Pierce County Local Public Health System Assessment
November 2013

Summary of assessment findings:

Strengths: The Pierce County public health system encompasses a wide web of critical service providers and partners. Overall, Pierce County has a strong, well-connected public health system that includes the local public health agency and numerous community partners.

Currently the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department (Health Department) has close working relationships with health, social service, and other government sectors. There may be additional opportunities to expand partnerships and connections with education, business, media, community advocacy, faith-based groups and other groups to address public health issues.

Challenges: As with other service systems, the public health system in Pierce County has experienced significant impacts due to the economic recession. The Health Department's budget has steadily decreased since 2008, leading to program and staff reductions in all divisions throughout the past five years. Additional reductions are anticipated in 2014. In addition to Health Department impacts, the overall public health system in the county has experienced significant reductions in the availability of health services and social supports during the past several years.

Gaps in the local public health systems:
1. Conducing assessment services
   - The community's ability to conduct thorough assessment services is hampered by the lack of capacity, i.e. necessary staff and resources. There is a need to better obtain, and interpret the data that is collected and better distribute data and findings.
2. Providing health advocacy, education and policy development
   - Pierce County organizations and agencies needs to strengthen their collaboration and public engagement focus. There are opportunities for improved cross-sector coordination, including clearer vision, necessary for large-scale community change.
   - More health literacy and health education is needed. There are opportunities for improved community and policy maker understanding about the changing role of public health and its related impacts.
3. Assurance /Safeguarding the quality of services provided
   - There is a lack of consistent enforcement and excessive and ambiguous codes or difficult rules. There is also a lack of capacity for enforcement.
   - There are a number of barriers that make it difficult to link people to needed services, with lack of providers or services being the top barrier.
   - Workforce development needs to be addressed to assure competent, knowledgeable and experienced providers and offer competitive compensation.
   - There needs to be more research or information about evidence based practices and their impacts.

Purpose

The public health system has the responsibility to protect, promote and improve the health of residents and visitors in the community. A strong public health system is critical to address current and emerging health issues, including public health emergencies—such as disease outbreaks, natural disasters, bioterrorism, and mass casualty events. Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department and community partners conducted a Local Public Health System Assessment to answers the questions, "What agencies, organizations or individuals *are* providing *essential public health services in Pierce County?"* and "*what gaps exist?"*

A Local Public Health System Assessment is one of the four MAPP (Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships) assessments conducted as part of the Community Health Improvement Plan process. This assessment will look at the *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Ten Essential Public Health Services* being provided in Pierce County. This report will complement other assessment reports and will be used as part of the decision-making process regarding strategic health priorities.

Method of obtaining community participation

This assessment was conducted in two parts. First, by inviting Tacoma-Pierce County management staff, as well as Community Health Improvement Plan core partners to a 2 ½ hour brainstorming groups, where they were asked to share their knowledge of the Pierce County public health system in a series of 10-30 minute facilitated sessions (each individual attended 3 random groups). In addition, attendees were asked to complete an on-line survey about the 10 essential public health services (see below).

Findings

The 10 Essential Public Health Services describe the public health activities that all communities should undertake. These services fall within the main functions of public health, which are Assessment, Policy Development and Assurance. The public health services in Pierce County were assessed for challenges, committed resources and gaps. The findings are presented by function and those services that fall within the function areas. Data is from both the survey and the assessment sessions and is presented within each of the main public health functions.

ASSESSMENT

Essential services are:
1. Monitor health status to identify and solve community health problems.
2. Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards in the community.

Table 1a: Survey results for monitoring health status

Status	Action needed	*% of responses
Challenge	**Requires increased activity**	**50.0%**
Challenge	Requires increased coordination	37.5%
Success	Maintain effort	37.5%
Success	Cut back resource	0%

Table 1b: Survey results for diagnosing and investigation health problems

Status	Action needed	*% of responses
Challenge	**Requires increased activity**	**75.0%**
Challenge	Requires increased coordination	12.5%
Success	Maintain effort	12.5%
Success	Cut back resource	12.5%

Survey participants could choose multiple answers for each essential service, therefore the percentage of responses for each service area will more than 100%.

