Partnering for Health:

How Mayors, Local Leaders, and Local Public Health Departments Can Work Together to Promote Health

FOR MAYORS AND LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS

Developing partnerships is critical to improving residents' health and well-being. **Mayors and local health departments have a shared vision of healthy, thriving communities and have much to offer each other as partners.** As agenda setters — with the ability to mobilize local agencies, engage partners, and drive policy — mayors, city councils, and other local leaders are effective change agents and valuable partners for improving public health. Local health departments can provide local leaders with timely, community-specific data and insights into evidence-based policies, programs, and infrastructure changes shown to improve health.

While nearly all local health departments report partnering with hospitals, schools, and non-profits, collaborations with mayors' offices and other government agencies are much less common.[1] **Mayor and local health department partnerships offer an opportunity to maximize the impact of funding by coordinating efforts and leveraging the strengths of both partners.**

"The director of the Health Bureau participates in our regular cabinet meetings, which helps a lot with communication. And, on the other side, helping the director understand that the Health Bureau has the mayor as a tool when it comes to securing funding for things they want to do is helpful and results in successful programs."

Mayor Matt Tuerk
ALLENTOWN, PA

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RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Identify Relevant Contacts

FOR MAYORS

- Some health departments serve a single county, some are operated by state agencies, and local government units operate others. Partnering with your local health department could benefit other government agencies, school districts, parks and recreation, transportation, and other community-based organizations. Encourage cross-government collaboration.
  - ✓ **Use this Directory of Local Health Departments to determine which health department serves your community.**

FOR LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS

- Mayors' and local health departments' jurisdictions may not always align. Research the municipalities in your service area and learn about their leadership structure. Depending on the municipality, the mayor, mayor pro tem, city council president, or other local leader may be the best partner.
  - ✓ **Introduce yourself and offer to serve as an expert in your field.**
  - ✓ **Learn when local elections are happening to keep abreast of leadership changes.**

2. Identify Common Priorities

FOR MAYORS

- One of the primary functions of local health departments is to analyze data to determine the health status of communities and identify residents' pressing health concerns. A community health needs assessment (CHNA) and/or a community health improvement plan (CHIP) could be valuable in understanding your community's priorities.
- As a mayor, you can play a significant role in promoting public health while you advance existing priorities.
  - ✓ **Determine if your community has completed a CHNA or CHIP.**

FOR LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS

- Review the social media pages of mayors (or municipalities) to identify health priorities. Learn what mayors are doing to determine how the local health department can help further their goals.
  - ✓ **Follow mayors (or municipalities) on social media.**
- Listen to what mayors say in the local media or at public events. Use these priority areas to connect and engage in activities to promote the health of residents.
- Consider writing op-eds and blog posts or presenting at forums and conferences attended by local leaders.
- Create a memo with the top three identified health priorities in a CHNA or CHIP and share it with the mayor's office.
- Set up a meeting with the mayor's office to discuss how you can support their health priorities. Cities often include mayors' contact information on their websites.
- Include representatives from the mayor's office to your community health improvement planning process.

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

ATHENS, TENNESSEE, worked with its county health department to develop a community health improvement plan (CHIP) to identify residents' priorities. In addition, their county health department regularly shares data from the county, so the city has an up-to-date understanding of the community's health. Through this work, residents identified walking trails as a priority, which helped lead to the expansion of the local 5.6-mile Eureka Trail. As a result, 220 people participated in a county-wide exercise program as part of Move with the Mayor®, walking 6,639 miles.

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

GLENDALE HEIGHTS, ILLINOIS, invited its county health department to provide services, including blood pressure checks, diabetes screenings, dental screenings, eye exams, and others, during its annual health and safety fair. By sharing resources and knowledge and learning about what each was working on, the mayor's office and the health department enriched the programming offered to residents, allowing better service to the community.

3. Start Small

Developing partnerships takes time. However, there are many ways to support or connect consistently.

- ✓ **Cross-promote events or invite others to participate in your events.**
- ✓ **Plan a one-time event or small project to explore what it is like to work together.**
- ✓ **Ask others to participate in your next health communication campaign.**

FOR MAYORS

- ✓ **Invite your local health department to host free blood pressure or other preventive screenings at your next event.**

- The programs, policies, and infrastructure changes that Move with the Mayor® (MWTM) mayors implement naturally align with offerings provided by health departments, including blood pressure checks and other preventive screenings, diabetes or nutrition education classes, vaccination clinics, and learning collaboratives. However, each health department and its state- and federally-funded programs operate differently. Contact your health department to find out what it is working on.

FOR LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS

- ✓ **Provide clear, easy-to-use resources.**

- Generally, mayors are enthusiastic about partnering with local entities. They appreciate partners providing clear, easy-to-use resources that their offices can rapidly implement.

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

HEALTHY BR is a mayor-led health collaborative in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Since 2012, the city has worked with local hospitals, the Louisiana Department of Health, and other community partners to create and update a joint community health needs assessment and implementation plan for advancing the health priorities of residents. As a result, the city launched programs promoting residents' health, such as Geaux Get Healthy, Family Fitness Rocks, and Move with the Mayor®.

Partner for a Healthier Community

Promoting cross-government collaboration is crucial to enhancing residents' well-being and advancing cities' prosperity.

Take the initiative today! Reach out to potential partners, identify shared priorities, and start small but impactful collaborations. Your proactive engagement can lead to significant improvements and stronger communities.

Don't wait — act now and make a meaningful difference in the lives of residents in your community!

"Our partnership [with our county health department] remains strong because we're all on the same page and we work together to share all of our resources."

Former Mayor Steven Sherlin (2022-2024)
ATHENS, TN

SOURCES

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