

Public Health in Vermont

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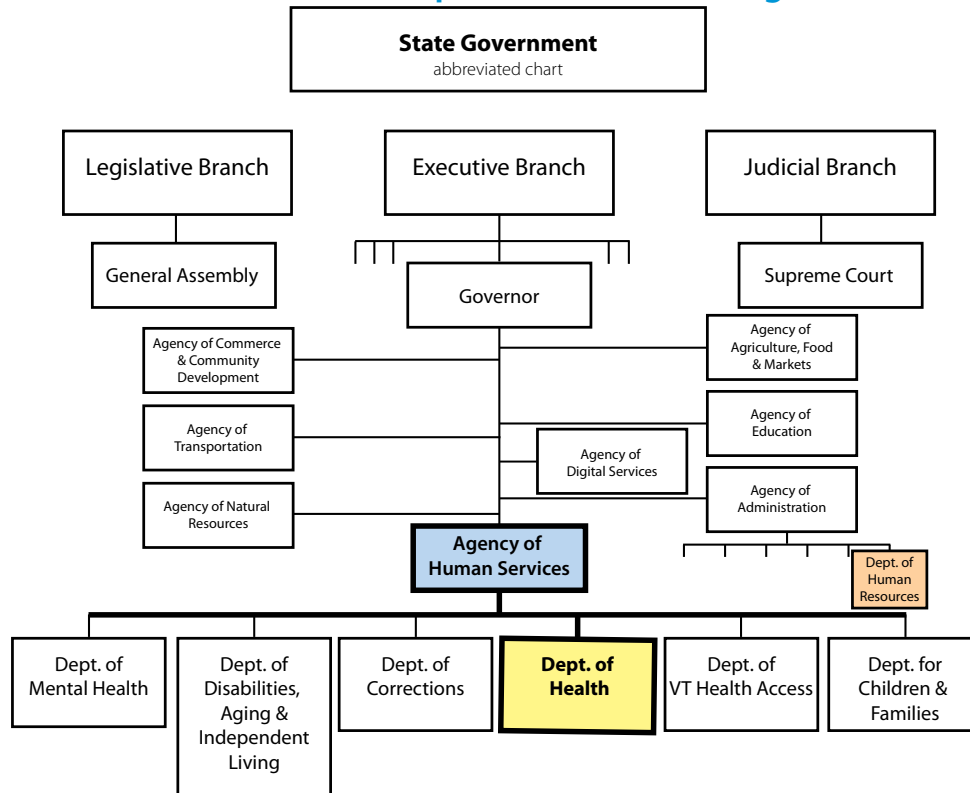
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Where does the Health Department fit in state government?



What is Public Health?

The Health Department has been working to protect and promote the health of Vermonters since 1886. We are proud to continue this long tradition of public health service—working every day for your health. We are the state’s lead agency for public health policy and advocacy. And it is our calling in public health to focus on avoidable inequalities, especially for people who have experienced socioeconomic disadvantage and social injustice.

What is public health?

Public Health is the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging healthy life, and promoting physical and mental health. This means not just one person’s health, but the health of an entire population. Some of the important work we do includes:

- Promoting healthy behaviors such as eating a healthy diet, having regular physical activity and not smoking or misusing alcohol or other drugs
- Improving access to health services such as immunizations, mammograms, HIV/AIDS testing and care, and prenatal care
- Investigating disease outbreaks and taking action to control the spread of illness
- Licensing physicians, hospitals and emergency medical personnel and services
- Inspecting food and lodging establishments and enforcing health regulations

In addition to our central office, we have a laboratory, Medical Examiner’s Office, and 12 local offices across the state that work with health care providers, volunteer agencies, schools, businesses, coalitions and organizations to improve health and extend public health initiatives in their communities.

As part of the Agency of Human Services, we work with the departments of Mental Health (DMH), Children and Families (DCF), Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living (DAIL), and Vermont Health Access (DVHA) to improve the health and wellbeing of Vermonters.

