

Charting Houston's Health

**Houston Department of Health and Human Services
Strategic Plan, 2007–2010**



*To the residents of Houston,
whose well-being the Department of Health and Human Services seeks to protect and promote*

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PREFACE

In part to fulfill its mission of working in partnership with community members and to make them aware of efforts it is making to ensure the community's health, the Houston Department of Health and Human Services presents this strategic plan. It is the department's plan for 2007 to 2010 and reflects the department's response to a wide range of resident stakeholders who voiced what they believed the department's priorities should be. You will see in this plan an assessment of the department's areas of excellence and achievements. You will also see the department's statements of aspirations for organizational success and for achievement of health and well-being outcomes.

Although they are not listed here, the department's leaders also produced specific plans for ways to achieve greater workforce productivity and departmental transparency, responsiveness, and accountability. Supporting these aims, the department will increase the community's awareness of our mission and activities, which will benefit the department and the residents we serve.

Fulfilling our responsibility to the community means not only providing services we have provided in the past

but also determining the needs of the community in the present and anticipating its needs in the future. An example of an initiative to document needs is the Assessment, Intervention, and Mobilization (AIM) project. Through AIM, we go door-to-door in certain neighborhoods performing assessments, linking residents to services, and providing follow-up. Part of this effort includes randomized surveying.

In another initiative, we partner with nonprofit and hospital district primary care clinics, co-locating them in the city's multi-service centers, streamlining access and improving the city's health profile simultaneously. Other efforts include city mobile HIV testing units that can be found parked outside nightclubs, not in the department parking lot, ensuring accessibility to the public. To at-risk youth in Houston high schools we offer "wraparound services," meeting needs student by student to build a better, healthier cadre of youth and ensuring a better future for the children at risk, the school community, and the community at large.

If Hurricanes Katrina and Rita taught us anything, they taught us that all of us—not a specific unit or department—had to be first responders: first to anticipate

need, first to recognize it, and first to meet it. No matter our rank, the sign on our door, or the job description we thought was ours, we all have a stake in the health of the city.

From one stakeholder to another, I am pleased to present this strategic plan.

Stephen L. Williams, M.Ed., M.P.A.

Director

Houston Department of Health and Human Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Houston Department of Health and Human Services presents this strategic plan for 2007 to 2010. The department has seven aims represented by the priorities presented in this report. They include (1) protecting residents from communicable diseases; (2) ensuring optimal health for mothers, infants, and children, including offering an oral health safety net; (3) promoting environmental health; (4) providing human services in order to optimize community well-being; (5) supplying residents with information they need in order to make optimal health decisions; (6) preparing for a coordinated response to disasters; and (7) reducing the incidence of chronic disease. The department intends to be a good steward of public resources, to provide services in an efficient and effective manner, and to engage with the community in creating a healthier tomorrow. We all have a stake in the community's health and safety, and working cooperatively with other local government agencies, nonprofit groups, and state bureaus offers the department a comprehensive approach to protecting

and promoting the health and social well-being of all Houstonians.

The department's priority areas include the following:

Communicable disease. Preventing and controlling communicable diseases, especially in children, are primary functions of the health department. The department works to immunize every child. It also wants to meet challenges presented by having one of every 40 African Americans in Houston infected with human immunodeficiency virus and a tuberculosis rate twice that of the United States by aggressively implementing strategies to reduce incidence.

Families. Every child deserves health, safety, and the opportunity for full development of potential. The department strives to ensure that newborns have a healthy start and that families have a health care "home." Oral health is recognized as an important factor in overall child health.

Environmental health. The department monitors air and water quality and strives to prevent factors in the environment from adversely affecting the public's health.

The department acts to mitigate environmental concerns and to ensure rules set out in permits, regulations, and ordinances are followed. To gain efficiency and effectiveness, the department uses information technology to improve surveillance, remediation of environmental health risks, and compliance with law.

Human services. The department strives through its network of centers and clinics to provide a range of services, building local solutions with input from community members. Collaborative efforts with neighborhood partners strengthen initiatives and broaden outreach. Community assessments are a priority, as are attempts to improve efficiency and avoid duplication of services.

Health information. In public health, decision making is data driven. Collected by the department and analyzed in the context of data from state, federal, and international sources, health information is vital to determining what policies and interventions are best for Houston. Securely integrating databases, making them time sensitive and highly accessible, and creating them in a format that makes them easy to use are efforts staff make to obtain maximum value from data collected. Online distribution of consumer health information promotes health and prevents illnesses.

