

Dawson County Health Department

# Annual Report



2023



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**Dawson County Health Department**  
207 W. Bell Street, Glendive, MT 59330; 406-377-5213  
<http://www.dawsoncountymontana.com/departments/publichealth>

# Letter from the Health Director

To the Residents of Dawson County:

I am pleased to present to you the 2023 annual report of the Dawson County Health Department (DCHD). The Health Department is committed to excellence in protecting, promoting, and enhancing the health and well-being of all people. We provide quality services to people of all ages and work to ensure the health and safety of our community and environment through the promotion of health and prevention of disease. The following pages show the tireless work undertaken daily by Health Department staff to carry out our mission.

The annual report serves as a tool to share information about the activities and achievements of the Health Department. More often than not, the work we do to prevent disease and promote healthy lifestyles is done behind-the-scenes. Because of this and our role as a publicly funded, government entity, it is our responsibility to the taxpayer and community at large to transparently share our work and be held accountable for the work we do. Our staff should be very proud of the work they do to promote and protect our community.

Please continue to read and explore the many facets of public health and our local programming outlined in this annual report. As you look through the pages, don't hesitate to contact us with any questions or concerns. Also, feel free to let the staff know what a great job they are doing.

Sincerely,



Laureen Murphree  
Health Department Director

**Mission**  
*Promote and Protect Public Health*

**Vision**  
Dawson County Health Department is committed to excellence in protecting, promoting and enhancing the health and well-being of all people. We provide quality services to people of all ages and work to ensure the health, safety, and mental health of our community and environment.

## Board of Health

Joe Sharbono, Dawson County Commissioner, Chair  
Jill Domek, Glendive Medical Center, Vice Chair  
Dr. Joseph Leal, Health Officer  
Deb Dion, Glendive Mayor  
Stephen Schreibeis, Glendive Public Schools Superintendent  
Pam Ley, Eastern Montana Mental Health Center  
Brett Irigoien- County Attorney  
Justin Cross- Licensed Establishment

**Ex Officio Members**  
Laureen Murphree, DCHD Director, Secretary  
Brant Gordon, Dawson County Sanitarian  
Lynn Newnam, DCHD Lead Nurse  
Jessica Lundstrom, VA Clinic  
Rachel Wilbert—One Health

The Dawson County Board of Health meets quarterly at the Dawson County Courthouse. To contact the Board of Health, contact Laureen Murphree, at 377-5213. Meeting minutes are available online at [www.dawsoncountymontana.com/departments/publichealth](http://www.dawsoncountymontana.com/departments/publichealth).

# Program Highlights

## Communicable Disease

In accordance with state law, healthcare providers in Montana report cases of over 60 different diseases to their local health department. When DCHD's Communicable Disease (CD) program receives one of these reports, they follow up on and investigate the case by providing patients information, monitoring for symptoms, and sometimes providing treatment recommendations for patients and potentially exposed contacts, all to help limit the spread of the disease.

## Surveillance

The CD program conducts weekly surveillance with local healthcare providers—including Glendive Medical Center, Gabert Clinic, One Health and private providers—GMC's laboratory, and Glendive Public Schools. Regular surveillance allows DCHD to identify potential communicable disease outbreaks or other issues in a timely manner. Additionally, it facilitates better communication between DCHD and other local entities.

## COVID-19 Response

As part of DCHD's Public Health Emergency and Preparedness program (PHEP), DCHD has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic as it impacted the Dawson County community. Since the known arrival of the SARS-CoV2 virus in Dawson County starting in **June 2020**, the PHEP program has tracked, reported, and investigated cases and contacts. During 2023, there were **84** confirmed cases of SARS-CoV2. DCHD has offered home tests to the community to monitor spread of the virus and conduct responsible surveillance of COVID-19 in high-risk populations. Per new guidelines from the CDC and DPHHS a case of COVID-19 is only confirmed via PCR testing. The COVID-19 response is ongoing.

