What is Public Health?

Public health is an essential set of services guaranteed to all citizens. It is a network of local, state and national professionals working together for a safer and healthier community. From restaurant inspections, to health education, immunizations, and disease control and prevention, Spokane Regional Health District (SRHD) is a public health agency providing over 20 different programs and services to individuals, families, and organizations across Spokane County.

SRHD now has over 200 employees, at several locations, and serves a population of more than 500,000 in Spokane County. SRHD is one of 34 public health agencies serving Washington state’s 39 counties. These public health agencies, together with Washington State Department of Health (DOH), make up the statewide public health network. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention lead the national public health network.

A 12-member board of health is the governing body of the health district, uniting the cities and county in a cooperative effort to oversee all matters pertaining to public health, according to state law. The board creates and promotes prudent health policy, ensures compliance with all applicable chapters of state law and invites participation by all persons and organizations interested in public health. The board adopts local ordinances and resolutions and approves budgets.

In February 2013, Spokane Regional Health District was among the nation’s first cohort to achieve national accreditation through the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB). The accreditation process validates the responsiveness of SRHD staff and programs in meeting the health needs of residents and demonstrates increased accountability and credibility to the public, funders, elected officials and partner organizations.

Agency Organization

Spokane Regional Health District is organized into six divisions to best serve the diverse needs of the community. Details about the wide variety of programs and services offered by the agency are contained in this publication. For more information, please visit SRHD’s web site at: srhd.org.

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Data Center 323.2853
Staff collect, analyze, and use health-related data to inform the community about current local health issues. They develop and conduct surveys; provide data and technical assistance to partners for grants or community work; assist with program or project planning; evaluate programs and assist with quality improvement efforts; and publish reports and fact sheets.

Community and Family Services

Access to Baby & Child Dentistry (ABCD) 324.1478
ABCD recruits and matches eligible children, from birth to age 5, to ABCD dentists, where they receive oral health services until age 6. Staff offers oral health resources via educational outreach, information and materials. The ABCD program organizes Spokane Oral Health Coalition meetings and assists other community groups with oral health promotion activities.

Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs 324.1696
Children under age of 18 who have disabilities, chronic illness or related conditions are eligible for this program. Staff enroll eligible children, then work collaboratively with the health maintenance organization’s case manager to ensure the child is receiving appropriate and timely services. On a limited basis, staff may be able to assist families in obtaining financial assistance for needed medical equipment for their children.

Infant Toddler Network 324.1651
Children ages birth to 3 years with developmental delays and/or disability, and their families, are provided services. Anyone concerned about a child’s development can call for assistance with screenings, evaluations and early-intervention services.

Neighborhoods Matter 324.1650
Neighborhoods Matter is a community-based approach to reduce health disparities impacting maternal, child and family health by promoting the resiliency of families. This is done using the strength and knowledge of community residents to build safe communities and strengthen connectivity. Staff are currently in Spokane’s Northeast neighborhoods and in the city of Airway Heights.

Nurse-Family Partnership 324.1621
Public health nurses with specialized training visit eligible mothers in their homes, providing services to pregnant women and their infant until the child is 2 years old. All low-income women who are less than 28 weeks pregnant may be eligible for the program. srhd.org/nfpspokane

Disease Prevention and Response

Communicable Disease Epidemiology 324.1442
Epidemiologists monitor, track, and respond to infectious disease in the community to prevent further spread of the disease. Health care providers and laboratories must report over 60 notifiable conditions to epidemiology staff. These reports are investigated and tracked to identify outbreaks or trends that require action or community education. Education on infection prevention practices and general disease information is provided to patients, healthcare providers and the public.

Emergency Preparedness and Response 324.1673
Program consists of Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response program, Medical Reserve Corps and REDI Healthcare Coalition. Staff and volunteers work with other response partners, healthcare systems, community organizations and the public to prepare for, respond to, and recover from, incidents affecting communities’ health. Its goals are to ensure a more resilient public, as well as a prepared healthcare system to better protect the health and safety of citizens.

