

Appendix C: Pan American Public Health Essential Functions (PAHO)

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) released a report⁶⁸ on the practice of public health in Latin America and the Caribbean, which focuses on the role of national health authorities in carrying out public health functions. Public Health in the Americas identifies 11 "essential public health functions" that should be the responsibility of the state and provides a methodology for assessing national health authority's discharge of these functions. PAHO lists the 11 essential public health functions as:

EPHF 1: Monitoring, Evaluation, and Analysis of Health Status

Definition: This function includes:

- Up-to-date evaluation of the country's health situation and trends including their determinants with special emphasis on identifying inequities in risks, threats, and access to services.
- Identification of the population's health needs including an assessment health services.
- Management of vital statistics and the status of special groups or groups at greater risk.
- Generation of useful information for the assessment of the performance of health services.
- Identification of those non-sectoral re-sources that support health promotion and improvements in the quality of life.
- Development of technology, expertise and methodologies for management, analysis and communication of information to those responsible for public health (including key players from other sectors, health care providers and civil society).
- Identifying and establishing agencies that evaluate and accurately analyze the quality of collected data.

EPHF 2: Public Health Surveillance, Research, and Control of Risks and Threats to Public Health

Definition: The capacity to conduct research and surveillance of epidemic outbreaks, patterns of communicable and non-communicable disease, behavioural factors, accidents, and exposure to toxic substances or environmental agents harmful to health.

- A public health services infrastructure designed to conduct population screenings, case-finding and general epidemiological research.
- Public health laboratories capable of conducting rapid screening and processing of a high volume of tests necessary for identifying and controlling emerging threats to health.
- The development of active programs for epidemiological surveillance and control of infectious diseases.

⁶⁸ Pan American Health Organization. (2002). Chapter 6.

- The capacity to develop links with international networks that permit better management of relevant health problems.
- Preparedness of the NHA and strengthening of local health surveillance to initiate a rapid response for the control of health problems or specific risks.

EPHF 3: Health Promotion

Definition: The promotion of changes in lifestyle and environmental conditions to facilitate the development of a “culture of health.”

- The strengthening of inter-sectoral partnerships for more effective health promotion activities.
- Educational and social communication activities aimed at promoting healthy conditions, lifestyles, behaviours and environments.
- Reorientation of the health services to develop models of care that encourage health promotion.

EPHF 4: Social Participation in Health

Definition: • Strengthening the power of civil society to change their lifestyles and play

an active role in the development of healthy behaviours and environments in order to influence the decisions that affect their health and their access to adequate health services.

- Facilitating the participation of the community in decisions and actions with regard to programs for disease prevention, diagnosis, treatment and restoration of health in order to improve the health status of the population and promote environments that foster healthy lifestyles.

EPHF 5: Development of Policies and Institutional Capacity for Regulation and Enforcement in Public Health

Definition: The definition of national and sub-national public health objectives which

should be measurable and consistent with a values-based framework that favours equity.

- The development, monitoring and evaluation of policy decisions in public health through a participatory process that is consistent with the political and economic context in which the decisions are made.
- The institutional capacity for the management of public health systems, including strategic planning with emphasis on building, implementing and evaluating initiatives designed to focus on health problems of the population.
- The development of competencies for evidence-based decision-making, planning and evaluation, leadership capacity and effective communication, organizational development and resource management.
- Capacity-building for securing international cooperation in public health.

EPHF 6: Strengthening of Institutional Capacity for Planning and Management in Public Health

Definition: The institutional capacity to develop the regulatory and enforcement frameworks that protect public health and monitor compliance within these frameworks.

- The capacity to generate new laws and regulations aimed at improving public health, as well as promoting healthy environments.
- Consumer protection as it relates to health services.
- Carrying out all of these activities to ensure full, proper, consistent and timely compliance with the regulatory and enforcement frameworks.

EPHF 7: Valuation and Promotion of Equitable Access to Necessary Health Services

Definition: The promotion of equity of access by civil society to necessary health services.

- The development of actions designed public health interventions and help link vulnerable groups to necessary health services (does not include the financing of health care).
- The monitoring and evaluation of access to necessary health services offered by public and/or private providers and using a multi-sectoral, multiethnic and multicultural approach
to facilitate working with diverse agencies and institutions to reduce injustices and inequities in use of necessary health services.
- Close collaboration with governmental and nongovernmental institutions to promote equity able access to necessary health services.

EPHF 8: Human Resources Development and Training in Public Health

Definition: The development of a public health workforce profile in public health that is adequate for carrying out public health services.

- Educating, training, developing and evaluating the public health work-force to identify the needs of public health services and health care, efficiently address priority public health problems and adequately evaluate public health activities.
- The definition of licensure requirements for health professionals in general and the adoption of ongoing programs that improve the quality of public health services.
- Formation of active partnerships with programs for professional development to ensure that all students have relevant public health experience and receive continuing education in the management of human resources and leadership development in public health.
- The development of skills necessary for interdisciplinary, multicultural work in public health.
- Bioethics training for public health personnel, emphasizing the principles and values of solidarity, equity, and respect for human dignity.

EPHF 9: Quality Assurance in Personal and Population-based Health Services

Definition:

- The promotion of systems that evaluate and improve quality.
- Facilitating the development of standards required for a quality assurance and improvement system and over-sight of compliance of service providers with this obligation.
- The definition, explanation, and assurance of user rights.
- A system for health technology assessment that supports the decision-making process at all levels and contributes to quality improvement.
- Using the scientific method to evaluate health interventions of varying degrees of complexity.
- Systems to evaluate user satisfaction and application of its results to improve the quality of health services.

EPHF 10: Research in Public Health

Definition: • Rigorous research aimed at increasing knowledge to support decision-making at the various levels.

- The implementation and development of innovative solutions in public health whose impact can be measured and assessed.
- The establishment of partnerships with research centers and academic institutions from within and outside the health sector to conduct timely studies that support decision-making of the NHA at all its levels and in all its fields of action.

EPHF 11: Reduction of the impact of the emergencies and disasters on the health

Definition: • Policy development, planning and execution of activities in the prevention, mitigation, preparedness, early response and rehabilitation programs to reduce the impact of disasters on public health.

- An integrated approach with respect to the damage and etiology of any and all emergencies and disasters that can affect the country.
- Involvement of the entire health system and the broadest possible inter-sectoral and inter-institutional collaboration to reduce the impact of emergencies and disasters.
- The procurement of inter-sectoral and international collaboration to respond to health problems resulting from emergencies and disasters.