Emergency preparedness. Training, extensive collaboration, performing exercises, and planning are just some of the ways Houston prepares for national priority hazards, or disasters, including hurricanes, pandemic influenza, and toxic chemical exposures. Revising plans after practices, filling identified gaps, and creating systems that can function during disasters are ways Houston is preparing. Plans include identifying ways to help special populations during disasters and building laboratory capacity to identify hazardous agents.

Chronic disease. Cardiovascular disease affects one in every three adult Americans and remains the leading cause of mortality among men and women. Other chronic diseases, including cancer, chronic lower respiratory diseases, accidents, and diabetes mellitus, also take a toll on quality of life, but it takes all of these to match cardiovascular disease's death rate. To combat chronic disease, the department seeks to promote health education and raise awareness of lifestyle choices that contribute to it; to better meet the needs of those with chronic disease, the department aims to improve surveillance systems, identify strategies for dealing with chronic disease, and establish partnerships to reduce it.

Mandates of the department are broad and are included in an appendix.

VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES

The Department of Health and Human Services has a vision, a mission, and values that underlie its activities.

VISION

Self-sufficient and healthy families and individuals in safe and healthy communities.

MISSION

To work in partnership with the community in order to promote and protect the health and social well-being of Houstonians

VALUES

Accountability

Diversity

Integrity

Quality

Data-driven

decision-making

Compassion

Efficiency

Teamwork

Effectiveness

Competency

Innovation

Proactive approach

Cooperative

Nonjudgmental

perspective

PART I: INTRODUCTION

Health Department Fulfills City Mandates,

This is the Houston Department of Health and Human Services plan until 2010. You will see in this plan an assessment of the department's areas of excellence and achievements. You will also see the department's statements of aspirations for organizational success and for achievement of health and well-being outcomes.

In 2005, the Department of Health and Human Services asked its stakeholders what the department's priorities should be, and they set seven priorities:

1. Protect the community from the spread of communicable diseases.
2. Optimize the health of mothers, infants, and children; serve as an oral health safety net.
3. Promote environmental health.
4. Optimize well-being through the provision of human services.
5. Give the community information for optimal decision making.

6. Prepare for health disaster.
7. Reduce the incidence of chronic diseases.

To achieve the outcomes outlined by the priorities, the department intends to demonstrate good stewardship, make residents aware of health issues and health services, and reach out and help the community acquire skills meant to improve its health.

BEING GOOD STEWARDS OF LIMITED RESOURCES

Efficiently using the resources at hand and seeking new opportunities for funding will be the department's aims while it strives to meet its mandates and adhere to grant requirements. As stewards of public funds, the department's leadership does not shirk from accountability and seeks new ways for achieving positive health and well-being outcomes.

To achieve those goals, the department's leadership, which embraces workforce diversity, recognizes the importance of sustaining the quality of the workforce by retaining the best employees, continuously training existing employees, and hiring the best applicants.

FACILITATING ACCESS TO BASIC HUMAN SERVICES

Addressing root causes of disease and promoting well-being are ways to prevent health problems. The department intends to partner with neighborhood organizations on initiatives that support investment in neighborhoods and empower residents to identify and capitalize on their assets,

Promotes Health, and Partners with Communities

which include the experience and commitment of community leaders and the organizations they lead.

INVOLVING THE COMMUNITY AND BUILDING ON ITS ABILITIES AND ITS CAPACITY TO ACHIEVE HEALTH-RELATED GOALS

Houston neighborhoods have many strengths, and the department will seek to identify and build on those strengths to address neighborhood health and human service needs. As a catalyst for health enhancement, the department will help community members find others with common interests and build the community's capacity to meet health needs and improve well-being. This change may require some retooling or refining of staff skills.

The department cannot and should not attempt to address all the community's needs alone; therefore, it must engage with partners to leverage their expertise and services and combine them with its own to maximize outcomes.

Adopting a holistic, community-oriented approach to public health will require transformation of multiservice center services, health center services, and other programs and will demand job description modifications. Grants and contracts may need to be adjusted or revised over time as the need for services changes. Services will be provided in a community-oriented manner rather than in a centralized manner.

FOCUSING ON CORE PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEMS

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita were evidence of the potential scope of disasters to which the city must effectively respond. Preparedness, an important aspect of the department's mission, requires not only strategic planning to address likely hazards but also expert control and deployment of incident command and incident management. Surveillance for hazards is also part of this effort.

MAKING DECISIONS WITH INPUT AND ENGAGEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS

The efforts needed to address current health and human services challenges cannot be supplied by a single agency. Staff must gain competency as assessors, facilitators, visionaries, and managers across many organizations.

