Operational Definition of a Functional Local Public Health Agency - Draft 3 (Fall 2004)

All local public health agencies (LPHAs), as governmental entities, derive their authority and power from the state constitutions that govern them. Accordingly, all LPHAs exist for the common good and are responsible for demonstrating strong leadership in the promotion of social, economic and environmental conditions that improve health and well-being and prevent illness, disease and injury. However, in the absence of specific, consistent standards regarding how LPHAs fulfill this responsibility, the degree to which governmental public health protections exist varies widely from community to community.

This definition is composed of standards, framed around the nationally-recognized 10 Essential Public Health Services, that describe what every person, regardless of where they live, can reasonably expect their LPHA to provide. The standards provide a framework by which LPHAs can be held accountable to the public they serve and to the governing bodies (e.g., local boards of health) to which they report. In meeting the standards, it is imperative that LPHAs operate according to the highest level of professionalism and ethics to inspire public confidence and trust.

How these standards are met will differ from place to place. The LPHA may solely finance services and/or share resources or services with other LPHAs. Additionally, the LPHA may directly provide the service or, alternatively, may control the means to make sure that the service is provided effectively. Moreover, while the standards are intended to provide consistency to the basic functions of LPHAs, the structural characteristics of LPHAs (e.g., governance, staffing patterns, size of the population served, etc.) will continue to vary, and thus LPHAs will achieve the standards through diverse means. Finally, while the standards describe what is common to all LPHAs, each LPHA may be required to provide services unique to meeting the public health needs of the community it serves.

**Essential Public Health Service No. 1: Monitor health status to identify community health problems**

1. Conduct or participate in community health assessments
   1.1. Obtain data that provide information on the community's health (e.g., provider immunization rates; hospital discharge data; environmental health hazard, risk and exposure data; etc.) to identify trends and population health risks
   1.2. Develop relationships with local providers and others in the community who have information on reportable diseases and other conditions of public health interest and help them report to the health department

**Essential Public Health Service 2: Diagnose and investigate identified health problems and health hazards in the community**

1. Using community health data, identify health problems and environmental health hazards

2. Minimize, contain and prevent adverse health events and conditions resulting from communicable diseases; food-, water, and vector-borne outbreaks; chronic diseases; environmental health hazards; biological, chemical and radiological threats; negative social and economic conditions; and public health disasters

3. Receive and provide public health alerts to the general public, health care providers, emergency responders and state and federal public health agencies

4. Coordinate and facilitate public health emergency response activities with state and federal public health agencies in a manner consistent with the community's best public health interest

5. Maintain access to laboratory capacity to help monitor community health status and diagnose and investigate public health problems and hazards
Essential Public Health Service 3: Inform, educate and empower people about health issues

1. Work with individuals, community groups, other agencies and the general public to share information to understand the social, economic, environmental and other issues affecting the public's health

2. Provide information, targeted to various audiences, to help those in the community understand what decisions they can make to be healthy

3. Conduct health promotion activities to address public health issues

4. Educate the public on policies and programs needed to improve the community's health

Essential Public Health Service 4: Mobilize community partnerships to identify and solve health problems

1. Lead, or participate in, a comprehensive planning process that engages the community in identifying, prioritizing and solving problems affecting the community's health and establishing public health-related goals

2. Lead and/or participate in partnerships of public and private organizations, state and local government agencies, businesses, schools, and the media to support and implement prevention strategies that address identified public health problems

Essential Public Health Service 5: Develop policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts

1. Serve as a primary resource to guide local, state, and federal elected and appointed officials to establish and maintain policies that support sound public health practice

2. Lead and/or participate in policy development efforts to improve physical, social and environmental conditions in the community as they affect public health

3. Engage in an internal strategic planning process to develop and adhere to a vision, mission and guiding principles

4. Promote social investments that sustain and improve community health

Essential Public Health Service 6: Enforce laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety

1. Apply knowledge of public health law, ordinances, and regulations and the relationship between the law and public health practice to its ongoing operations

2. Inform and educate individuals and organizations of the meaning, purpose and benefit of public health laws, regulations and ordinances

3. Monitor the compliance of regulated organizations, entities and individuals

4. Conduct enforcement activities
Essential Public Health Service 7: Link people to needed personal health services and assure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable

1. Lead efforts to increase access to culturally competent personal health services, including preventive and health promotion services

2. Advocate for the development of systems that assure prevention and for the establishment of personal health services needed in the community

Essential Public Health Service 8: Assure a competent public health and personal health care workforce

1. Evaluate the local public health agency workforce on the demonstration of core public health competencies

2. Address deficiencies in, and promote, public health competencies through continuing education, training and leadership development activities

3. Develop partnerships with academic institutions to provide educational experiences that address the public health workforce, including practice-based educational opportunities

4. Recruit, train, develop and retain a diverse staff

5. Develop relationships with health care providers, community-based organizations, and others outside of the health department to promote the use of interventions appropriate for the prevention, containment and/or remediation of public health problems

6. Provide the public health workforce with access to support functions and tools needed to do their job

Essential Public Health Service 9: Assess effectiveness, accessibility and quality of personal and population-based health services

1. Evaluate the effectiveness and quality of all local public health agency programs and activities against evidence-based criteria and use the information to improve performance

2. Assess the effectiveness of strategies implemented through the comprehensive planning process to achieve the identified public health goals

3. Review the effectiveness of interventions provided by those outside the health department for prevention, containment and/or remediation of problems affecting the public's health

Essential Public Health Service 10: Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems

1. Using current data, develop evidence-based public health programs

2. Work with researchers to actively involve the community in all phases of public health research

3. Provide data and expertise to support research that benefits the health of the community

4. Share results of program evaluations to contribute to the evidence base of public health