

Strategic Plan

2022 - 2026

Background

The Philadelphia Department of Public Health has just come through a tumultuous period that has put tremendous pressure on our staff, resulted in substantial turnover of our leaders and managers, but also allowed – maybe even forced – us to create new relationships with community partners and new ways of doing things that can make us stronger and more effective in the future. This new strategic plan reflects the input of staff at all levels as well as community members and partners who have helped us to better understand what is working well and what we need to do differently. [As is true in health departments across the country](#), many of our staff members are exhausted, burnout is common, and many do not see avenues for professional development and advancement within the department. And yet our staff is also proud of the work they do and committed to public health in Philadelphia. This strategic plan is designed to look internally as well as externally, to understand and plan for ways to improve workforce wellbeing and to support the professional development needs of our staff as well as how we can do our public health work more effectively to address the numerous pressing public health problems in our city. This dual approach is much needed if we are to build a stronger, more resilient, and even more effective department and to better support our staff to grow and develop. It is informed by the results of our [community health needs assessment \(CHNA\)](#), by an all-staff survey, by a [community health improvement plan \(CHIP\)](#) process, by a SWOC analysis (strengths/weaknesses/opportunities/challenges) of our community stakeholders, and by the results of staff focus groups. One highlight of the feedback from community partners was their appreciation for the dedication, professionalism, and the heart PDPH staff put into their work. We have a great deal of work to do as a department, but we have amazing staff who continue to work to improve the health of our city every day.

What We Have Learned

Through the strategic planning process and the input from internal and external stakeholders, we have heard many valuable lessons. Please see the appendices for full details.

Highlights:

- Our staff are our greatest strength. Their commitment, expertise, and dedication are widely recognized. But they are exhausted, underpaid, overworked, and in need of opportunities for professional development, tracks for advancement, and better internal communications.
- Understaffing is becoming a critical problem across the department. We must come up with effective strategies to attract and retain qualified staff and we need to create pipelines to help us attract staff from communities in the city that are not yet well represented among our workforce.
- Community partners recognize the department's commitment to equity but need to hear more from us through improved communication and by addressing silos in the ways that we interact with partners. We cannot do our work well without the input and understanding we gain from community members, both because we need their trust to do our work and because their grounded experience can help us to develop more effective strategies.
- The COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent MPOX outbreak have taught us lessons about preparedness for future public health emergencies that offer an opportunity and a challenge to use them to ensure we are ready to respond to future emergencies in ways that will protect all Philadelphians, particularly those who have experienced the worst impacts from these infections. We must center equity and true community engagement in this work.
- Disparities in access to healthcare continue to impact the health of many Philadelphians, particularly those who lack health insurance and those who have Medicaid. PDPH must expand the number of health centers to eliminate lengthy wait times and invest in much needed repairs to those that need them to ensure that city residents have access to healthcare services both now and during a future public health emergency.

Mission

The mission of the Department of Public Health is to protect and promote the health of all Philadelphians and to provide a safety net for people who are disproportionately impacted by societal factors that limit their access to healthcare and other resources necessary for optimal health.

Vision

Our vision is of a city in which every resident is able to:

- Live a long, healthy and productive life;
- Be free of preventable disease; and
- Live, work, learn, and play in safe environments that promote health.

Guiding Principles

- **Equity:** We promote equity and eliminate disparities in health, including those related to race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, immigration status, language, and disability.
- **Evidence:** We develop programs and policies based on the best available science, evaluate them rigorously, and share knowledge broadly within Philadelphia and across the country.
- **Impact:** We implement policy, systems, and environmental changes that help to make the healthy choice the easy choice for all Philadelphians.
- **Professionalism:** We maintain a diverse, well-trained, professional workforce and provide high-quality, consistent services.
- **Collaboration:** We foster partnerships with agencies and individuals inside and outside of government to promote the public's health.

Values

We believe:

- All people should live to their fullest potential in environments that allow them to grow and thrive.
- Progress only happens when we treat all people, communities, partners, and staff with dignity, care, and respect.
- Good government works in full partnership with community.
- Knowledge comes in many forms and from many places in our society.