Organizations that are addressing assessment in Pierce County:

Monitor Health Status
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Washington State Departments of Health and Social and Health Services
- Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department
- US Military Public Health Command/Public Health Corps/Madigan Health System
- Pierce County criminal justice systems (jails, courts and law enforcement agencies)
- Puyallup Tribal Health Authority
- OptumHealth (Pierce County RSN provider for mental health services)
- Local providers
- Health care systems (Franciscan, MultiCare and Group Health Cooperative)
- Schools, local colleges and universities (University of Washington School of Public Health, University of Washington—Tacoma, Evergreen State University, Pacific Lutheran University)
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation – County Health Rankings
- United Way of Pierce County

Diagnose and investigate health problems (in addition to the above organizations)
- Animal borne illness/disease authorities
- Washington State Environmental Public Health and the Departments of Fish and Wildlife, and Ecology
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Planned Parenthood
- City code enforcement
- Asarco Smelter Enforcement/Cleanup
- American Lung and Heart Associations ; American Cancer Society

Gaps (challenges) with providing assessment services in Pierce County:
- Not enough capacity (staff and resources) for organizations doing assessment work
- Distribution of information: data and information are not reaching every population
- It is difficult to get local-level (city and community) data and population specific data
- Data can be difficult to interpret and needs to be timely
- Distrust of government agencies providing the data
- Knowing the impact and cost benefits for evidence-based programs
- Mental illness health service providers
- Environmental health and its impact on persons, e.g., toxics
- Emerging disease, coming/new diseases, ex. paralytic shellfish poisoning
- Shifting priorities/funding
- Coordination at the local – county or county – state levels
- Language, culture, trust barriers when it comes to disease investigation

I.   **POLICY DEVELOPMENT**
Essential services are:
3. Inform, educate, and empower people about health issues.
4. Mobilize community partnerships and action to identify and solve health problems.
5. Develop policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts.

Table 2a: Survey results for informing, educating, and empowering people

Status	Action needed	*% of responses
Challenge	**Requires increased activity**	**66.7%**
Challenge	Requires increased coordination	44.4%
Success	Maintain effort	22.2%
Success	Cut back resource	0%

Table 2b: Survey results for mobilizing community partnerships

Status	Action needed	*% of responses
Challenge	Requires increased activity	33.3%
Challenge	**Requires increased coordination**	**77.8%**
Success	Maintain effort	33.3%
Success	Cut back resource	0%

Table 2c: Survey results for develop policies and plans

Status	Action needed	*% of responses
Challenge	**Requires increased activity**	**55.6%**
Challenge	Requires increased coordination	44.4%

Success	Maintain effort	33.3%
Success	Cut back resource	0%

<u>Organizations that are providing health education, advocacy and policy development:</u>

Inform, educate, and empower

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department
- Pierce County Board of Health
- City of Tacoma
- United Way of Pierce County
- Puyallup Tribe/Tribal Health
- Health care systems (Franciscan, MultiCare and Group Health Cooperative)
- Community centers and senior centers
- Community Health Advocates
- Community health workers/patient navigators
- Local providers
- Family Support Centers
- Schools (private and public) and early childhood education
- YMCA of Tacoma-Pierce County
- Boys and Girls Clubs
- Washington State Health Plan Finder
- Community coalitions
- Child Find/Child Reach
- Churches/religious community (e.g., Black Infant Health, Catholic Community Services, parish nurses)
- First responders – police, fire and rescue, and emergency medical technicians
- For profits (Walgreens, pharmacies, etc.)
- Washington State Departments of Social and Health Services, Health, Education, Transportation, Fish and Wildlife
- Center for Medical Services
- Military- Joint Base Lewis-McChord
- Women, Infant and Children Nutrition Program
- Project Homeless Connect
- Together We Care
- Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered focus: iFLAG and Rainbow/OASIS
- Foster parents
- Libraries
- Community clubs (e.g., Lions Club, Mustard Seed, Kiwanis, Rotary)
- Educating providers on finding disease

