Foundational Public Health Services (FPHS) are essential parts of the health and safety infrastructure of every community.

Benton-Franklin Health District

When a public health department has to choose which communicable disease cases they can afford to investigate, who pays the real cost? The people living, working or traveling in the area.

That was the reality Benton-Franklin Health District (BFHD) faced when dwindling resources forced them to start prioritizing which communicable disease cases to pursue. With a rising population of nearly 300,000 residents in these two thriving counties, the situation had the potential to impact a large number of individuals, families, schools and businesses.

The healthcare system relies on public health to investigate a long list of notifiable conditions from tuberculosis (TB) to sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) such as syphilis and HIV. Without public health, there’s a gap in our health system; a gap that puts people at risk.

When BFHD received FPHS funding, they knew they could tackle that gap and better protect their communities.

FPHS funding allowed them to proactively respond to all infectious disease reports. They were able to eliminate a backlog of cases, cut response time on STD reports from weeks to days, increase capacity in their TB program with a Tele-health option, and take other important steps to mitigate communicable disease outbreaks.

But they didn’t stop there.

Food safety issues—from inspecting restaurants to managing foodborne illness outbreaks—are another way public health protects the health and vitality of its communities. Using FPHS funds, BFHD was also able to analyze the results of a federal Food and Drug Administration foodborne illness risk factor study they had completed. This helped staff focus food safety efforts in priority areas at the over 1,300 permitted establishments in their jurisdiction.

Maria Courogen
Special Assistant, Systems Transformation, Office of the Secretary
Washington State Department of Health
360-236-4017 / maria.courogen@doh.wa.gov

Jaime Bodden
Managing Director
Washington State Association of Local Public Health Officials
360-489-3011 / jbodden@wsac.org