Strategic Priorities

1. Center equity throughout our work
2. Improve workplace wellbeing through implementation of the [Surgeon General's Framework for Workplace Mental Health and Well-Being](#)
3. Focus on strategies to ease administrative barriers to day-to-day operations within the department and enhance teamwork across divisions
4. Prepare for future public health emergencies (CHIP priority)
5. Improve the health of Philadelphia's children
6. Ensure that all Philadelphians have access to primary care (CHIP priority)
7. Use data informed strategies to inform our approach to the major causes of early death and disability (includes CHIP priority related to gun violence prevention)
8. Achieve accreditation of and build public trust in our Medical Examiner's Office

Strategic Priority #1: Center equity in all our work

PDPH has made a commitment to center equity throughout our work, understanding that virtually every public health problem will be disproportionately experienced by groups subject to historic and present-day racism and other forms of discrimination. We are conceptualizing equity to include 5 foundational components:

- a.** Community Engagement
- b.** Data Equity
- c.** Workforce Development
- d.** Communications
- e.** Public Health Ethics

OBJECTIVES

By December 31, 2023, we will:

- Create and implement a Health Equity Plan that connects across all divisions and programs and includes both internal strategies related to our workforce diversity and well-being and external strategies addressing our public health goals and strategies
- Regularly convene and consult with our internal Health Equity Council and our External Health Equity Committee, adding representation from groups not yet included, ensuring that we have mechanisms to quickly hear from community leaders and groups about public health problems that impact their members and can incorporate their expertise into our planning and programs
- Review our performance metrics and other publicly reported data and reports to ensure that they meet the goals of an [equity-centered data system](#)

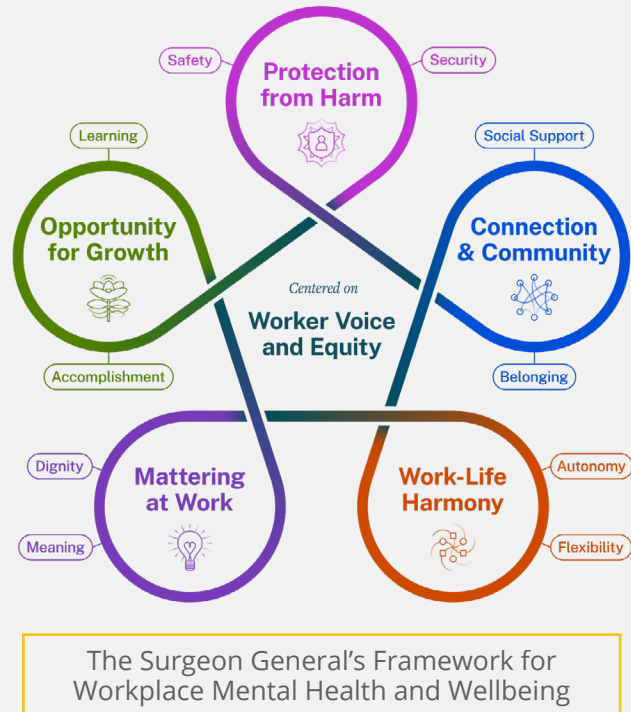
Strategic Priority #2:

Improve workplace wellbeing and staffing levels

OBJECTIVES

By December 31, 2023, we will:

- Utilize our new CDC Workforce grant to provide support for professional development for staff through creation of a menu of training options in partnership with local academic institutions
- Create formal mentorship programs within the department
- Create leadership training programs within the department to help strengthen the skills of managers and supervisors
- Improve internal communications through use of internal newsletters, town halls, and other strategies to decrease silos, build pride across the department in our collective work and help us all to achieve a fuller understanding of the work done across the department
- Add a Health Fiscal Trainer to ensure that new fiscal staff have the support they need to learn and succeed in their positions
- Add a Workforce Director position, funded through the CDC Workforce Grant, who will work across civil service and contract staff positions, helping to implement strategies to improve staff well-being, improve conditions for our staff, and facilitate movement of contract staff into civil service positions where feasible
- Repeat our all-staff survey to assess progress and identify areas in need of improvement
- Restart Public Health 101 training for new PDPH staff



Strategic Priority #3:

Focus on strategies to ease administrative barriers to day-to-day operations within the department and enhance teamwork across divisions

- Work across divisions to identify barriers to smooth operations; conduct problem-solving sessions across divisions to strategize potential solutions followed by PDSA cycles to identify and implement effective strategies.
- Identify opportunities for synergy to avoid duplicative work
- Identify opportunities for shared work across divisions including both public health goals and processes
- Create opportunities for staff to spend time working with another division to improve teamwork across divisions and enhance cross-pollination of ideas

Strategic Priority #4:

Prepare for future public health emergencies with a focus on equity

(see also PDPH Community Health Improvement Plan)

By December 31, 2023, we will:

- Develop and implement a comprehensive outreach strategy that focuses on engaging community-based partners, incorporating community input in planning, response and outreach activities, and promoting health equity for our Disease Control/Preparedness work
- Create a PDPH Emergency Response Corps made up of PDPH staff across divisions who will receive additional training to enable them to be ready to respond to public health emergencies
- In partnership with community organizations, integrate strategies for people with disabilities in all emergency response plans.
- Work with partners across the city to create a plan for a health response to large-scale displaced person events
- Update emergency response plans to include best practices and lessons learned from recent responses, including COVID-19, the Mpox outbreak, and displaced person events
- Create brief, concise documents for department leadership on the immediate response needed for potential public health emergencies along with public health communications messages that can be prepared and translated in case they are needed.
- Achieve Laboratory Response Network (LRN) status for the PDPH Public Health Laboratory and relocate the lab to a new state of the art facility to support future testing services including those needed in public health emergencies

