

From the Association of North Carolina Boards of Health (ANCBH)

January 2023

This year, 2023, is the year to rebuild our public health programs and make them better, stronger, and more focused on the needs of our citizens. Monies have been appropriated to help us 'reinvent' processes to work better. Please read this newsletter to find out what our leaders are working on to accomplish these important changes and improvements.

As 2023 begins, ANCBH is confident that residents of our state will remain focused on mental, physical, and social wellbeing, along with the absence of disease or infection! Many of our neighbors may turn to health-informed people whom they know and trust, like you as a Board of Health member or Local Health Director, for guidance. This year, ANCBH will aim to help guide the way toward better health in your community.

We will surely gain a wealth of information from medical and health researchers on topics such as Healthy Eating, Physical Activity, Health Promotion and Disease Preventive, Medical and Health Services, Health Policy, and community health improvement. Here is some basic advice that any BOH member can share with residents in your community from ANCBH as they set their goals for 2023:

1. Avoid tobacco and nicotine containing products.

If you're a smoker, or do vape, quitting is surely a priority for 2023. In North Carolina, residents can get help and information from the NC DHHS QuitLine, (1-800-QUIT-NOW) or from many pharmacies, medical, or public health offices across our state. Many communities provide assistance through counseling centers and volunteer groups. In our state, residents continue to have access to nicotine-replacement therapy or prescription medications. Access is even easier now that many pharmacists are authorized to prescribe these therapies. If you don't use nicotine products, resolve to (1) help a friend, colleague, or loved one who does; and (2) avoid secondhand smoke.

2. Eat right.

Our state is known for animal and vegetable farming! In order to stay healthy, we must remind ourselves and our neighbors to cut down on saturated fat and cholesterol by limiting foods that are high in these ingredients. We can remind our neighbors to avoid trans fats in stick margarine, fried foods, and many snack and "junk" foods. Most people should also fare well by eating lots of fruits and vegetables and cutting down on sodium (salt).

3. Exercise regularly

We are excited for anyone who found a health club membership in their Christmas stocking or holiday gift. That's great — now go out there and actually use it! If you or your neighbor did not receive a gift of a health club membership, you can still benefit from exercise by building physical activity into your daily activities such as taking the stairs, being mindful of exercise opportunities while doing household chores, or even by purposely playing active games (that do not involve using only your thumbs) with your kids. Since we have the benefit of all 4 seasons in our state, we can

look forward to working in the garden when spring comes, — but until then, be very cautious if you have to shovel snow. Above all, BOH members can encourage your neighbors and family to walk whenever you can and aim for at least 30 minutes of walking each day in total. Better yet, plan for at least 150 minutes each week of aerobic exercise where your heart rate is elevated, as directed by your exercise instructor.

4. Control your weight.

If you or your neighbors have decided that you need to reduce your weight, the bottom-line way that any plan will work in the long run is if you eat fewer calories and burn more calories with exercise. Various types of eating plans and physical exercise ranging from weight training to aerobics, will be key to weight management. Portion control and eating smaller amounts every 3 hours will keep one from getting hungry and craving non-healthy foods. Some find a structured program to yield results that are sustainable. Please contact a weight management program if such is desired. [Body Mass Index \(BMI\) calculators](#) are readily available to illustrate weight loss goals. The website also includes practical information on healthy eating.

5. Reduce stress and control alcohol and other addictive pharmacological substances

We know that it can be daunting to figure out what makes you tense, and then to try to change what you can; but taking control over your problems and worries will be key to reducing stress and creating a healthy existence. Seek help from Employee Assistance Programs or similar programs to manage stress and elevate happiness balance. Get enough sleep. Have more fun, especially with people you adore or admire. Purposely seek out life's little pleasures. Avoid trying to “fix” your problems with alcohol or other drugs; instead learn relaxation techniques such as meditation. Never drink if you will have to drive; and do not use street drugs — ever.