Disease	Cases	Investigations*
STD's	21	23
Hepatitis C (includes chronic and acute cases)	8	8
Listeriosis	1	1
Tuberculosis (latent)	4	4
COVID-19	84	115
Influenza Hospitalizations	8	8
West Nile Virus	3	3
HIV	1	1
Campylobacter	1	1
Cryptosporidiosis	1	1
Lead Level >5 mcg	2	3
Salmonellosis	1	1

\*Investigations refer to reports that are not lab-confirmed cases, but still require DCHD to investigate and, in some instances, provide treatment or other recommendations.

## Rabies Exposures and PEP Recommendations

In 2023, **DCHD investigated 30 animal bites**. In each of these cases, DCHD is responsible for assessing the circumstances surrounding the incident and determine whether or not post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), a vaccine series to prevent rabies, is recommended. A number of factors go into determining the necessity of PEP, and DCHD may work with veterinarians and law enforcement, along with the exposed person(s), to make the recommendation. **DCHD did recommend PEP 13 times in 2023. Most of these cases involved exposure to bats. Due to the difficulty of identifying whether or not a bite occurred and the prevalence of rabies in bats, bat encounters almost always require PEP recommendation.** DCHD and Dawson County Sanitarian work together to follow up and investigate all reported animal bites in Dawson County.

## Outbreak Response

DCHD also maintains 24/7 availability for outbreak response. Outbreaks of any communicable disease must be investigated and reported to the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS).

## Immunizations

Immunizations are offered at DCHD on a walk-in basis on Thursdays and other times by appointment. Immunizations are provided for children regardless of ability to pay through the Vaccines for Children program, which offers no-cost vaccines to children through age 18 who are uninsured, under-insured, or for other reasons cannot afford the cost of vaccination. Additionally, DCHD offers 11 different vaccines for adults. In 2023, **DCHD provided 613 immunizations, including 316 flu shots.**

### **DCHD KinderVax and 7thVax Challenge**

This year DCHD entered all Kindergarteners and all 7th graders that received specific vaccinations into a drawing for a \$50 Amazon gift card. To be eligible, 7th graders had to have received their Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis). Kindergarteners had to receive a DTaP, IPV, MMR & Varicella. Both had to be up to date on all vaccines by October 31.

### **Infant Immunizations**

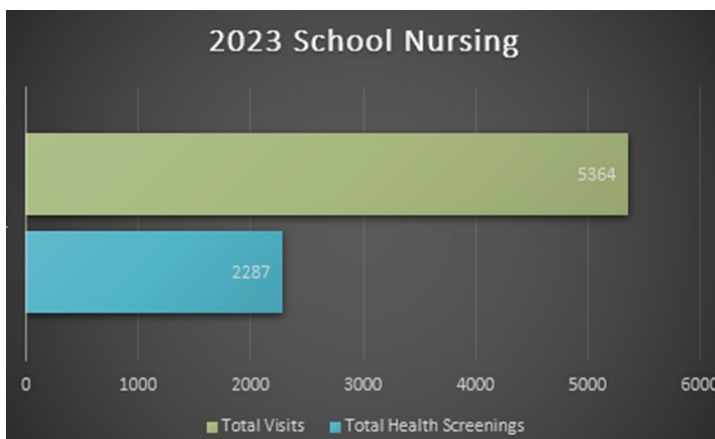
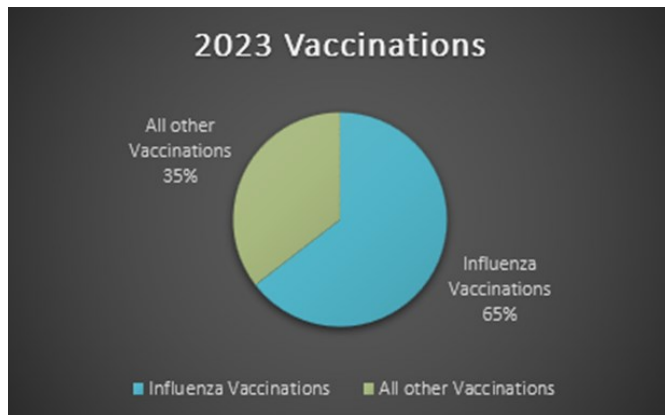
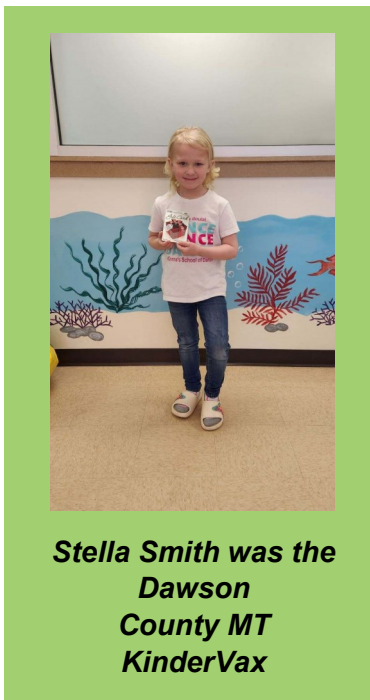
By the age of two, infants and young children should receive four doses of DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis), three doses of polio vaccine, one MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella), one varicella (chickenpox), four doses of Hib (*Haemophilus influenzae* type b), three Hepatitis B, and four doses of PCV (pneumococcal).