HIV Case Management 324.1542
HIV case management is a confidential, client-centered program that links HIV-positive individuals to services to ensure timely, coordinated access to medically appropriate levels of health and supportive services. Program professionals work with individuals to develop an action plan to assist in achieving and maintaining stability across a multitude of life domains. Case management is for people living with HIV who could benefit from support, advocacy, referrals, and linkage to health insurance and community resources, information and education, skill building or coordination of services around their health condition.

HIV/STD Prevention 324.1494
HIV staff provide HIV and hepatitis C testing for populations at highest risk. Staff offer education to people recently diagnosed with a sexually transmitted disease, as well as associated partner notification. Staff also work with local providers to improve STD care. The program also offers a one-for-one needle exchange.

Immunization Assessment & Promotion 324.1611
To improve immunization coverage, staff build partnerships to improve vaccine access and promote the state’s immunization registry by working with schools, healthcare providers and other community partners. Washington provides free vaccines for children under the age of 19. Staff monitor the use of state provided vaccines working to assure individuals are protected from disease. Immunization info: srhd.org/imms
Environmental Public Health

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

Drinking Water (Private Wells) 324.1560 ext. 6
Consultation is provided to private well owners inquiring about water quality, odor, taste and/or contaminants. Environmental health specialists inspect a portion of the new drinking water wells in Spokane County to ensure they meet construction standards and inspect all unusable or abandoned wells at the time of decommissioning.

Land Development 324.1560 ext. 3
Program staff review new subdivisions, conditional use permits, and zoning changes to ensure appropriate provisions are made for various public facilities, including potable water supplies and sewage disposal facilities. Findings and conditions for development are provided to the appropriate planning jurisdiction.

Local Source Control 324.1560 ext. 4
Environmental health specialists, through a contract with Washington State Department of Ecology, conduct technical assistance visits to small quantity generators of hazardous waste, including businesses, schools, and government-owned facilities to prevent pollution. Staff evaluate waste handling practices and offer new and best management practices for improvement. The goal is to identify and control contaminants entering wastewater, groundwater and stormwater at the source.

Solid Waste Handling (Garbage) 324.1560 ext. 3
All solid waste facilities and septic tank pumper trucks in Spokane County are permitted annually, and periodically inspected for compliance with SRHD Solid Waste Handling Standards. This includes facilities and organizations involved in solid waste storage, collection, transportation, treatment, utilization, processing, and final disposal. Staff investigate complaints of improper disposal, storage, or handling of solid waste.

FOOD SAFETY

Food Inspections 324.1560 ext. 2
Environmental health specialists work with the food service industry and the community to prevent food-borne illness, provide food worker education, conduct food establishment inspections, investigate complaints and illnesses associated with food establishments, and much more. The program issues permits to over 2,300 permanent retail food establishments and approximately 300 temporary food establishments each year. Food industry and community representatives serve on the Food Advisory Committee to help guide program activities.

Food Worker Permits 324.1400
All food service employees in Spokane County who handle unwrapped foods or beverages are required to hold a current Washington State Food Worker Permit. Over 22,000 local food worker permits are issued annually. Education and testing are available both online and at SRHD. The permit is $10. Information about the required class and test are available at srhd.org or by calling the number above.

LIVING ENVIRONMENT

School Health and Safety 324.1560 ext. 4
Public, private and parochial schools (K-12) in Spokane County are routinely inspected for public health and safety issues. Plans for proposed remodeling or new construction of schools are reviewed, and public health and safety concerns are investigated. School and community representatives serve on the School Advisory Committee to help guide program activities.

Vector and Zoonotic Diseases 324.1560 ext. 7
Environmental health specialists work with health district epidemiologists to monitor and investigate illnesses transmitted from animals or insects to humans. Illness prevention education is provided to pet shop owners, animal exhibitors and the public. Program staff investigate reports of bites by dogs, cats, bats, ferrets, and wild animals for the risk of rabies, working closely with animal control agencies. The program also participates in state surveillance efforts for emerging animal and insect-carried diseases.

Water Recreation 324.1560 ext. 4
Public and semi-public water recreation facilities (pools, water slides, spas) are permitted and annually inspected for compliance with state water quality and safety regulations. Program staff investigate complaints and reported illnesses, review plans for remodeling or new construction, and work with partners on drowning prevention.

