



Local Public Health: Working with Your Community to Improve Health

In Illinois local public health services are provided by certified health departments that represent municipalities, districts, counties, and multiple county jurisdictions. These agencies vary greatly in size but each has a similar mission to **Protect Health, Prepare for Emergencies, Prevent Illness, and Promote Health.**

Health is protected and illness prevented for EVERYONE in Illinois by public health services focused on the entire community such as:

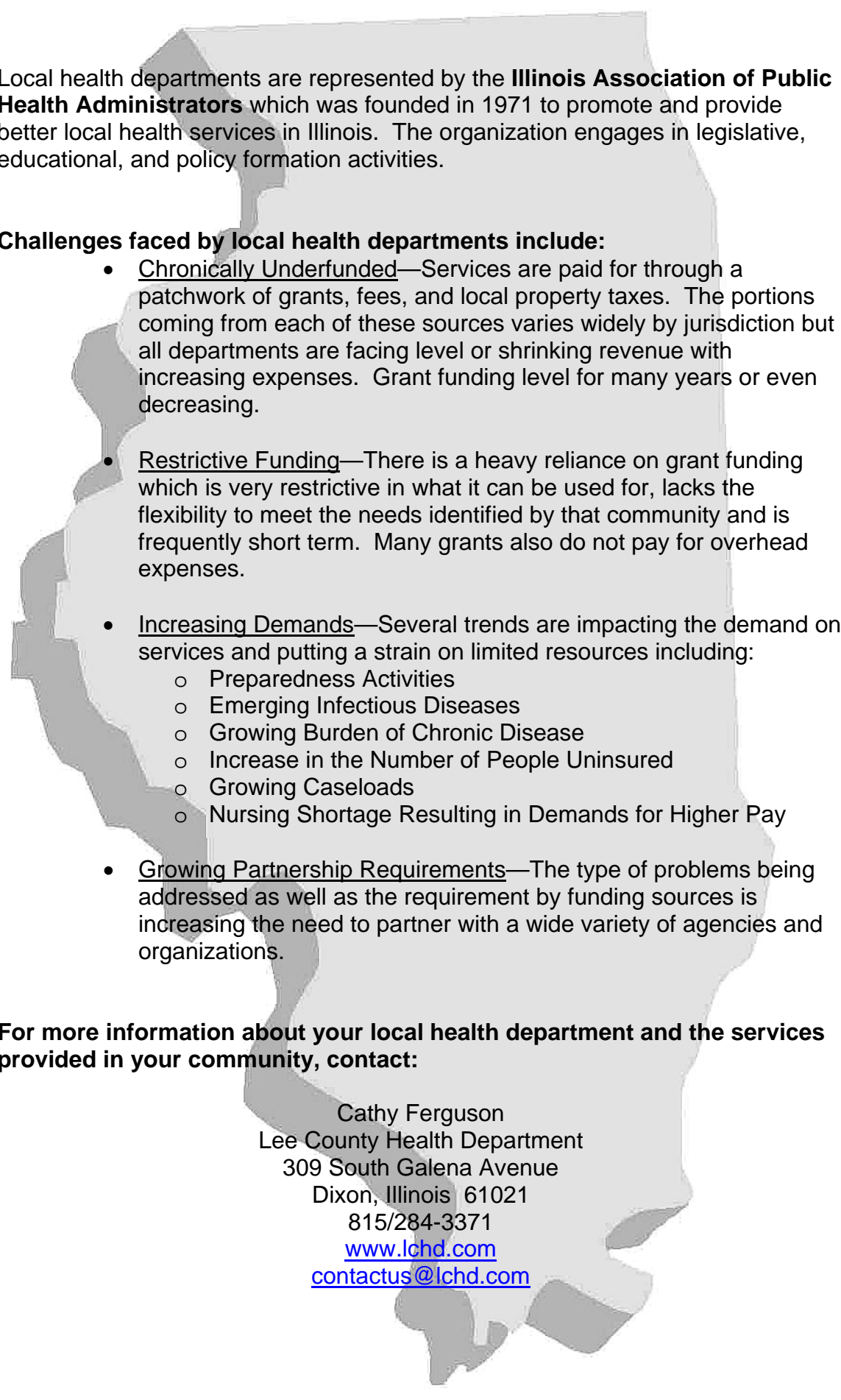
- Food Protection
- Communicable Disease Prevention and Control
- Preparedness Activities to Ensure Effective Response to Public Health Emergencies
- Private Sewage and Private Water Programs
- Vector Control

Local health departments also provide direct services that **promote health and prevent illness to 32% of all households statewide.** Women with children and high school educations across all income brackets report using health department services more frequently than other groups. These services include:

- WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children)
- Family Case Management
- Childhood and Adult Immunizations
- Tobacco Prevention and Control
- Health Education

In addition to the above services, local health departments provide **leadership in responding to the health needs of their communities.** They collaborate with community partners to identify health priorities and deliver innovative programs that address those needs. These priorities and programs are as different as our many communities but some of the issues addressed include:

- Access to health and dental care
- Chronic diseases such as diabetes and asthma
- Family violence
- Injury prevention and farm safety
- Mental health services
- Lifestyle choices that impact health
- Early detection of cancer
- And much more...



Local health departments are represented by the **Illinois Association of Public Health Administrators** which was founded in 1971 to promote and provide better local health services in Illinois. The organization engages in legislative, educational, and policy formation activities.

Challenges faced by local health departments include:

- Chronically Underfunded—Services are paid for through a patchwork of grants, fees, and local property taxes. The portions coming from each of these sources varies widely by jurisdiction but all departments are facing level or shrinking revenue with increasing expenses. Grant funding level for many years or even decreasing.
- Restrictive Funding—There is a heavy reliance on grant funding which is very restrictive in what it can be used for, lacks the flexibility to meet the needs identified by that community and is frequently short term. Many grants also do not pay for overhead expenses.
- Increasing Demands—Several trends are impacting the demand on services and putting a strain on limited resources including:
 - Preparedness Activities
 - Emerging Infectious Diseases
 - Growing Burden of Chronic Disease
 - Increase in the Number of People Uninsured
 - Growing Caseloads
 - Nursing Shortage Resulting in Demands for Higher Pay
- Growing Partnership Requirements—The type of problems being addressed as well as the requirement by funding sources is increasing the need to partner with a wide variety of agencies and organizations.

For more information about your local health department and the services provided in your community, contact:

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