Addressing the complex issues of providing medical care, reducing health inequities, and ensuring well-being requires engagement of many partners—city agencies, county departments, nonprofit community organizations, and the private sector—and ambitious collaborative efforts. In these and other initiatives, the mayor and city council remain allies.

Although values of the department have been listed in the beginning of this document, the following aims operationalize those values in terms of public health service to the community:

- Monitor the community's health status. Report on the

important health problems facing the community.

- Protect people from problems and health hazards, such as communicable diseases, epidemics, and diseases resulting from environmental hazards.
- Assess communities to determine their needs.
- Give community members information they need to make healthy choices. Promote and encourage healthy behaviors and sound mental health.
- Engage the community in identifying and solving many health and human services problems; improve the ability of the community to solve many of its own problems.
- Screen individuals and make appropriate referrals for services.
- Develop public health and human services policies and plans that will address the risks of disease outbreaks and environmental hazards.

- Enforce public health laws and regulations that govern environmental hazards and disease transmission.
- Help people access and benefit from health and human services.
- Provide safety net services, such as interventions that prevent or treat sexually transmitted diseases or services that keep babies well and prevent disease.
- Maintain a competent workforce.
- Ensure workforce is equipped with the skills to respond to disasters and assist the community in recovery.
- Evaluate and improve programs and interventions to ensure services provide maximum value to the taxpayer.
- Participate in research activities that contribute to the evidence base.

This document sets out the department's plan for the next three years.

PART II: PRIORITIES



Communicable Disease Control Essential:

Since the establishment of the first public health department, control of diseases spread from person to person or from animal to animal—communicable disease—has been of primary importance. Houston residents continue to face risks to their health from such long-standing diseases as tuberculosis, influenza, measles, syphilis, and gonorrhea, but they are also at risk of such new and emerging diseases as human immunodeficiency virus/autoimmune disease syndrome (HIV/AIDS), SARS, West Nile virus, and avian influenza.

The department must take a leadership role in preventing the spread of diseases while promoting the health of the community. Immunizations can greatly reduce cases of preventable disease; however, many Houston children have not been fully immunized, putting themselves and others at risk. Like many large urban centers, Houston's incidence rates of some communicable diseases are

higher than those of the country overall and are a long way from reaching the national objectives set out in *Healthy People 2010*. For example, approximately one of every 40 African Americans in Houston is infected with HIV, and Houston's 2005 tuberculosis case rate was 13.2/100,000 compared with 4.8/100,000 in the United States as a whole. The consequences of not detecting and treating communicable diseases can be devastating from societal and economic standpoints. These diseases, particularly those that are airborne (for example, influenza, measles, and tuberculosis), can infect casual contacts, leading to illness and death. Incomplete treatment of a case of tuberculosis can result in drug-resistant tuberculosis, which can cost hundreds of times more to treat than a nonresistant tuberculosis strain.

The Houston Department of Health and Human Services strives:

- to implement strategies aggressively to reduce the incidence and prevalence of communicable diseases.
- to increase early detection and intervention through an enhanced surveillance system.
- to campaign effectively, aggressively, and continually for disease prevention through education.
- to integrate prevention services into other programs and services.

City and Community Integrate Prevention Efforts

- to promote access to its treatment services through controlling cost, expanding hours of operation, and locating services in geographic locations where need is greatest.
- to create a public health system that approaches the needs of individuals and families holistically.
- to focus on the patient, not the program or the system.
- to leverage all resources within the department and the community to respond to community health issues.

The Houston Department of Health and Human Services will:

- expand the reach of the department's prevention services by developing partnerships.
- strive to have every child immunized on time.
- rapidly investigate disease outbreaks and intervene.
- reduce the prevalence of syphilis citywide.
- increase the proportion of homeless clients who complete tuberculosis therapy.
- reduce disease in neighborhoods with strategic partnerships.
- integrate disease control and prevention across the department.
- advocate for better policies to protect health.

The Houston Department of Health and Human Services will measure its achievements through the following indicators.

Indicators of disease control include:

- an increase in the proportion of homeless people who complete tuberculosis therapy.
- a decrease in syphilis rates in targeted communities and populations.

- a decrease in hepatitis B and C in targeted communities.
- increase in the number of communities with comprehensive resource-based control and prevention plans and programs.
- an increase in the number of staff cross trained in disease control and prevention concepts and methods.
- an increase in the number of community leaders trained in disease control issues and programs.

Indicators of disease prevention include:

- an increase in the immunization coverage rate.
- expansion of the percentage of the population that receives the influenza vaccine.
- an increase in the number of schools providing educational activities about HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.
- intensification of efforts targeting communities at high risk.

