



Minnesota Local Public Health Response to COVID-19

Responding to disasters and emergencies is a core responsibility of Minnesota's local public health departments. Listed below are some examples of how local public health agencies are currently investing resources to respond to and mitigate the risks associated with COVID-19.

- **Incident Command** – Local public health agencies throughout the state are leading their incident command (IC) structures to respond to COVID-19. They hold regular (often daily) meetings with their IC staff and internal partners such as Emergency Management, Sheriff's Office, Risk Management, and Communications. This allows for situational monitoring, planning and development of policies. IC oversees locating alternate care sites, planning for fatality management, writing sick protocols and ensuring continuity of operations. These structures also enable regular communication and support for nursing homes, congregate living facilities, hospitals and other partners.
- **Community Engagement** – Local agencies have long standing relationships in their communities that are more important now than ever. Local health departments are leading on education, working to understand people's basic needs, and engaging in regular outreach to organizations and groups including churches, congregate living facilities, people experiencing homelessness, seniors, and communities of color including American Indians.
- **Supporting Mental Well Being** – Local agencies regularly work to support mental well-being in their communities. Agencies are setting up mental wellbeing teams or working through existing programs to understand how various populations are dealing with COVID-19 and developing messages to respond. Many are also coordinating with various parts of local government to provide programs and grant funding, so services continue in the community.
- **Communications**– Local agencies are tasked with sharing accurate information both internally and with external partners including long term care, congregate living facilities, media and constituents. They are active members of their regional healthcare coalitions and communicate regularly with local healthcare providers. Many agencies have launched local COVID-19 hotlines to connect constituents with accurate information and local resources. They also work and coordinate daily with state agencies including the Departments of Health.
- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** – Many agencies have small stockpiles of some PPE that are being depleted quickly, and this will continue in the event of a longer-term response. Local agencies are inventorying their equipment and making it available to health care workers and other critical employees as available. They are diligently seeking out new and creative ways to secure personal protective equipment and other supplies.
- **Epidemiological Surveillance** – Local agencies can and often do play a critical role in case investigation and contact tracing with those who have or been exposed to COVID-19. Furthermore, they are tracking and reporting where case outbreaks are happening to understand how the virus is traveling and who is impacted.
- **Addressing Health Disparities** – Agencies focus on applying an equity lens to ensure disparities are not created or exacerbated and play a key role in collecting and framing data to ensure a recovery that lifts everyone up.
- **Quarantine** – Quarantine and isolation are key tools to preventing the spread of COVID-19. Local agencies oversee, regularly communicate, and provide resources to those who are in quarantine. Agencies locate alternate housing and provide guidance to shelters on how to best protect residents. For those who are in quarantine, agencies assist with basic needs such as home food delivery and prescription delivery.
- **Continuing Services** – Local health departments are exploring innovative ways to continue services in an era of social distancing. Agencies are working to ramp up telehealth options for new moms and their babies, Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) programs, and MNCHOICES or LTCC assessments for seniors. Ensuring continued access to these programs keeps families safe, healthy and fed.
- **Testing** – As testing for COVID-19 ramps up, local public health can play a key role in setting up testing sites, administering tests, and notifying individuals of their test results.
- **Vaccinations** - Although a vaccine is still in its development phase, once a vaccine is available, public health will organize mass vaccination campaigns.



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About the Local Public Health Association of Minnesota

The Local Public Health Association of Minnesota (LPHA) is a voluntary, non-profit organization that works to achieve a strong local public health system through leadership and collective advocacy on behalf of Minnesota's county, city and tribal local public health departments. The Association represents more than 230 public health directors, supervisors and community health services administrators throughout the state. LPHA is an affiliate of the Association of Minnesota Counties.