Strategic Priority #5:

Address the environmental factors impacting the health of Philadelphia’s children

By December 31, 2023, we will:

- Complete a home visit including education, environmental assessment, and assistance with remediation for 75% of children with a lead level of 3.5 mcg/dL or higher
- Pass a regulation to limit Air Toxics (Hazardous Air Pollutants) to improve outdoor air quality
- Work with stakeholders across the city to create and implement a plan to address childhood asthma in Philadelphia
- Work with stakeholders across the city to create and implement a plan to address tobacco use during pregnancy and during the first year post-partum

Strategic Priority #6:

Ensure that all Philadelphians have access to primary care

(see also PDPH Community Health Improvement Plan)

By December 31, 2023, we will:

- Commit to sites for building 2 additional health centers to address the long-standing lengthy wait times and lack of safety net clinics in the lower Northeast
- Conduct health center repairs and renovations to make existing facilities welcoming to patients, avoid unplanned closures due to systems failures, and allow for expansion of services
- Decrease the vacancy rate for staff positions at the city health centers from 26% to below 10%
- Continue dissemination of the [Primary Care Finder](#) through 311 and community partners

Strategic Priority #7:

Use data informed strategies to inform our work on major causes of early death and disability

By December 31, 2023, we will:

- **Gun violence** (see also PDPH Community Health Improvement Plan):
 - Create a non-fatal shooting review to complement and expand learning and recommendations from the Homicide Death Review team, a cross departmental team convened by PDPH, and ensure community awareness of this process
 - Hire a social worker to expand grief counseling options for families of victims of gun violence
 - Expand the injury prevention dashboard to include an asset map with a wide range of injury prevention assets and resources by place.
- **Overdose deaths:**
 - Reduce the number of stimulant-involved overdoses by 20% through community outreach and education focused on the risk of fentanyl contamination in stimulants and measures to reduce risk (distribution of and education about fentanyl test strips and naloxone, avoiding use alone)
- **Heart disease/cancer:**
 - Reduce adult smoking rate from 16% to 14% through a combination of policy, environmental, and systems approaches
 - Work with stakeholders across the city to create and implement a plan to address tobacco use during pregnancy and during the first year post-partum (as above)
 - Work with other city departments and agencies to decrease the number of city residences without access to running water by at least 50% by ensuring that public health expertise and evidence inform the City's water shutoff and affordability policy and expand community outreach through our CDC-funded Community Health Workers to help Philadelphians avoid water shutoffs, including by enrolling in customer assistance programs.
- **Maternal Mortality:**
 - Develop a surveillance system for maternal morbidity and then discuss cases as part of the Maternal Mortality Review Committee

- **Ending the HIV Epidemic:**

- Diagnose all Philadelphians with HIV as early as possible with a goal of 97% of Philadelphians living with HIV knowing their status by 2025.
- Treat people with HIV quickly and effectively with a goal of 95% of Philadelphians living with HIV on effective HIV treatment by 2025.
- Prevent new transmissions by promoting pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), non-occupational post-exposure prophylaxis (nPEP), and syringe service programs with a goal of 50% of Philadelphians with a PrEP indication on PrEP, and 100% of Philadelphians seeking nPEP and syringe services able to receive these services by 2025.
- Respond quickly to all HIV outbreaks in Philadelphia.

Strategic Priority #8:

Achieve accreditation by 2025 and build public trust in our Medical Examiner's Office

- Decrease the vacancy rate for staff positions in the MEO from 14% to below 10%
- Add 22 additional positions to meet current needs of the office, which have increased due to the high number of overdose and homicide deaths in the city
- Create written policies and procedures for the office
- Create a brochure and website page that explains MEO procedures in language accessible to the public

Performance Management in Strategic Planning

To track progress on strategic priorities, strategic objectives are aligned with the Department's performance management system (PMS). The PMS includes divisional performance metrics that are aligned with departmental goals. These performance metrics are reviewed quarterly in meetings with the Health Commissioner, Deputy Commissioners, and Division Directors to determine progress and assess the need for quality improvement efforts to meet intended goals.

The Strategic Plan consists of short-term and long-term goals, the nature and timing of which are evaluated for revision as needed throughout the Strategic Plan's effective period. The department issues annual progress reports on the Strategic Plan to ensure transparency in our efforts to make progress toward these goals.