Public Health in Daily Life

Vermonters are able to live longer and healthier lives, thanks to more than 130 years of work by the Vermont Department of Health. On average, people in the U.S. are living 30 years longer than previous generations. Twenty-five of those years are credited to public health achievements such as childhood vaccinations, infection control measures, safer workplaces, services for mothers and babies, and recognizing tobacco as a leading public health threat.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought our work front and center for Vermonters, but public health makes a difference in their lives every day.

A Day in Your Life

6 a.m. — Up out of bed, you head for the shower and then brush your teeth. You know that routine care and dental exams, combined with fluoride in the public water system, will keep your teeth healthy now and in the future. In the kitchen, you get out milk, fruit, cereal and whole grain bread, since a nutritious breakfast is the best start for kids and adults alike.

7 a.m. — You head off to the car. You always fasten your seat belt, put away your phone and drive at a safe speed. You know from public health messages that most crashes and injuries are avoidable. You pass an ambulance. Thanks to the Health Department, it is fully equipped and inspected, with EMTs trained and certified. They are part of a system to make sure critically ill or injured people have the best chance of survival.



8 a.m. — At work you enjoy a smoke-free environment, just like almost everywhere else. Vermont was the first state to ban smoking in public places, thanks to the efforts of public health. Your kids never grew up around cigarettes or other tobacco, thanks to your example and the public health messages all around them.

9 a.m. - Your sister texts you. She and her new baby went to the pediatrician for a six-week checkup yesterday and everything looked great! The Health Department promotes early prenatal care, and every baby gets a newborn screening to test for conditions that, if untreated, can cause development and learning delays and severe health problems. If a child has a special health need, the Health Department works with families to help coordinate specialty care.

She's also thrilled with her visits to her Health Department local office, free Text-4-Baby health tips, breastfeeding support, healthy WIC foods and nutrition services, plus a debit-like card to buy fresh fruit and vegetables at local markets.

12 noon — Almost lunchtime. First, you head outside to join your walking partners. Public health studies have shown that people who exercise regularly live longer and healthier, with less chronic disease. Catching up with colleagues while fitting regular activity into your busy day is good for your physical and mental health!

12:30 p.m. — For lunch, you stop for take-out soup and salad. You assume that the food is safe to eat because the Health Department oversees inspection and licensing of restaurants, publishes scores, and investigates foodborne illness outbreaks.

1 p.m. — As you get back to work, you think ahead to your weekend hiking plans and make a mental note to pack sunscreen, bug spray, hats and long sleeves. Public health messages about sun protection, staying cool and preventing diseases caused by ticks and mosquitos are always part of your planning for time outdoors.

4 p.m. — Another day ends. You start your car and the radio comes on. You hear an ad reminding parents to make sure their young children are up to date on all their vaccines. Your kids got vaccinated when recommended by their doctor, and you're glad to hear public health promoting early childhood immunizations to protect against serious, sometimes life-threatening diseases.

5 p.m. — Your children are home, after a day of school. You know their school is a healthy environment because of testing for lead in drinking water and PCBs in the air, in addition to

monitoring for other indoor air quality issues. At home, you limit the kids' screen time in favor of outdoor activity. They go for a bike ride before dinner — always wearing helmets to prevent head injuries.

6 p.m. — When dinner is ready, you remind your family to wash their hands before eating. "To keep germs from spreading — we know," they say. Luckily none of you has been sick lately, but your family knows how important it is to cover coughs and stay home and away from others when they aren't feeling well.

7 p.m. - You check your phone and read about a new virus that has appeared in another part of the country and is making people sick. The Health Department says the illness is rare, but experts are working with other local and federal agencies to prepare for any type of public health emergency. Their experience with the COVID-19 pandemic and other emergencies means they know how to respond quickly and effectively.

8 p.m. — Your pre-teen asks if they can get a ride to a friend's house tomorrow night, where their friends will be hanging out. You agree, but remind them about your expectations and the conversations you've already had about alcohol, cannabis and other drugs. You've prepared for this, with help from the Health Department's Parent Up campaign.

10 p.m. — It's time for bed and you drift off to sleep. Public health has touched your lives in countless ways today, working behind the scenes—nearly invisibly—to keep you your family and your community safe and sound.

How the Health Department works for Vermonters

Divisions and Offices

Provides programs and services for Vermonters.