6. Increase your infection protection

Check with your health care provider to make sure your immunizations are up to date; infants, children, adults, and the elderly all need various series of vaccinations. Keep your distance from folks with communicable infections such as COVID, RSV, or Influenza. If you are ill, protect others by avoiding crowds or social gatherings. The US Centers for Disease Control still strongly advises us to wash our hands often, using an alcohol-based hand rub, to cough on a napkin or sleeve, wear a mask, and social distance as warranted. We also want to highlight two very useful apps from the CDC for mobile devices, PneumoRecs VaxAdvisor and CDC Vaccine Schedules. Both are available free through the Apple App Store and Google Play. Vaccine products, schedules, and special patient conditions are increasingly complex. These apps help you navigate to the right vaccine at the right dose and at the right time. Importantly, these apps include “catch up” schedules for persons who are behind in their immunizations, an unfortunate outcome from decreased medical visits during the Covid pandemic.

7. Prevent accidental injuries

[Check out the fourth leading cause of death in the US (below in red): Source: [Mortality in the United States, 2020, data table for figure 4](#)]

- Heart disease: 696,962
- Cancer: 602,350
- COVID-19: 350,831
- **Accidents (unintentional injuries): 200,955**
- Stroke (cerebrovascular diseases): 160,264
- Chronic lower respiratory diseases: 152,657
- Alzheimer's disease: 134,242
- Diabetes: 102,188
- Influenza and pneumonia: 53,544
- Nephritis, nephrotic syndrome, and nephrosis: 52,547

In our nation, many deaths result from unsafe behaviors. Remind yourselves and your neighbors to wear seatbelts and drive defensively; check your house for clutter and cords that might trip you; be sure your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors work, and change the battery yearly; hold the handrail when using the stairs, and keep the stairs clear of clutter; lock up personal protection weapons away from children; learn to swim and boat safely; avoid walking or driving in ice or snow.

8. Seek health and medical care when needed

The next time you visit your doctor or medical provider, make sure that you know your numbers, including your cholesterol, blood pressure, blood sugar, and weight before you leave their office. Take your medication as directed. Keep a record of your major illnesses and tests, your medications, and your allergies. Listen to your body and let your provider know if you feel as if a visit to their office is needed.

The above tips might seem like a lot, but surely, we are already aware of most of these, and only need a refresher to brush them off and re-commit to good health in 2023! You and your neighbors should focus on the ones you need most, change slowly, and do not give up if you slip from time to time.

Let us all aim to make this our healthiest year ever so that 2023 will be a Happy New Year. Here to a very healthy and happy 2023 from ANCBH!

Strengthening U.S. Public Health Infrastructure, Workforce, and Data Systems Grant

(the following information is from the US Centers for Disease Control website.. December 2022)

Strengthening the public health infrastructure in our nation means helping protect people from preventable illness, death, and health threats. With a stronger infrastructure, public health will be able to help maintain every American's health by making sure food and water is safe, tracking diseases, stopping outbreaks, providing child and maternal healthcare, and monitoring data.

Today, CDC is awarding \$3.2 billion to help state, local, and territorial jurisdictions across the United States [strengthen their public health workforce and infrastructure](#). This first-of-its-kind funding provides awards directly to state, local, and territorial health departments to provide the people, services, and systems needed to promote and protect health in U.S. communities. Everyone in the United States lives in a jurisdiction that will receive funding under this new grant.

“State, local, and territorial health departments are the heart of the U.S. public health system, and the COVID-19 pandemic severely stressed these agencies, which were already weakened by neglect and underinvestment,” said CDC Director Rochelle Walensky, M.D., M.P.H. “This grant gives these agencies critical funding and flexibility to build and reinforce the nation’s public health workforce and infrastructure and protect the populations they serve. We are meeting them where they are and trusting them to know what works best for their communities.”

The \$3.2 billion includes \$3 billion from the [American Rescue Plan Act](#) for jurisdictions to recruit, retain, and train their workforce, including critical frontline public health workers such as epidemiologists, contact tracers, laboratory scientists, community health workers, and data analysts. The funding also includes \$140 million from a new appropriation for jurisdictions to strengthen and revitalize their public health infrastructure. Lastly, national partners will be awarded \$65 million to provide training, evaluation, and other technical assistance to jurisdictions as they work to strengthen the services they provide and rebuild their workforce to help protect every American community.