Mobilize

- Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department
- Non-profits
- YMCA of Tacoma-Pierce County
- Safe Streets
- Schools (private and public) and early childhood education
- Health care systems (Franciscan, MultiCare and Group Health Cooperative)
- Community Health Education Foundation
- Community Councils (e.g., watershed) and community development orgs (e.g., MDC)

- Cross-Cultural Collaborative of Pierce County
- Business districts (e.g., safety or health issues, AIA zones)
- American Lung and Heart Associations and the American Cancer Society
- Black Collective
- Churches/religious community (e.g., Black Infant Health, Catholic Community Services, parish nurses)
- Milgard Breast Center (African American health disparities)
- Tacoma business leaders
- Project Homeless Connect

Develop policies and plans
- Washington State Legislature
- Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department
- Pierce County Board of Health
- City of Tacoma/Town and city planners/ City leaders and metro parks/park districts
- Health care systems (Franciscan, MultiCare and Group Health Cooperative)
- Washington State Departments of Social and Health Services, Health, Ecology, Education, Transportation, and Fish and Wildlife
- University of Washington-Tacoma and other academic institutions
- Community Health Advocates
- Non-profits (strategic plans)
- Military- Joint Base Lewis-McChord
- Private industry/business
- Plans and policies are not easily accessible (and understandable) to the public

Gaps (challenges) with conducting health education, advocacy and policy development:
- Lack of coordination/cooperation among entities; no clear vision/goal
- Engaging people in identifying problems and finding solutions/don't involve those who are impacted (e.g., residents, businesses, tribes)
- People are "aging out" – need to engage next generation
- Growing transit communities
- Shortage of drug treatment providers
- Lack of public transportation, especially east of Tacoma Narrows Bridge
- Housing for homeless
- Internet access providers
- Distribution of information: not reaching the right populations
- Lack of community understanding about Key public health issues: Adverse Childhood Experiences, social determinants of health, Affordable Care Act (i.e. eligibility, rights, roles, etc.)
- Importance of population-based approaches
- Growth Management Act/Built environments updates
- General public health and why it matters education, including public health prevention (e.g., immunizations and fluoridation)

II.   ASSURANCE
Essential services:
6. Enforce laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety.

7. Link people to needed personal health services and assure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable.
8. Assure competent public and personal health care workforce.
9. Evaluate effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and public health services.
10. Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems.

Table 3a: Survey results for enforcing laws and regulations

Status	Action needed	*% of responses
Challenge	Requires increased activity	33.3%
Challenge	Requires increased coordination	33.3%
Success	**Maintain effort**	**66.7%**
Success	Cut back resource	0%

Table 3b: Survey results for linking people to health services

Status	Action needed	*% of responses
Challenge	Requires increased activity	50.0%
Challenge	Requires increased coordination	25.0%
Success	**Maintain effort**	**62.5%**
Success	Cut back resource	0%

Table 3c: Survey results for assuring a competent workforce

Status	Action needed	*% of responses
Challenge	**Requires increased activity**	**50.0%**
Challenge	Requires increased coordination	25.0%
Success	**Maintain effort**	**50.0%**
Success	Cut back resource	0%

Table 3d: Survey results for evaluating personal and health services

Status	Action needed	*% of responses
Challenge	**Requires increased activity**	**62.5%**
Challenge	Requires increased coordination	50.0%
Success	Maintain effort	25.0%
Success	Cut back resource	0%

Table 3e: Survey results for diagnosing and investigation health problems

Status	Action needed	% of responses
Challenge	**Requires increased activity**	**62.5%**
Challenge	Requires increased coordination	37.5%
Success	Maintain effort	25.0%
Success	Cut back resource	0%