## School Nursing

Through a contract with Glendive Public Schools, DCHD provides school nursing services in each school. We also have contracts with Richey Schools and the Rural Schools in Dawson County. School nurses provide health screenings, including vision and dental health; medication supervision; immunization record review and maintenance; health promotion; emergency treatment; and referral services.

School nurse encounters include any visits to the nurse by students or staff or contacts with parents or other healthcare providers. Student visits account for the vast majority of encounters. The most common issues are things like headaches, stomach aches, sore throats, or minor injuries. Nurses are also responsible, especially in lower grades, for ensuring students take prescription medication.

**School nurses handle health screenings, student illnesses and dispense prescription medications.**



## Public Health Emergency Preparedness

DCHD's Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) program maintains plans to prevent and mitigate disasters such as communicable disease outbreaks, food and water contaminations, malicious attacks, severe weather, and situations that require medical countermeasures. **The PHEP program is responsible for the development and continuing maintenance of 16 different incident-specific plans and protocols.**

### Flu Immunization Clinics

**DCHD held 10 off-site flu immunization clinics in 2023, providing a total of 229 flu shots offsite.** One of these was a mass drive thru clinic utilized as an opportunity to practice emergency response and medical countermeasure dispensing. A walk-in clinic at Glendive Senior Center provided flu vaccinations for **41** persons. DCHD vaccinated **61** for influenza at the drive thru flu shot clinic in September. In addition, Richey's clinic vaccinated **18** persons.

### HAN Messages

The Health Alert Network (HAN) is an information-sharing program DCHD belongs to. HAN is the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) method for sharing information with state and local health departments. DCHD receives information through the HAN to disseminate to local partners. **DCHD forwarded 20 HAN messages to local partners in 2023** and conducted 14 major outreach activities.

## Tobacco Use Prevention

The Montana Tobacco Use Prevention Program (MTUPP) works to eliminate tobacco use, especially among young people, through statewide programs and policies. DCHD is responsible for MTUPP activities in Dawson, Prairie, and Wibaux counties. MTUPP promotes the Montana Quit Line, which provides free help for quitting tobacco use. **27 Quit Line calls were made from Dawson, Prairie, and Wibaux Counties in 2023.**

### Days of Action

**In 2023, the DCHD Tobacco Education Specialist (TES) organized activities for four different "Days of Action,"** including Red Ribbon Week, the Great American Smokeout, Through with Chew Week, and Take Down Tobacco Day in Dawson, Wibaux and Prairie Counties. The goal of these days' activities is to raise community awareness on the dangers of tobacco use. Youth involvement is an important component of these activities. Prairie County's 4-H students, Wibaux County's BPA students, and Dawson County's Trading Cards Kids and TIP kids help organize activities and deliver information to their fellow students and community. Tobacco Prevention had a Honk and Wave with the Washington Middle School TIP students for Take Down Tobacco Day. Also, weekly Facebook posts, monthly articles and quarterly ads were placed in Dawson, Wibaux and Prairie Counties.