In crafting this grant, CDC’s core focus was on listening to jurisdictions and partners to ensure the funding was tailored to meet their actual needs; needs which are as diverse as the jurisdictions themselves. This grant helps to address urgent and ongoing public health needs in communities that are economically or socially marginalized, rural communities, and communities with people from racial and ethnic minority groups. The grant is also a critical new tool for CDC to provide direct support to public health agencies and deliver future resources for modernizing data systems and meeting the fundamental public health needs of American communities.

Stronger infrastructure allows public health to ensure food and water is safe, detect and track diseases, stop outbreaks, provide child and maternal healthcare, and monitor data. As we look to the future, continued investments will strengthen our national public health workforce and infrastructure, supporting a public health system that is prepared to respond to any future health threat.

For more information, including a full list of funded jurisdictions and national partners, visit www.cdc.gov/infrastructure/.

From the UNC School of Government Website:

[UNC School of Government Resources](#)

Question #1: What does a local board of health do?

Answer: A local board of health is the policymaking, rule-making, and adjudicatory body for public health in the county or counties in its jurisdiction.[1] State statutes give boards of health specific powers and duties.[2] Every type of local board may make local public health rules that apply throughout the board's jurisdiction. Each board has limited authority to set fees for public health services. Each board also influences the day-to-day administration of the local public health agency.

Public health authority boards have expanded powers and duties compared to county and district boards of health. Consolidated human services boards have all of the powers of county and district boards of health, except a consolidated human services board may not appoint the agency director (who is appointed instead by the county manager, with the advice and consent of the board). A consolidated human services board also plays a more active role in the development of the agency's budget,[3] and has additional powers and duties related to its oversight of other human services programs. A table comparing the powers and duties of the different types of boards in more detail is available in the attached document.

Question #2: Who serves on a local board of health?

Answer: The membership of local boards of health varies depending on the type of local public health agency. In general, board members represent county commissioners, professionals with expertise in health care or public health (including physicians, pharmacists, veterinarians, and professional engineers, among others), and the general public. A consolidated human services board also includes members who are consumers of human services, and a public health authority board includes a hospital administrator. The number of board members may be as few as seven for a public health authority board, or as many as 25 for a consolidated human services board. The composition of board membership also varies by type of board.

In some counties the board of county commissioners serves as the board of health. If a county provides public health services through a county health department or a consolidated human services agency the board of county commissioners may adopt a resolution directly assuming the powers, responsibilities, and duties of the county board of health or consolidated human services board – an action that has the effect of abolishing the appointed board. A board of county commissioners that takes this action must appoint an advisory committee on health that includes the same membership as a county board of health.

It is possible for a board of commissioners to assume the powers and duties of a board of health for a county that provides public health services through a district health department or a public health authority, but the commissioners must first dissolve or withdraw from the district or authority. After dissolving the district or authority, the commissioners could create either a county

health department or a consolidated human services agency to provide public health services within the county, and then assume the powers and duties of the agency's board.

Training Opportunity: Crisis Communications: A Webinar with Mark Weaver, JD, MPA

Facing the news media can be nerve-racking under the best conditions. In a crisis or emergency situation, when hostile reporters want answers to tough questions, what do you do? Mark Weaver, a crisis communications expert with nearly three decades of experience, will share strategies for composing an effective message and engaging with the media.

This webinar is supported through a contract to the N.C. Institute for Public Health from the N.C. Division of Public Health as part of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) investment in North Carolina's public health workforce.

Monday, January 23 at 10-11:30 a.m. Registration is open (and free) for all local health department staff in North Carolina and all N.C. Division of Public Health staff.

Questions?

Please contact Executive Director [Merle Green](#) or [Jean Douglas](#), President of ANCBH for further information.