



★ HEALTH DEPARTMENT ★

Polk County Health Department Annual Report 2010/2011



Public Health

Prevent. Promote. Protect.



To improve the health and safety of our residents by assuring people have access to necessary health services; advocate for policies that promote health and safety; and provide services to prevent and control disease.

The Polk County Health Department strives to demonstrate leadership in identifying public health priorities, mobilizing resources, and establishing community partnerships.

Health Care Reform has been a central focus of our attention this past year and we have been preparing for our public health clinic to meet the standards of health care reform and increase our capacity to serve as a medical home for our patients. We fully implemented an Electronic Health Record (EHR) database system and ensure that our EHR meets meaningful use standards. We also became credentialed with most major health insurance carriers.



We view health care reform as an opportunity to place even more emphasis on prevention and building healthy communities, which has been a central focus of our Department’s work. We are engaged in activities to enhance and expand our partnerships in the health care reform movement. To accomplish this we have committed a significant amount of time and resources towards building partnerships that support the Healthy Polk 2020 priorities.

As the economic strain impacted our community the need for our services became quite evident. The Polk County Health Department followed our program budget for 10/11 and successfully met our agency goals. We were also able to continue to meet the ever increasing needs of our community by providing care for an additional 333 clinic patients each month.

Next year local health departments across the state will be eligible to pursue State and National accreditation. This past year in preparation, we had two staff trained to serve as Quality Improvement Champions. They are working with administration and program and clinic staff to embed continuous Quality Improvement in our department.

Thank you for your continued support of the Health Department.

Sincerely,

Terri Henkels, Director



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Current Board of Supervisors



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Current Board of Health Advisory Committee

Jean Phillips, Director of Health Services, Des Moines Public Schools

Dr. John Olds, Medical Advisor to the Iowa Board of Medicine and Des Moines Metropolitan Area Team Physician for Hospice of Central Iowa

Mary Susan Gibson

Reylon Meeks, Clinical Nurse Specialist for Blank Children's Hospital and Pleasant Hill Fire Chief

Dr. Donald Anderson, general surgery private practice



Fifty percent of our health outcomes are determined by health behaviors. At the Polk County Health Department we help teach people how to make healthy choices.

- Our Choose To Live: Diabetes Education Program has taught 45 people in English and Spanish about how nutrition, physical activity, proper medication and testing can help them manage their diabetes and avoid complications.
- Better Choices Better Health is a six-week interactive workshop that helps people with health conditions learn how to take control of their health. We have taught 90 people how to manage medications, deal with depression, eat healthy, control pain, fight fatigue, manage stress, exercise, communicate with health providers, and how to set and meet goals.
- In 2010 we trained three staff members to provide wellness coaching to our patients. Our coaches have helped nine patients learn how to set achievable health goals and find solutions that work for their lives. Collectively they have lost 150 pounds.
- Through our Well Baby and Well Child visits we have helped ensure that hundreds of kids are developing properly and in a healthy manner.
- 140 people have received dental screenings at our clinic and learned about how to take better care of their teeth and mouth.



“Changing your behavior can be overwhelming. When I became a wellness coach it was thrilling to be able to help our patients make their own choices and goals. Giving them more information was not working, but helping them learn how to use their strengths and set their own agenda for their health is extremely rewarding.”

*- Sarah Boese
Health Educator & Wellness Coach*



Injuries can happen to anyone. We give people tools and strategies to reduce their risk of injury.

- A Matter of Balance is a class that has helped 99 people reduce their fear of falling and increase their levels of physical activity.
- The Polk County Health Department convenes 169 community partners in the Polk County Suicide Prevention Coalition to help reduce suicide and self-harm in our community and build resiliency in kids.

“The lead home repair program was surprisingly easy. Everyone was very helpful during the entire process. My house is beautiful and a safer place for our children now. Myself, my family, and the entire neighborhood are impressed!”