Commissioner's Office

Coordinates the mission and vision for the department. Creates policy, manages and supports the staff and functions of all divisions.



● Organization of the Department of Health

The Health Department is part of the Agency of Human Services, and is led by Health Commissioner. The department's work is guided by our [strategic plan](#), located on our website.

● Administration

Commissioner's Office

Deputy Commissioners
Senior Policy & Legal Advisor
Assistant Attorneys General
Communication Director
Financial Director

Health Equity Director
Human Resources Manager
Information Technology Director
Operations Director
Planning Director

Business Office

Provides business management services to the department in accordance with Vermont Agency of Administration policies and procedures.

- Budget preparation and financial monitoring
- Payroll/accounts payable and receivable
- Audit/cost allocation and federal programs financial services
- Subgrant and contract processing

Communication Office

Leads department-wide effort to provide public health information and messages to Vermont residents and visitors. Given the critical importance of such information to the wellbeing of the public, the focus at all times is on accuracy, credibility, utility and timeliness. Collaborates with local, state and national agencies on public health communication efforts, with a commitment to health equity and accessibility of information.

- Crisis, emergency and risk communication
- Interface with the news media
- Social marketing campaigns
- Social/digital media messaging
- Manage and maintain healthvermont.gov
- Graphic design/branding

Health Equity Integration

The Health Equity Integration team is a cross-departmental team integrating equity in the department's culture and operations to improve the effectiveness of the work of the department with communities where systems and institutions have created injustice and oppression.

- Build and sustain internal and external relationships to support equity
- Work to enhance the department's ability to identify and address health inequities
- Support the development and continuous improvement of organizational, institutional, financial and business process with a health equity lens
- Create and measure health equity goals

Legal and Policy Provides guidance on legal and policy matters for the Department of Health. Serves as a liaison to the legislature on public health matters and assists the department in promulgating necessary public health regulations. Provides consultation and guidance on legal issues, including coordination with Assistant Attorneys General as needed.

Operations Develops and manages the operational processes and systems for the Health Department that include central office, 12 local offices, Public Health Laboratory and Medical Examiner's Office. Primary liaison with multiple State partner agencies/departments for operations issues and processes.

- Business Resource Center functions: mail, printing, conference rooms, space management, suite renovations, work station design, and telecommunications
- Building security and maintenance
- Continuity of Operations (COOP) and VT Alert emergency notification
- Employee onboarding program
- Audio/visual equipment
- Intranet and SharePoint/Teams sites
- Records management program
- Public records requests
- HIPAA disclosure and mitigation
- Respiratory protection program
- Business systems and process improvement

Planning

Works with staff throughout the department to facilitate long range planning and integration of activities to improve population health outcomes and internal systems. Collaborates with partners across government, in multiple sectors, and at the state and local level to improve health. Key areas of work include:

- Health Department Strategic Plan
- State Health Assessment and State Health Improvement Plan
- Public health accreditation
- Performance management and quality improvement
- Workforce development
- Health in All Policies

Human Resources

The Department of Human Resources partners with the Agency of Human Services to provide comprehensive support to department employees so that the overall mission of AHS can be met. The team of HR professionals supports the department with:

- Recruiting, hiring, and onboarding employees
- Supporting supervisors with personnel actions, position management
- Providing information about payroll, benefits, retirement, FMLA, and more

Information Technology

Provides reliable quality software, applications and data systems that support the diverse programs of the department. Utilizes standards and best practices that will result in appropriate software solutions, whether developed in-house or purchased.

- Requirements gathering and quality assurance
- Application development and support
- Data services
- Health Information Exchange
- IT expertise and project management skills for RFPs and contracts

● Offices & Divisions

Substance Use Programs

Oversees a network of health promotion, prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery services to prevent, reduce and eliminate the health impacts of alcohol, cannabis, opioid and other drug use. Works with national, state and community-based organizations to make programs and services available to Vermonters.