### Trading Card Kids

DCHD's Tobacco Use Prevention Program handles mentorship and organization of the Trading Card Kids group. Trading Card Kids' interviews were conducted, 20 students were selected to be 2023-2024 Trading Card Kids. They visited the elementary classrooms during Red Ribbon Week, The Great American Smokeout, Through With Chew Week and in April for Summer Safety presentations..



## Family Planning

DCHD's Family Planning clinic provides comprehensive reproductive health services to both women and men. Along with the main clinic in Glendive, **DCHD provides oversight for satellite clinics in Richland and Fallon counties**. Some services in Dawson County are provided through a partnership with a Glendive Medical Center healthcare provider. Family Planning's client population is primarily female; **DCHD recorded 105 Family Planning client visits in 2023\***. Most of the client population is also uninsured. Family Planning offers services regardless of insurance status and ability to pay; services are provided on a sliding fee scale based on income.

Family Planning services provide:

- Birth control supplies for men, women, and teens
- Emergency contraception
- Pregnancy testing and counseling
- Tests and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases
- Free and confidential HIV testing
- Hepatitis C testing (not provided on sliding fee scale)
- Breast and cervical cancer screening
- Sterilization counseling and information
- Reproductive health education and counseling
- Referrals for advanced cancer screening services, such as colonoscopies
- Referrals for information regarding pregnancy options



**montana**  
**FAMILY PLANNING**

**Family Planning had 105 client visits in 2023\***

\*These numbers are from Dawson County's Family Clinic only and do not include satellite clinics.

## WIC

WIC is a Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children that provides valuable health information and nutrition benefits. The program is designed to improve health outcomes and influence lifetime nutrition and health behaviors in a targeted, at-risk population. WIC is available for pregnant, breastfeeding, or new mothers and infants and children up to age 5 that meet income guidelines. Nutrition education and benefits are the cornerstone of the WIC program. **There were 554 WIC visits in 2023.**

Once each quarter, WIC staff from DCHD usually travel to four different satellite clinics to provide services. Satellite clinics are located in Wibaux, Prairie County (Terry), McCone County (Circle), and Garfield County (Jordan). Some visits were held virtually due to COVID-19 outbreaks.



# Maternal and Child Health Services

## Parents as Teachers

Parents as Teachers (PAT) is a home visiting program that promotes early development, learning, and health by supporting and engaging caregivers. Certified parent educators can provide pregnant women and children aged birth to age five referrals to other programs and services.



Parents as Teachers™

**451 Home Visits were provided in 2023**

Research shows that PAT can help children become healthier, score higher on kindergarten readiness tests, become better problem solvers, and grow more advanced in language and social development.

Parents in the program also benefit. Increased involvement in their child's education and play leads to higher confidence in their parenting abilities. Additionally, PAT helps parents learn to manage stressors in an effort to reduce levels of child abuse and neglect.

## Well Child Screenings

DCHD helps provide height, weight, vision, and developmental screenings each fall and spring for preschool age children.



## Walk-In Services

**Blood pressure and Lab on Demand** clinics take place weekly. Lab on Demand is offered every Wednesday. You may request the following labs: CMP, TSH, Thyroid Panel, PSA, CBC, Lipid Panel, Hemoglobin A1C, Vitamin D, Hepatitis C Antibody, Hepatitis B Surface Antigen, Varicella Titer, Uric Acid, Iron and MMR Panel at discounted prices.