Indicators of expanded outreach include:

- an increase in the number of formal partnerships the department has organized.
- an increase in the number of new social marketing prevention campaigns initiated.
- acquisition of funds to control or prevent disease.

Indicators of improved performance include:

- updating of laboratory methods.
- improvements in on-time performance of epidemiological investigations.



Youngest, Most Vulnerable a City Priority:

Every child deserves to be healthy, every child deserves to be safe, and every child deserves to be able to develop to his or her full potential. The health and well-being of children is a reflection of the current health status of a large segment of the population and is a predictor of the health of the next generation. Although most children, youth, and families do well despite the challenges confronting them, a significant proportion remain at risk of harm. Children of color, children of recent immigrants, and children in impoverished families and communities are at greater risk than average of poor health and bear an unequal burden of poor health outcomes.

Consider these indicators:

- In Houston, the infant mortality rate for blacks (13.8%) is twice that of whites (7.2%).
- Thirty-five percent of Houston's children live in poverty.
- Many infants are born with a less-than-optimum birth weight. In Houston, the low-birth weight rate is

14% for blacks, 7% for whites, and 6% for Hispanics.

- Each year, the state receives about 26,000 reports of child abuse in Harris County.
- Only 78% of children 19–35 months of age in Houston are fully immunized against vaccine-preventable diseases.

Helping children grow into healthy, resilient adults is a priority for the Houston Department of Health and Human Services. The department promotes, provides, and supports (1) comprehensive, collaborative approaches, programs, and practices that nurture and protect children in their earliest development; (2) prevention of abuse and neglect; and (3) detection and intervention at the earliest possible indication of risk.

The department strives:

- to promote passion about the well-being of children.
- to provide a holistic approach for addressing children's well-being.
- to create an easy-to-use, consistent, and portable health record for mothers and their children.
- to ensure newborns a healthy start and services as they grow up to maintain good health.
- to use a partner-based, community approach to improving health outcomes for children.

Each Child Deserves Health, Safety, Development

- to advocate for overall improvements in the public health care system.
- to increase the number of families who have a medical “home”—a consistent source of preventive and acute care.

The department will:

- use a holistic approach to address children’s well-being.
- promote a healthy start for all newborns.
- provide essential services to optimize the health of infants and expectant mothers.
- focus on the welfare of infants and children.
- use a shared community approach to improving health outcomes so that efforts extend beyond those the department could achieve alone.
- create strong partnerships with schools to promote oral health.

The department will measure its achievements through the following indicators.

Indicators of disease prevention include:

- an increase in the percentage of pregnant women enrolled in the federal Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program who access prenatal care in the first trimester of pregnancy.
- an increase in the percentage of women who breastfeed their infants.

- the percentage of children fully immunized.
- an increase in oral health partnerships, such as those between dental and dental hygiene schools and providers in targeted city clinics.
- an increase in the number of sealant programs in schools.

Indicators of expanded outreach include:

- expansion of children’s enrollment in home visiting services.
- an increase in the percentage of newborns from targeted neighborhoods who are assessed for health services.
- an increase in the catalog or database of referral resources.

Indicators of improved performance include:

- production of a document that identifies gaps in children’s health and well-being and proposes ways to address them.
- increases in services with documented effectiveness.
- an increase in the number of maternal and child health employees who are cross trained.
- expansion of the number of cross-division initiatives to integrate child and infant welfare services.
- an increase in documented efforts to increase and improve communication regarding the department’s role in providing a safety net to vulnerable residents.



Protecting Growing Houston Community

Environmental health, according to the World Health Organization, encompasses assessing, correcting, controlling, and preventing those factors in the environment that could adversely affect the health of present and future generations.

Environmental health comprises those aspects of human health, including quality of life, that are determined by natural, physical, chemical, and biological contaminants in the water, soil, food, and outdoor or indoor air as well as those contaminants introduced by humans. Environmental health risks can also be caused by diseases carried by such vectors as insects and animals.

While many environmental indicators are improving (stream water quality; levels of air toxics, including 1, 3-butadiene), the threat of others (ambient benzene, ozone, and particulate levels, for example) is not clear. The department's Environmental Health Division is responsible for monitoring and assessing communities,

homes, workplaces, food establishments, swimming pools, waterways, special waste infrastructure, animal vector populations, and public services (ambulances, funeral homes, laboratories, and kennels) for environmental risks. Actions are taken to mitigate environmental concerns and to ensure compliance with permits, regulations, and ordinances. The division provides professional environmental services to the growing Houston community.