*- Sara Toothill
Lead home repair
participant*





The environment we live in can have a large impact on our health so we help families identify and fix hazards in their environment.

- Lead poisoning can cause irreversible brain damage in young kids. Lead based paint in homes older than 1978 is the most common cause of lead poisoning. Our lead home repair program has helped 76 families remove lead hazards in their home and is teaching the community how to safely do home repairs themselves.
- The only way to know if a child has been lead poisoned is by doing a blood test at ages 1 and 2. We have tested 382 kids.
- The National Children’s Study will look at the health effects of the environment by following children from before birth until the age of 21. The recruitment and participation goals for the research study in Polk County were successfully achieved. We assisted by coordinating communication and community engagement activities.
- While bed bugs do not currently pose any health threats, they can cause serious mental anxiety and be expensive to treat. We organized a task force to help teach individuals and families about strategies to avoid bringing bed bugs into their home and what to do if they have them.

“While many people don’t realize the work that public health does behind the scenes, it feels good to know that I helped identify and reduce the spread of disease in our community before it affected a lot of peoples’ lives.”

*- Ajsa Paric
Communicable Disease
Team Member*



The Polk County Health Department tracks and investigates diseases in the county to help stop the spread of diseases.

- Our team of Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) investigators help identify individuals who may have been exposed to a STD and encourage them to visit our clinic for testing and treatment.
- Our Iowa Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program helped provide free cancer screening tests, such as mammograms and pap tests, to 2,487 women and cardiovascular screenings to 400 women.
- All adults over 50 should be tested for colorectal cancer and adults over 40 who have a family history of colorectal cancer should also be tested. We have provided 59 tests.
- Our team of Communicable Disease nurses investigated 324 food borne and disease outbreaks in Polk County.
- The Polk County Health Department’s clinic provides a wide range of immunizations. We provided 5,945 immunizations to 1,830 kids 0-18 that will help them avoid many dangerous childhood diseases. Eight hundred and sixty nine adults got booster immunizations that will help them avoid getting sick and passing it on to others, and we gave 3,732 travel immunizations. During the fall and winter we held 132 community flu vaccination clinics in addition to our daily walk-in flu clinic, giving a total of 11,102 vaccinations.



Public health helps create the conditions in which people can be healthy by providing leadership, education, and better health systems.

- The Health Planning and Education Team identifies community priorities, participates in community partnerships, and helps shape the public dialogue about health, to ensure that health is viewed as a community issue, not just an individual issue.

- * Key Community partnerships include: Polk County Suicide Coalition, Polk County Lead Poisoning Prevention Coalition, Health Cabinet, Project LAUNCH Community Council, National Children’s Study, State of Iowa Prevention and Chronic Care Management Advisory Council, Partnership for a Healthy Johnston

- * Community work plans have been identified for two of the Healthy Polk 2020 priorities.

- During the last year our health education team has attended 52 community events where we provided the public with information about a number of public health issues as well as the services that the Polk County Health Department



Disasters can occur at any time and being prepared can be the difference between life and death at times.

- We continuously monitor the weather during the summer months to determine when cooling shelters need to be opened. In 2010 we opened a cooling center for six days in July that served 115 people.
- Five years ago, Polk County Health Department and Polk County Emergency Management began convening community partners and responders to develop a coordinated response to a possible influenza pandemic. This multi-jurisdictional, multi-discipline team continues to meet, every other month, to facilitate coordinated planning to enhance our community's response to any emergency or disaster.
- We mobilized resources and community partnerships to respond to the 2010 and 2011 floods. The Health Department provided emergency shelter care for displaced flood victims as well as triaged their medical needs and ensured they had appropriate medical and other resources.

“The Health Department really works on a broad range of health and safety issues and we were happy to partner with them to provide cooling shelter services for the community during the extreme heat periods this past summer. It was a critical service for families who didn't have access to air conditioning.”

*- Betty Devine
Polk County Community,
Family & Youth Services*



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