DCHD also offers a **variety of walk-in services**. You may request a nurse to assess health concerns, such as, ear flush, DNA testing, rashes, staple/suture removal and allergy shots.

**260 Walk-In services were provided in 2023.**



## Fetal, Infant, Child, Maternal Mortality Review (FICMMR)

FICMMR is a statewide effort to reduce preventable fetal, infant, child, and maternal deaths. The program is driven locally by multi-disciplinary teams; DCHD is a part of Dawson County's team. The local team's responsibility is to review all fetal deaths and the deaths of children up to age 18 to determine preventability and develop projects that may prevent future deaths.

## Car Seat Safety

The Car Seat Safety program provides car seat installation, education, and seat belt awareness. Car seats are available for eligible parents or caregivers. Our certified car seat technician inspected and instructed how to install a car seat properly. Annually, we have car seat check events in the community.

**DCHD provided 11 car seats for infants and young children in 2023**





## The Nurturing Tree

The Nurturing Tree (TNT) helps to nurture healthy families by providing parenting resources, classes, and other activities. Each Tuesday, TNT staff hold Mommy/Daddy and Me groups for young children and their caregivers in the basement of the library following Storytime. The group focuses on preschool readiness and includes Crafty Tuesday, Kindergarten Readiness, Awareness Tuesday, Mix and Measure, and Power Play activities. Mommy/Daddy and Me is a great social time for children and caregivers. **In 2023, TNT served 906 children.**



- TNT also boasts a parent resource library with free resources on issues such as parenting, grandparenting, teen issues, birth, newborns, breastfeeding, toddlers, and nutrition.
- Parenting education classes are offered periodically for parents or caregivers of children ages 0-18.
- Safe-sitter classes are usually held twice a year.

**TNT provided parent/child activities for 902 children**

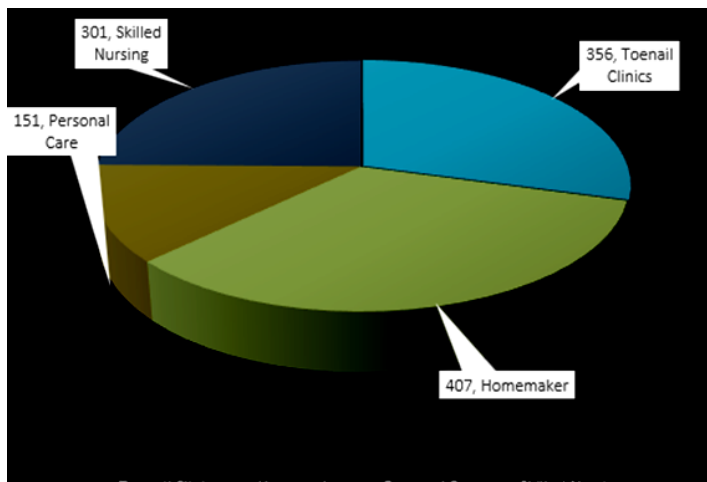
## Home Health

Home Health services are provided for people age 60 and older or those with special health needs. Home Health provides the following services on a fee or donation basis based upon eligibility.

- **Skilled Nursing:** RN visits to the client's home made on order of a physician. Care provided may include medication setup, health assessment, dressing changes, blood draws, and other skilled nursing functions.
- **Home Health Aide:** Certified Nursing Assistants provide care in the home under the supervision of an RN. Services may include assistance with personal care, bathing, dressing, and ambulation.
- **Homemaker:** Homemakers provide light housekeeping and assistance with laundry and shopping. This service is available in both Glendive and Richey.
- **Home Delivered Meals (HDM):** Meals are delivered to homebound participants at noon Mondays thru Fridays with a sack lunch option for Saturdays.
- **Mom's Meals:** A meal option for those who are homebound and live outside the urban transportation district.
- **Respite:** Home Health Aides provide care to individuals in their own homes to allow caregivers time away.