Organizations that are focusing on assurance services in Pierce County:
Enforce laws and regulations TPCHD
- Police departments/law enforcement/courts
- Code enforcement (all agencies)
- Washington State Departments of Ecology, Health, Licensing, Social and Health Services
- Washington State Liquor Control Board
- Schools
- Environmental Protection Agency /Clean Air Agency

- U.S. Military (Coast Guard, JBLM, Army Corps of Engineers)
- U.S. Departments of: Food and Drug Administration, Drug Enforcement Agency and the Departments of Agriculture and Interior
- Home owners associations
- Port of Tacoma
- Metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs)
- Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations for hospitals
- Private business
- Tribal enforcement
- Local housing authorities
- Fire department

Link people to needed services/resources
- Federally Qualified Health Care (e.g., SeaMar, Community Health Care)
- In-person assisters for Affordable Health Care Act roll-out (nine local agencies trained in program)
- Case managers (all organizations)
- Pierce County AIDS Foundation
- Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department
- 2-1-1 (United Way of Pierce County)
- Hotlines (hospitals, insurance companies)
- Schools and school nurse
- Korean Women's Association
- Women of color
- Making a Difference in Communities (including health care for the homeless)
- Free clinics (Rotocare, Project Access, Pierce County Medical Society, and Trinity)
- Key Peninsula Free Clinic
- ABCD Program (children's oral health)
- School-based programs
- Medical Teams International
- Health care systems (Franciscan, MultiCare and Group Health Cooperative)
- Uncompensated Care
- Pierce County Dental Society
- OPTUM
- Comprehensive Life Resources
- Food banks
- Seattle Archbishop

Assure competent workforce
- Higher education: University of Washington, schools of nursing, medical centers, urban studies programs, internships, cross-training w/planning schools
- Accreditation boards for nursing, sanitarians, medicine, etc.
- American Planning Association
- Public/private high schools
- Social work schools
- Northwest Center for Public Health Practice (UW School of Public Health)
- Washington Public Health Association
- Washington Environmental Health Association
- Washington State Department of Health (e.g., diversity training)
- Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department – public health in general

- Hospitals (e.g., MultiCare's nurse camps, health care professionals)
- Chemical dependency
- Curry Center (Tuberculosis raining)
- Medical Explorers program
- Medical Reserve Corps
- TRAIN (local government network of training opportunities)
- Local emergency agencies (e.g., FEMA)

Evaluate
- Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department – public health in general
- Washington State Departments of Health, and Social and Health Services
- Health care systems (Franciscan, MultiCare and Group Health Cooperative)
- Local colleges
- U.S. Military

Research
- Universities/colleges - University of Washington (UW) Northwest Center for Public Health Practice and School of Public Health, School of Nursing, and Urban Studies
- Drug companies
- Research programs in larger health care systems (e.g., MultiCare and Group Health Cooperative)
- Foundations
- Public Health - Seattle and King County and Washington State Public Health Practice-Based Research Network
- Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center
- Washington State University- extension (zoonotics)
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Point Defiance AIDS Project (at least in the past)

Gaps and challenges with conducting assurance services in Pierce County:
Enforce laws and regulations
- Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department
- Barriers (costs to follow regulations)
- Funding and resources
- Lack of uniformity (ex. City vs. county)
- Lack of citizen involvement
- Culture and language gaps
- Differences how large hospitals enforce vs. smaller providers
- Businesses enforce differently
- Public education/will
- Poorly written/ ambiguous codes and regulations
- Multiple regulations (ex. farmers)
- Regulators
- Border areas are ripe for crime (ex. 2 jurisdictions)

Link people to needed services/resources
- Adult vaccines (low-income population)
- Specialty care for uninsured (ex. Chronic viral hepatitis)
- Adult dental coverage
- Fluoridation
- School-based clinics (lacking at high schools)

- Language/culture (ex. lack of medical interpreters)
- Lack of resources and services
- Provider shortage- mental health
- Dentists who take Provider 1
- Gap in coordination of care for chronic disease