The department strives:

- to be more aware of and responsive to all areas of environmental health risks.
- to cross train staff members to recognize diverse environmental health risk factors and to function effectively, whether in their own divisions or departments or others.
- to be proactive by using preventive measures to protect the environment and thereby avoiding reliance on regulatory enforcement, which often follows, rather than prevents, environmental insult.
- to support and educate communities on how to identify, communicate, and collaborate to reduce environmental health hazards.
- to use information technology optimally to gain efficiency and effectiveness in providing (1) surveillance, (2) remediation of environmental health risks, and (3) compliance with ordinances and regulations.

Requires Ongoing Assessment, Monitoring, Training

The department will:

- prioritize activities based on risk.
- optimize use of field technology to address environmental health risks.
- partner with community and elected officials to reduce environmental health risks.
- investigate complaints within 24 hours.
- reduce the number of stray animals on Houston streets.
- increase the number of impounded animals that find adoptive homes.
- advocate for better policies to protect the public from environmental health risks.

The Houston Department of Health and Human Services will measure its achievements through the following indicators.

Indicators of the prevention of environmental hazards include:

- initiation of additional integrated environmental sweep teams that focus on targeted communities.
- improvement in shelter living conditions.
- an increase in the rate of inspections of mobile food units and commissaries.
- an increase in the number of sweep-and-trap teams for capture of loose dogs.
- an increase in adoptions of animals in the care of the Bureau of Animal Regulation and Care.

Indicators of expanded outreach include:

- creation of new environmental health partnerships and partnership activities.
- continuation of the training of community leaders in methods to reduce air pollution.
- continuation of the training of public officials in how to improve environmental health.

Indicators of the promotion of environmental health include:

- provision of more efficient and effective services to ambulance companies and ambulance drivers.
- publication of a report on lead poisoning and lead hazard reduction in children.
- presentation of proposals and promotion of policies and ordinances that strengthen the department's and the community's ability to address environmental hazards, specifically food safety, swimming pools, dangerous dogs, and indoor and outdoor air quality.

Indicators of improved performance include:

- development of a system to coordinate and integrate complaint intake and response.
- an increased success rate in citation trials.
- establishment and operation of an air toxics laboratory and ambient radiation monitor laboratory.
- an increase in the number of community risk assessments conducted.



Building and Sustaining Needed Services:

The Houston Department of Health and Human Services seeks to enhance community well-being through its human service efforts. The department will build and sustain multipurpose and multiprovider services that are rooted in the neighborhood. In response to local needs, the department seeks to provide a range of services that focus on the person and the community. This approach builds local solutions to neighborhood concerns and involves communities in decisions that affect their lives.

The department's partners are already powerful forces for social change. The department aims to build the strength of partner agencies and boost their capacity to influence their communities, thereby promoting their distinctive role in local communities and emphasizing the unique functions that they perform. The department cannot work in isolation. Indeed, it believes that operating within a strong and influential community sector is a

prerequisite to any attempt to generate lasting and sustainable social change. The department will pioneer collaborative and enterprising approaches that improve the impact and influence of the communities the department serves.

The Houston Department of Health and Human Services strives:

- to connect and track services between and across programs.
- to link various service components (including case management, information and referral, and screenings).
- to empower clients and assist them in accessing the services they need.
- to integrate behavioral health screenings into existing programs and services.
- to be a strong advocate and catalyst for building service capacity within the community.
- to build and use best practices program and service models and replicate them throughout the community.
- to strengthen human services for unserved and underserved populations.

The department will:

- leverage community resources and partnerships to address human service needs.
- reduce health disparities by increasing well-being and

City Seeks to Raise Health Equity of All Communities

health equity.

- use a diverse range of model and evidence-based programs.
- be an advocate for better policies to protect and increase well-being and health equity.

The department will measure its achievements through the following indicators.

Indicators of improved performance:

- evaluation of the use of community resources.
- production of community-based health status reports.
- an increase in the number of community assessments

and interventions conducted.

- development of regional plans that focus on health and human service outcomes.
- completion of a comprehensive review of department programs to identify duplicative efforts to address human service needs.
- development of model programs to measure improvement in the well-being of children, youth, and seniors.
- production of policy papers on key human service concerns.
- production of a human service best practices review report.



Statistical Analysis Informs Decisions:

Because public health is science driven, data analysis informs policy decision making. The Houston Department of Health and Human Services is responsible for tracking and publishing statistics on health conditions and analyzing data to determine what policies and interventions would be best to prevent disease, promote health, and protect the public. The department must inform decision makers, the media, and other partners as well as the public in a timely manner.