Meals Delivered for HDM	
January	362
February	348
March	469
April	351
May	380
June	374
July	426
August	475
September	391
October	342
November	361
December	347
<b>Total</b>	<b>4626</b>

## 2023 Home Health Visits



Homemakers and Home Health Aides may make multiple visits per month to each client. Additionally, Home Health also offers periodic toenail clinics in Glendive and Richey and SAIL (Stay Active and Independent for Life) classes.

# Community Engagement

## Health Promotion

As part of the vision to protect, promote, and enhance the health and well-being of all people, DCHD offers hypertension classes, dementia classes and a SAIL program to help community members learn more about their own health status and take control of their health.

DCHD coordinates the annual Dawson County Health Fair Blood Draws. DCHD offers Health Fair Blood Draws any time during the year. **Clients can call and schedule an appointment and get the low \$45 cost twice a year at their convenience. Clients can pick up their results within a week.** They can deliver results themselves to a doctor of choice and play a more active role in their own health maintenance. Labs offered include a Lipid Panel, Complete Blood Count, Comprehensive Metabolic Panel including Thyroid Stimulating Hormone (TSH) testing. In addition, participants had their choice of having a Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) and a Hemoglobin A1C.

## Community Coalition and Advisory Board Membership

DCHD staff members belong to a wide variety of coalitions, committees, and advisory boards. In this capacity, DCHD is able to work collaboratively with an extensive variety of community agencies and organizations to work for the enhancement of health and well-being in Dawson County.

- Dawson County Healthy Communities Coalition
- Building Active Glendive
- Dawson County Tobacco Use Prevention Coalition
- React—Youth Tobacco Coalition
- Local Emergency Planning Committee
- Unified Health Command
- Child and Family Services Advisory Board
- Sexual Assault Response Team
- Eastern Montana Human Trafficking Task Force

DCHD staff members hold memberships in the following professional associations:

- Association of Montana Public Health Officials
- Montana Public Health Association
- Montana Association of WIC Agencies
- Montana Family Planning Administrators
- National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO)
- National Association of Local Boards of Health (NALBOH)

DCHD staff sit on the following advisory boards:

- Board of Health
- County Council on Aging
- Child Protection Team
- Adult Protection Team
- Dawson County Safety Committee
- Foster Care Review Committee
- Best Beginnings Council
- Dawson County Policy Committee
- Drug Court

***DCHD staff belong to 24 different coalitions, boards, and professional associations, which work collaboratively with other local agencies or under guidance from state and national authorities to improve the health and well-being of Dawson County residents***

## Public Information

DCHD works to provide the community with timely, accurate information on current health issues and events. Outreach efforts include interviews and responses to media inquiries, press releases, regular news articles, advertisements, and social media posts.

### Media Inquiries, Interviews, and Articles

**Sixty two** DCHD-related news stories ran in local newspapers in **2023**. Most of these were submitted to local papers by DCHD staff; others were the result of media inquiries into current topics or events. DCHD provides at least one article a month to the Glendive Ranger Review as part of a partnership with the Dawson County Health Communities Coalition; these are included in the total. Local papers also printed **one** large, captioned photo to report on events sponsored by DCHD. In addition to the print stories, DCHD ran **29** ads in local newspapers to promote programs and activities.

*92 newspaper articles, printed advertisements, and articles in partner newsletters were printed in addition to DCHD's monthly newsletter*

Month	Number of Posts*	Number of People Reached
January	41	3,544
February	48	14,654
March	50	13,109
April	48	19,913
May	72	54,422
June	54	17,428
July	46	17,306
August	43	21,762
September	43	17,276
October	47	16,808
November	43	21,233
December	47	27,073
<b>Total Posts = 583</b>		

\* Posts are made on DCHD social media pages including Facebook and Instagram

## SAFESITTER

Safe Sitter® Essentials with CPR is a 1-day class designed to prepare students in grades 6-8 to be safe when they're home alone, watching younger siblings, or babysitting.