Assure competent workforce
- Entry points with people who have limited knowledge and experience
- Salaries are too low, experienced nurses can make more in hospitals
- Discrepancies with experience needs
- Limited entry points for public health nurses
- Lack of time to take on people to mentor (willingness) – Capacity?
- Health informatics

Evaluate
- Less effective information, especially around various populations
- Impact of emerging issues (ex. emergency preparedness and climates change)
- Timeliness
- Cost benefit of using evidence-based programs

Research
- Performance measurement for communicable disease programs (ex. new antibiotics for drug resistant diseases, especially Tuberculosis)
- New and improved vaccines
- Lack of ability to be able to generalize research in built environment and prevent lack of/gap in
- Common distribution of info/data to us
- Comparing impact/outcomes of different public health intervention (ex. communicable disease investigation) – need to look at this holistically
- Research that concludes what the best practices are
- Communication of research, findings (don't publish good findings)
- Not enough screening for disease investigation (ex. symptomatic HIV/STDs)

Other public health systems information
Additional information was gathered if readily available and included within this report.

I. In 2013, The Pierce County Board of Health began a process to collectively identify their public health priorities for the Health Department for 2014 and beyond. They bring years of public health policy experience and the voices of their constituents to the process. Their goal is to better align the Board of Health's priorities with the priorities of the Health Department and of the community.

II. Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department developed a descriptive list of their programs, which has been added to the end of this report. This list can be used as an inventory for those local public health programs addressing the 10 essential public health services.

Program Descriptions

🏛 *Legally mandated*   👥 *Population-based*

🤝 *Direct service*   🎯 *Evidence-based*

Tacoma-Pierce County
Health Department
Healthy People in Healthy Communities

Environmental Health Programs

Air Quality

🏛 👥 Provides education and resources to improve air quality and reduce associated health impacts such as respiratory illness and heart disease. Works with community partners to promote health and economic benefits such as removing uncertified woodstoves, increasing burn ban compliance and best-practice asthma education.

Built Environment

🏛 👥 Provides guidance to local and regional agencies and organizations to plan and build healthier communities. Works with municipalities to integrate health priorities into comprehensive plans using planning policies and tools that improve health equity, safety, air quality, water quality and access to opportunities for physical activity, healthy eating and social cohesion.

Drinking Water

🏛 👥 Ensures safe and reliable drinking water through the regulation of public water systems. Determines water systems' ability to provide adequate water supply for land use development and building permits. Works with the Washington State Department of Health, Regional Water Association, municipalities and private water companies to monitor water quality and minimize water borne illnesses.

Food Safety

🏛 👥 Minimizes the public health risks from food borne illness through inspections, consultations and public education.

Meth Lab Remediation

🏛 Investigates and administers clean-up of drug lab contaminated properties.

On-Site Sewage Systems

🏛 👥 Enhances the investigation, data management and operation of on-site septic systems within the Marine Recovery Area of Pierce County to protect shellfish growing areas.

Physical Activity and Nutrition

👥 🎯* Improves children's health through Healthy Schools Grants, which help schools implement physical activity, nutrition and/or tobacco prevention policies and changes to establish lifelong healthy behaviors. School Nutrition effort provides school districts and nutrition directors with technical assistance to help implement the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act.

Pool Safety

🏛 👥 Minimizes the public health risks from water borne illness through inspections, consultations and public education.

Shellfish Area Protection

🏛 👥 🤝 Investigates, monitors and assists in the elimination of contamination of commercial and recreational shellfish harvesting areas.

Program Descriptions

🏛 *Legally mandated*

🤝 *Direct service*

👥 *Population-based*

🎯 *Evidence-based*

Tacoma-Pierce County
Health Department
Healthy People in Healthy Communities

Solid Waste	
🏛 👥 🎯	Works to reduce/eliminate environmental and community impacts of solid waste facilities (landfills, composters, recyclers, etc) through the application of state, county, and Board of Health regulations. Monitors the design, construction and operation of these facilities.
Tobacco	
🏛 👥	Works to reduce youth initiation of tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke and associated health impacts such as respiratory illnesses, heart disease, and lung cancer. Smoke-Free Housing works with property owners/managers to adopt non-smoking policies. Curricula, media campaign, youth leadership and policy review help prevent 12-15 year olds from initiating tobacco use. Both strategies provide health and economic benefits to individuals, families and communities.
Toxic Algae Monitoring	
👥	Investigates, monitors and posts warning signs for toxic algae present in Pierce County's lakes and surface waters.