To continue to meet such demands adequately in the 21st century, the department will develop a public health information-gathering, analysis, and distribution system that is (1) securely integrated, (2) time sensitive and highly accessible, (3) easy to use, and (4) supportive of public health decision making. The data carried by that system are expected to be easy to interpret. Aims include eliminating the inefficiencies of multiple, disparate data collection and data management

systems; strategically targeting the needs for improved technical expertise of systems support staff; and advancing a long-term strategic plan for information infrastructure development.

The department strives:

- to have an integrated data system, usable in real time for tactical decision making and for long-term policy guidance.
- to share data internally and externally for planning and management.
- to meet state and federal public health information network requirements.
- to quickly and efficiently identify and provide timely notification about emerging health issues.
- to report health status by neighborhood using accurate data and information.

The department will:

- maintain a data warehouse to make information easy to use for decision making.
- provide information users with the tools they need for their health-related decision making.
- ensure data systems facilitate electronic data sharing with outside organizations and agencies.
- create new data systems for better decision making.

Tracking and Publishing Data Keep Public Apprised

The department will measure its achievements through the following indicators.

Indicators of increased transparency and accessibility include:

- a data warehouse that is fully functional and accessible.
- digitized and searchable paper vital statistics records.
- web-based applications, installed and functional, that allow user-friendly data mining.
- production of Houston's health indicator report, *The State of Health in Houston and Harris County*.
- production of community-level data profiles and health report cards.

Indicators of increased access to environmental data include:

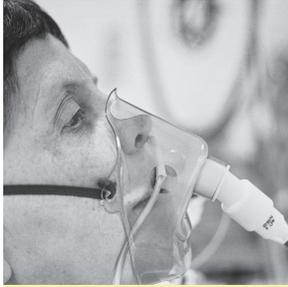
- having all standard hazard sources routinely monitored.
- development of a departmental Web page giving communities timely access to community assessments, maps that locate any environmental health hazards, and actions taken by the city to eliminate them.

Indicators of expanded outreach include:

- an expanded number of partnerships with Houston-area hospitals for electronic data-sharing.
- the number of partnerships with the community in which participants collect and share information and design strategies for application of health data at the community level.

Indicators of optimal use of information systems include:

- enhancement of the human service information system meant to support the production of outcome assessments.
- adopting citywide standards for geospatial coding of data collection systems.
- meeting state and federal information network compliance standards from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- implementing electronic commerce for revenue-generating programs.



Health Disaster Response Preparedness—

The Houston Department of Health and Human Services is part of a regional, statewide, and national effort to protect people from health disasters and to ensure that Houston is prepared to respond to a health disaster. Extensive collaboration ensures that emergency plans meet community needs by mitigating or reducing the risk of harm from an emergency, preparing for an effective response when an emergency occurs, and promoting a recovery that is as quick and complete as possible. The department must lead and coordinate citywide plans to respond to public health events, especially four among the 15 national priority hazards: hurricanes; pandemic influenza; infectious agents such as anthrax, tularemia, and smallpox; and toxic chemical exposure. To execute that role, the department must provide training to the entire staff on appropriate response roles to continue to ensure their preparedness.

The department must continue to plan, perform exercises, and revise plans in conjunction with emergency response

partners to address and respond to public health disasters. The department will address disparities by seeking to ensure that all population groups' needs are taken into account during an emergency.

The department strives:

- to respond effectively to all public health emergencies.
- to have a workforce of men and women who understand the importance of public health preparedness and their role in preparedness and response.
- to have the internal capacity to respond to disasters and any emergency in Houston.
- to have an integrated system of preparedness thinking, planning, and capacity throughout the department.
- to have all staff trained to perform their roles.

The department will:

- plan and make decisions with allied organizations and emergency preparedness and response partners.
- address all 15 national priority hazards in written plans.
- put systems in place for early detection, response, and notification.
- have the capacity to mitigate disasters through early detection and to respond to emergency events.
- train staff to increase their capabilities to respond to emergencies.

Participation at All Levels Expands Abilities, Safety

The department will measure its achievements through the indicators that follow.

Indicators of coordinated and/or tested emergency preparedness include:

- activation of a capable volunteer mobilization system that provides adequate resources to assist with mass distribution of medications.
- participation by decision makers from all divisions of department in local, county, regional, state, and/or federal exercises and participation by these same decision makers in planning meetings.
- joint training and recruiting activities that are documented in response plans.
- active participation with Office of Emergency Operations in activities to develop safety coordinators for all neighborhoods.
- conducting of exercises for each plan.
- identifying and assessing training needs and filling identified gaps.