The instructor-led class is filled with fun games and role-playing exercises. Students even get to use manikins to practice rescue skills like choking rescue and CPR!



# Public Health Systems Improvement

In 2015, DCHD received their first Public Health Systems Improvement (PHSI) grant. The PHSI grant allows DCHD to move forward in their mission of promoting and protecting public health through improved workforce development, including staff training; strategic planning; and quality improvement. By addressing each of these issues, DCHD has already identified strengths and areas for improvement, addressed and prioritized long-standing concerns, and improved management processes. Through this, DCHD is able to continue and improve the means of providing high-quality services to our community. Additionally, implementing these plans and policies helps DCHD fulfill the 10 Essential Services (below).

DCHD has completed a Workforce Development Plan, an agency Strategic Plan, a Quality Improvement Plan and a Performance Management System Plan. In 2022, we completed our Community Health Assessment and our Community Health Improvement Plan. Employees are encouraged to work on Quality Improvement Projects. In 2023, two Quality Improvement Projects were completed including Data Loggers and Animal Bite Reporting Updates. We continue to use Electronic Health Records.

## Core Functions and Essential Services

Public health is guided by the ten essential public health services, which are applied to every facet of public health and mirror the statutes guiding public health outlined in Montana Code Annotated 50-1-105. The foundation for public health and the ten essential services lies within the following four core functions.

### Core Function 1—Assessment

**Essential Service 1**—Assess and monitor population health

**Essential Service 2**—Investigate, diagnose, and address health hazards and root causes.

### Core Function 2—Policy Development

**Essential Service 3**—Communicate effectively to inform and educate.

**Essential Service 4**—Strengthen, support, and mobilize communities and partnerships.

**Essential Service 5**—Create champion, and implement policies, plans and laws.

**Essential Service 6**—Utilize legal and regulatory actions.

### Core Function 3—Assurance

**Essential Service 7**—Enable equitable access

**Essential Service 8**—Build a diverse and skilled workforce

**Essential Service 9**—Improve and innovate through evaluation, research, and quality improvement

**Essential Service 10**—Build and maintain a strong organizational infrastructure for public health



# Montana Code Annotated

## Montana Code Annotated 50-1-105. Policy—Purpose

- (1) It is the policy of the state of Montana that the health of the public be protected and promoted to the extent practicable through the public health system while respecting individual rights to dignity, privacy, and nondiscrimination.
- (2) The purpose of Montana's public health system is to provide leadership and to protect and promote the public's health by:
  - (a) promoting conditions in which people can be healthy;
  - (b) providing or promoting the provision of public health services and functions, including:
    - (i) monitoring health status to identify and recommend solutions to community health problems;
    - (ii) investigating and diagnosing health problems and health hazards in the community;
    - (iii) informing and educating individuals about health issues;
    - (iv) coordinating public and private sector collaboration and action to identify and solve health problems;
    - (v) developing policies, plans, and programs that support individual and community health efforts;
    - (vi) implementing and enforcing laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety;
    - (vii) linking individuals to needed personal health services and assisting with needed health care when otherwise unavailable;
    - (viii) to the extent practicable, providing a competent public health workforce;
    - (ix) evaluating effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services; and
    - (x) to the extent that resources are available, conducting research for new insights on and innovative solutions to health problems;
  - (c) encouraging collaboration among public and private sector partners in the public health system;
  - (d) seeking adequate funding and other resources to provide public health services and functions or accomplish public health system goals through public or private sources;
  - (e) striving to ensure that public health services and functions are provided and public health powers are used based upon the best available scientific evidence; and
  - (f) implementing the role of public health services and functions, health promotion, and preventive health services within the state health care system.
- (3) Title 50, chapter 2, and this chapter may not be construed to require an individual or agency within the public health system to provide specific health services or to mandate state public health agencies and local public health agencies to implement unfunded programs.

**History:** En. Sec. 1, Ch. 150, L. 2007.