

Lee County Health Department

1315 Franklin Grove Road

Dixon, Illinois 61021

(815) 284-3371

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What does public health mean to you? Perhaps you haven't given this much thought. Public health means different things to different people. It often evokes images of a restaurant inspector or a nurse giving a child an immunization, but the range of services is much broader.

The Lee County Health Department was established in 1946 through a referendum of the citizens of Lee County. Since that time, the department's mission has been the promotion of health and wellness through a variety of programs and services designed to protect the health and safety of the individuals residing in Lee County.

In addition to food safety and vaccinations to protect children against disease, the Lee County Health Department offers processes to ensure the proper installation and maintenance of wells and septic systems; investigations to control the outbreak of infectious diseases; screenings to identify potential delays in development among infants and children; nutrition education for pregnant, breastfeeding and postpartum women; family planning services to help prevent unintended pregnancies; mammograms and pap tests to ensure the early detection of breast and cervical cancer among uninsured women; community blood pressure screenings to identify or monitor hypertension; a tobacco control program which provides prevention education to youth and referrals to individuals wishing to stop smoking; flu shot clinics to help reduce the prevalence and severity of influenza; sexually transmitted disease education, testing, and treatment; school-based education to reduce the incidence of teen pregnancy; and community education to inform residents of various health issues.

Today, in addition to maintaining our ongoing programming, we are faced with emerging infections such as West Nile Virus, SARS, and Monkeypox. Another important, but time-intensive issue is the need for emergency preparedness planning. All local health departments are required to develop a Bioterrorism Response Plan to be utilized in the event of a Bioterrorist attack. We are collaborating with other local organizations on this plan.

Public health is an investment in your community. Research has continually shown that preventing disease, through education or intervention, or identifying disease early, when it is more easily treated, saves money. The WIC (Women, Infants and Children) Program is a great example – by providing expectant mothers healthy foods, nutrition education and ensuring good prenatal care – we reduce the incidence of low birth weight and all the associated health costs. Another example is a mammogram which detects a breast tumor that is too small to be felt – at this stage it can be treated much more easily and less costly, than had the cancer spread.

The Lee County Health Department staff works diligently to protect the health and safety of Lee County residents, all of whom are affected by our efforts - either directly or indirectly. We serve people of all socioeconomic backgrounds, at virtually every age, aspect and cycle of life. We thank you for the opportunity to serve you. For additional information, please call 284-3371.

-Submitted by Cathy Ferguson, MPH, Public Health Administrator