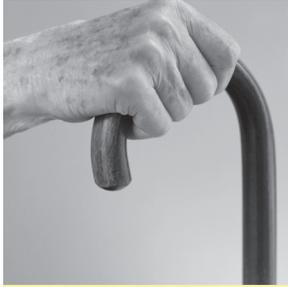
Indicators of expanded outreach and/or ability include:

- approved plans that address the needs of populations with special challenges, including mental illness.

- expansion of the ability and range of biological threat surveillance systems.
- laboratory capacity to identify 100% of agents specified in 15 priority hazards.
- creation of a detailed description and technical manual for a system for rapid notification and alerting.

Indicators of public health staff preparation and ability to lead in time of disaster include:

- employee participation in public health preparedness activities and drills.
- employees' recognition of their roles in responding to disasters.
- percentage of new employees given their emergency job description within 30 days of hiring.
- percentage of new employees who complete required preparedness training.
- percentage of all staff who are trained and competent in the Incident Command System.
- percentage of all staff who are trained and competent in a role-appropriate level of the National Incident Management System.
- percentage of all staff who are trained and competent to provide coordinated mass prophylaxis and vaccinations.



Meeting the Challenge of Chronic Disease:

Chronic diseases are prevalent yet many are preventable. Cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases are the top causes of death in the United States for all racial and ethnic groups.

According to an American Heart Association 2006 report, 34% of American adults 35 years or older in 2003 had one or more cardiovascular diseases and 910,614 died as a result that year. This is more than the toll from the next four leading killers—cancer, chronic lower respiratory diseases, accidents, and diabetes mellitus. Type 2 diabetes, which has been rising dramatically, is a lifestyle disease and among the most preventable of all health problems. Seventy percent of diabetes risk is attributable to overweight or obesity, according to the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. For CVD and some other diseases, African Americans are at higher risk: in 2000, rates of CVD deaths were 29% higher among African Americans.

The department wants to lead others in preventing chronic diseases while also easing the burden of further complications among persons living with chronic diseases.

The department strives:

- to be a leader in addressing chronic disease in the community.
- to create an internal chronic disease prevention program that emphasizes surveillance, primary prevention, early detection, and reduction of the disease burden.
- to promote a wellness culture within the department, within city government, and within the city's communities.

The department will:

- promote a wellness culture in targeted communities.
- improve chronic disease surveillance systems.
- advocate for better policies to reduce the burden of chronic diseases.

The department will measure its achievements through the following indicators.

Indicators of chronic disease control efforts include:

- developing a plan that identifies key strategies for dealing with chronic diseases.

Wellness Plans Promote Prevention and Education

- the number of neighborhoods and populations that have chronic disease profiles.
- The number of partnerships established to reduce chronic diseases.

Indicators of chronic disease prevention efforts

include:

- the percentage of department bureaus and programs that focus on chronic disease prevention in their activities.
- the percentage of department employees using the wellness program.
- preparing chronic disease wellness plans for targeted communities.
- the number of neighborhoods having social marketing chronic disease prevention campaigns.
- the number of neighborhoods using train-the-trainer health promotion and education programs developed and implemented for community partners.
- participation in wellness-related services in the employee benefits package.

APPENDIX

Houston Department of Health and Human Services

ENFORCE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY REGULATIONS

Source of Authority:

- Texas Health and Safety Code: Chapter 341
- Houston Code of Ordinances: Chapter 21 Health Sec. 21-2,3

Key Requirements: Enforce state standards and regulations regarding sanitary conditions at businesses and places of employment.

ENFORCE PUBLIC DRINKING WATER REGULATIONS

Source of Authority:

- Texas Health and Safety Code: Chapter 341
- Houston Code of Ordinances: Chapter 21 Health Sec. 21-14

Key Requirements: Inspect public drinking water systems to ensure compliance with state standards and regulations.

REPORT NOTIFIABLE CONDITIONS

Source of Authority:

- Texas Health and Safety Code: Chapter 81

- Houston Code of Ordinances: Chapter 21 Health Sec.21-3

Key Requirements: Receive reports of notifiable conditions and report them to the Texas Department of State Health Services.

ENFORCE ANIMAL CRUELTY/DISPOSITION OF CRUELLY TREATED ANIMALS REGULATIONS

Source of Authority:

- Texas Health and Safety Code: Chapter 821
- Houston Code of Ordinances: Chapter 6 Animals and Fowl

Key Requirements: Enforce and apply state standards and regulations regarding animal cruelty and disposition of cruelly treated animals.

