Help to Shape Healthy Community Health:

- ◆ **Select Boards** — Approve budgets that reflect the health needs and priorities of residents
- ◆ **License Commissions** — Consider health issues when granting alcohol and tobacco licenses
- ◆ **Schools** — Healthy students make better learners
- ◆ **Councils on Aging** — Advocate for communities that allow for aging with independence and dignity
- ◆ **Planning Boards** — Zoning ordinance is based on community design that protects quality of life
- ◆ **Public Safety** — Police, fire, and EMS all protect the safety and well-being of residents
- ◆ **Recreation Commissions** — Create opportunities for activity and connection
- ◆ **Depts. of Public Works** — Maintain town infrastructure to foster a safe and healthy environment

The efforts, projects, and values of all government departments contribute to the conditions that foster health. In vibrant, efficient, and prosperous communities, departments work together make sure they prioritize residents' health in all policy and project planning decisions. This might be a shift in how local governments do business, but it is an investment that pays off.

Further information on how government departments can collectively address efficiency and health can be found at: <http://www.phi.org/resources/?resource=hiapguide>