ON-SITE SEWAGE

Liquid Waste (Septic Systems) 324.1560 ext. 1
Septic system designs for single-family homes and small businesses (systems with flows less than 3,500 gallons per day) are reviewed for compliance with regulations, permitted, and inspected after installation. SRHD issues a renewable three-year permit for gravity on-site sewage systems and a one-year permit for all other systems. As-built record drawings showing the location of an on-site sewage disposal system for a specific address or tax parcel are provided upon request (if available). To request a record drawing, call the automated request line at 324-1546 or email request with address and/or parcel # to asbuiltrequest@srhd.org
Breast, Cervical & Colon Health Program 324.1553 or 888.461.8876
Staff work with medical providers throughout nine counties in Eastern Washington to promote breast, cervical and colon cancer prevention and screenings. Eligible clients receive free medical services, navigation and access to cancer treatment.

Healthy Communities Program 324.1668
Healthy Communities staff use policy, systems, and environmental changes to prevent and reduce disease, disability, and deaths locally. They do so while advancing health equity and reducing health disparities in Spokane County.

Active Living: Staff work with cities, the county, school districts, nonprofits, etc., to create more, and safer, opportunities for physical activity such as walking, bicycling and taking transit. They also work with schools to increase use of safe routes.

Healthy Eating: Staff provide trainings and resources to businesses, universities, nonprofit organizations, senior meal programs, schools and child care facilities to increase equitable access to healthy and culturally appropriate foods. Staff collaborate with community partners to promote, develop and evaluate programs that enhance the adoption of model food policies and supportive systems changes to address health, food security and equity.

Senior Falls Prevention: Staff coordinate the Washington Falls Prevention Coalition: Eastern Washington, Stay Active and Independent for Life (SAIL) evidence-based older adult fitness program, Steady as We Go social marketing campaign, and provide educational presentations to older adults, healthcare professionals, and older-adult-serving groups.

Tobacco, Vapor Device & Marijuana Prevention: Staff work w/youth, schools, health care providers, community orgs., and retailers to prevent use of tobacco, vaping and marijuana by underage youth. Staff promote cessation resources, educate retailers, promote campaigns, develop youth as leaders, and work to change policies to decrease tobacco use, secondhand smoke exposure, and youth marijuana and vapor product use.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) 324.1478
Program works to improve the likelihood that families eligible for SNAP benefits will make healthy food choices and lead physically active lifestyles. Staff provide education and facilitate policy, system and environmental change. SRHD staff manage various projects and partnerships across 10 counties in Eastern Washington, including an SRHD peer-to-peer model within Spokane low-income housing communities.

Community Health Workers 324.3613
Staff implement core competency training, implement place-based models within low-income communities, and facilitate network connections that support various roles for CHWs within the Eastern Washington region.

Women, Infants & Children (WIC) 324.1620
SRHD provides WIC services to over 10,000 clients annually at six Spokane County locations. Eligible pregnant, postpartum and breast-feeding women; infants; and children up to age 5 receive WIC nutrition services, including: nutrition evaluation, education, and counseling; breast-feeding support; referrals to health care and other services; and vouchers to get free and healthy foods like: fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy products. Visit: spokanewic.org or call the number above for more information.

Opioid Treatment Program 324.1420
The Opioid Treatment Program provides treatment for adults addicted to opioids (heroin, morphine, hydrocodone, oxycodone, etc.). The program is federally- and state-accredited to provide medication-assisted treatment. Ongoing therapy allows a team of medical and counseling professionals to help an individual set and achieve realistic health and lifestyle goals.

Financial Payments/Birth & Death Certificates 324.1601
Financial payments and orders for birth and death certificates typically take a few minutes. A completed application must be received to process an individual’s certificate request. Each copy of a birth or death certificate is $20. Certificates and invoices are payable by cash, debit or credit card, or money order. To purchase a birth or death certificate online, visit: srhd.org/birth-death-certificates

Public Health Policy 324.1517
Public health policy staff work with health district programs and partners to identify policies that could positively impact the community’s health. A proven approach to enhancing health and well-being, these policies change the systems and environments that affect public health. Policy staff support the board of health in taking direct action to enact such changes. Staff also identify any negative health impacts associated with proposed policies and work with decision makers to modify the policy or mitigate its negative impacts.