Strengthening Families Programs

Alcohol Misuse	
👥 🎯	Works with local community coalitions to coordinate services and community efforts around teen alcohol prevention.
Comprehensive Community Oral Health Program	
👥 🤝	Aligns opportunities to address oral health through school-based programs, obesity intervention, Access to Baby and Child Dentistry (ABCD) and promotes community readiness for fluoridation efforts.
Family Support Partnership/Family Support Centers	
🎯 🤝	Provides home visiting services and center-based services to high-risk families, connects families to services, and provides parenting classes to improve the outcomes for children, birth through eight years old, throughout Pierce County.
Maternal Child Health Community Programs	
👥 🤝	**Maternal Child Outreach Team**—Provides outreach activities to high-risk maternity clients to reduce infant mortality. **Black Infant Health**—Works with African American churches to provide pregnant women outreach and referral to First Steps services and social support to increase healthy births. **Community Coalitions**—Works with local community coalitions to coordinate services and community efforts around health.
MOMS (Maternal Outpatient Management and Support) and Women's Recovery	
🤝	Provides outpatient chemical dependency treatment services for women dealing with substance abuse, with an emphasis on pregnant and post partum individuals. Childcare Program provides childcare for children of MOMS and other treatment agencies' clients.

Program Descriptions

🏛 *Legally mandated*　　　🧑‍🤝‍🧑 *Population-based*

🤝 *Direct service*　　　🎯 *Evidence-based*

**Tacoma-Pierce County
Health Department**
Healthy People in Healthy Communities

Nursing Services
🎯* 🤝 **Nurse Family Partnership**—Provides home visiting services to high-risk maternity clients.*   **Children with Special Healthcare Needs**—Provides case management, care coordination and referral to community-based programs.   **Maternity Support Services**—Helps low-income pregnant women get the services they need to be a healthy mother with a healthy baby.   **Maternal and Child Health**—Provides nurse home visit services and support to improve the outcomes for young children.   **Early Intervention Program**—Home visit services and support for Child Protective Services (CPS) referred children with health and/or child development concerns.

Title XIX Medicaid Administrative Match Coordination
Provides department-wide coordination for revenue generating Title XIX Medicaid Administrative Match activities (i.e., training, code review, monitoring, organizing, coordinating, executing and evaluating the activities of the programs).

Administration Programs

Assessment and Evaluation
🧑‍🤝‍🧑 Provides data analysis, health indicators and community assessment services for Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department programs and community partners for grant development and health services planning. Enables programs and community partners to measure effectiveness of programs and program outcomes. Includes advanced statistical analysis, survey development, data mapping, evaluation design and focus group facilitation.

Cross-Functional Programs

School Health Improvement
🧑‍🤝‍🧑 Works to ensure all the services Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department provides to schools are coordinated, efficient and effective. Works with schools to improve collaboration and communication and ensure access to individual services such as family support centers and population-based services such as nutrition policy support.

Community Health Improvement Plan
🧑‍🤝‍🧑 A community-based planning process that engages multiple partners to 1) assess Pierce County's health needs, strengths/assets and gaps in public health services and programs, and 2) use these community assessments to collaboratively set health priorities and address key public health problems throughout the county. This effort is a requirement for public health accreditation.

Comprehensive Community Oral Health Plan
🧑‍🤝‍🧑 🎯 🤝 Oral health is fundamental to maintaining good overall health and quality of life. This county-wide plan seeks to meet the oral health needs of Pierce County children and adults in three major ways: continue current service delivery systems, build capacity through collaboration and develop policies to improve oral health.

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