ENFORCE ANIMAL REGULATIONS

Source of Authority:

- Texas Health and Safety Code: Chapter 822
- Houston Code of Ordinances: Chapter 6

Animals and Fowl
Key Requirements: Regulate and permit dangerous dog and dangerous wild animals. Administer pet licensing program and enforce leash laws.

PROVIDE RABIES ERADICATION AND CONTROL SERVICES

Source of Authority:

- Texas Health and Safety Code: Chapter 826
- Houston Codes of Ordinances: Chapter 6 Animals and Fowl

Key Requirements: Investigate animal-to-people bites. Enforce rabies vaccination/quarantine requirements and standards.

MEET ANIMAL SHELTER AND EUTHANASIA STANDARDS

Source of Authority:

- Texas Health and Safety Code: Chapter 823
- Houston Code of Ordinances: Chapter 6 Animals and Fowl

Key Requirements: Ensure that the county/city animal shelter meets/exceeds state standards

for animal shelters and euthanasia.

PROVIDE DOG AND CAT STERILIZATION SERVICES

Source of Authority:

- Texas Health and Safety Code: Chapter 828
- Houston Code of Ordinances: Chapter 6 Animals and Fowl

Key Requirements: Ensure that pets adopted from the county/city animal shelter are neutered.

ENFORCE FOOD SAFETY REGULATIONS

Source of Authority:

- Texas Health and Safety Code: Chapter 437
- Houston Code of Ordinances: Chapter 20 Food and Drugs

Key Requirements: Permit and inspect food establishments to ensure compliance with state regulations.

ENFORCE NEIGHBORHOOD NUISANCE ABATEMENT LAW

Source of Authority:

- Texas Health and Safety

Mandates Aim to Protect the Public's Well-being

Code: Chapters 341 and 343

- Houston Code of Ordinances: Chapter 10 Houston Code Section 10-451, 456

Key Requirements: Abate public nuisances through owner notification and prosecution.

ENFORCE SWIMMING POOL REGULATIONS

Source of Authority:

- Texas Health and Safety Code: Chapter 341
- Houston Code of Ordinances: Chapter 43 Swimming Pools

Key Requirements: Inspect public swimming pools to ensure compliance with state standards and regulations.

ENFORCE WATER QUALITY REGULATIONS

Source of Authority:

- Texas Health and Safety Code: Chapter 341
- Texas Water Code Chapters 7 and 26
- Houston Code of Ordinances: Chapter 47

Water and Sewers

Key Requirements: Monitor water quality and perform investigations to ensure compliance with state rules and regulations; file civil/criminal suit if necessary.

ENFORCE AIR QUALITY REGULATIONS

Source of Authority:

- Texas Health and Safety Code: Chapter 382; Texas Water Code Chapter 7
- Houston Code of Ordinances: Chapter 21
- Health Article VI. Air Pollution

Key Requirements: Monitor air quality and perform investigations to ensure compliance with state rules and regulations; file civil/criminal suit if necessary.

ENFORCE SOLID WASTE REGULATIONS

Source of Authority:

- Texas Health and Safety
- Safety Code: Chapter 361
 - Texas Water Code Chapter 7
 - Houston Code of

Ordinances: Chapter 39

Solid Waste and Litter Control

Key Requirements: Monitor and investigate hazardous industrial and municipal solid waste activities to ensure compliance with state rules and regulations; file civil/criminal suit if necessary.

COMPLY WITH JOINT NATIONAL POLLUTANT DISCHARGE ELIMINATION MS4 PERMIT: ENFORCE STORM WATER REGULATIONS

Source of Authority:

- Harris County Storm Water Quality Management Regulations
- Clean Water Act Section 404
- Texas Water Code Chapter 26
- Houston Code of Ordinances: Chapter 47 Water Sewers

Key Requirements: Perform representative sampling to characterize the quality of rainwater run-off; conduct inspections of industrial and nonindustrial facilities; locate and eliminate illicit discharge.

ENFORCE LITTER ABATEMENT LAW

Source of Authority:

- Texas Health and Safety Code: Chapter 365
- Houston Code of Ordinances: Chapter 39 Solid Waste and Litter Control

Key Requirements: Monitor the disposal of litter and investigate illegal dumping activities to ensure compliance with state rules and regulations.

ENSURE PRIVACY OF PERSONAL HEALTH INFORMATION

Source of Authority:

- U.S. Public Law 104-101—Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996
- Houston Code of Ordinances: Chapter 21 Health Sec. 21-3

Key Requirements: Ensure that personal health data and information is maintained, used and disclosed according to federal law.

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