- Adolescent treatment system
- Health promotion, information and resources
- Opioid treatment programs
- Recovery support and harm reduction services
- School-based substance use services
- Specialty services and messaging for youth, young adults, women, people who are pregnant and older adults
- Substance use intervention
- Substance use prevention
- Substance use treatment

Emergency Preparedness, Response & Injury Prevention

Coordinates, develops and manages emergency preparedness and crisis response capabilities for the department. Facilitates hospital and health care preparedness through the Medical Operations Network. Oversees the state EMS system. Works with external partners to promote injury prevention.

- Emergency Medical Services
- Medical Operations Network
- Health Alert Network
- Health Operations Center/Incident Command
- Health care and hospital preparedness
- Strategic National Stockpile/Cities Readiness Initiative
- Volunteer registration (OnCall for Vermont, Medical Reserve Corps)
- Suicide prevention
- Pedestrian safety
- Child passenger safety
- Overdose harm reduction

Environmental Health

The work of Environmental Health is to prevent illness or disease that may be caused by environmental threats, both natural and human-made, and to reduce or eliminate harmful environmental exposures.

- Asbestos and lead regulation
- Chemical Disclosure for Children's Products
- Climate and health
- Environmental Public Health Tracking
- Food and lodging
- Healthy Homes
- Private drinking water
- Radiological health
- Radon
- Recreational water
- School environmental health (Envision)
- Town Health Officer
- Toxicology and risk assessment

Health Promotion and Disease Prevention

Focuses on making the healthy choice the easy choice for Vermonters. Uses policy, systems and environmental approaches to help increase healthy behaviors so Vermonters can live their best lives.

Works with health care systems and through community programming to help people address chronic disease.

- Alzheimer's and brain health program
- Asthma
- Cardiovascular disease prevention
- Chronic disease self-management programs
- Colorectal cancer
- Comprehensive cancer control
- Diabetes prevention and control
- Nutrition and physical activity
- Oral health
- Tobacco prevention and cessation
- You First—a breast and cervical cancer and heart health screening program

Health Statistics and Informatics

Collects, processes, analyzes, and provides information on the health status of Vermonters.

- Cancer registry
- Immunization registry
- Infectious disease data systems
- Vital records
- Research, epidemiology and evaluation
- Research and statistics

Laboratory Sciences and Infectious Disease

Provides laboratory services to test and monitor Vermont's population and environment for public health threats. Leads efforts to track, prevent and control the spread of infectious diseases in Vermont:

- HIV, STDs and Hepatitis C
- Health care-associated infections
- Immunizations
- Infectious disease epidemiology
- Vector borne diseases (diseases transmitted by ticks or mosquitoes)
- Zoonotic diseases (diseases that spread between animals and people)

Local Health

Carries out the department's mission to protect and promote the health and well-being of Vermonters at the local level. The staff works to address public health needs of Vermonters from the community perspective by supporting a statewide local public health delivery system that provides essential services and promotes building local infrastructure to address public health needs of Vermonters.

District offices carry out program work of the department's divisions:

- Epidemiology
- Immunization
- Emergency preparedness
- Chronic disease prevention
- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)
- Early and Periodic, Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment program (EPSDT)

Family and Child Health

Assures delivery of core public health services (infrastructure building, population-based, enabling direct health care) to improve maternal and child health.

- Preventive reproductive services including family planning and preconception health
- WIC: Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children
- Breastfeeding promotion and support
- Help Me Grow Vermont builds systems to support child development, and connects children and families to developmental resources
- Strong Families Vermont early childhood home visiting programs
- Support Delivered strengthens perinatal mental health services
- Health, wellness, and safety in child care
- Children's preventive health services and screening guidelines; Early Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment Services (EPSDT)
- School and adolescent health
- Children with special health needs clinical and care coordination
- Child injury prevention and domestic and sexual violence prevention

Board of Medical Practice

The Board of Medical Practice is comprised of health care professionals and public members who are appointed by the Governor. Their role is to regulate the practice of medicine by:

- Licensing MDs, PAs, and podiatrists, and certifying anesthetist assistants and radiologist assistants
- Investigating complaints and conducting hearings on charges of unprofessional conduct brought against the health care professionals licensed by the Board.

The Board's staff carries out the day-to-day operations of the Board, receiving and processing applications for licensure, receiving complaints of unprofessional conduct, and conducting investigations under the direction of the Board.

Office of the Chief Medical Examiner

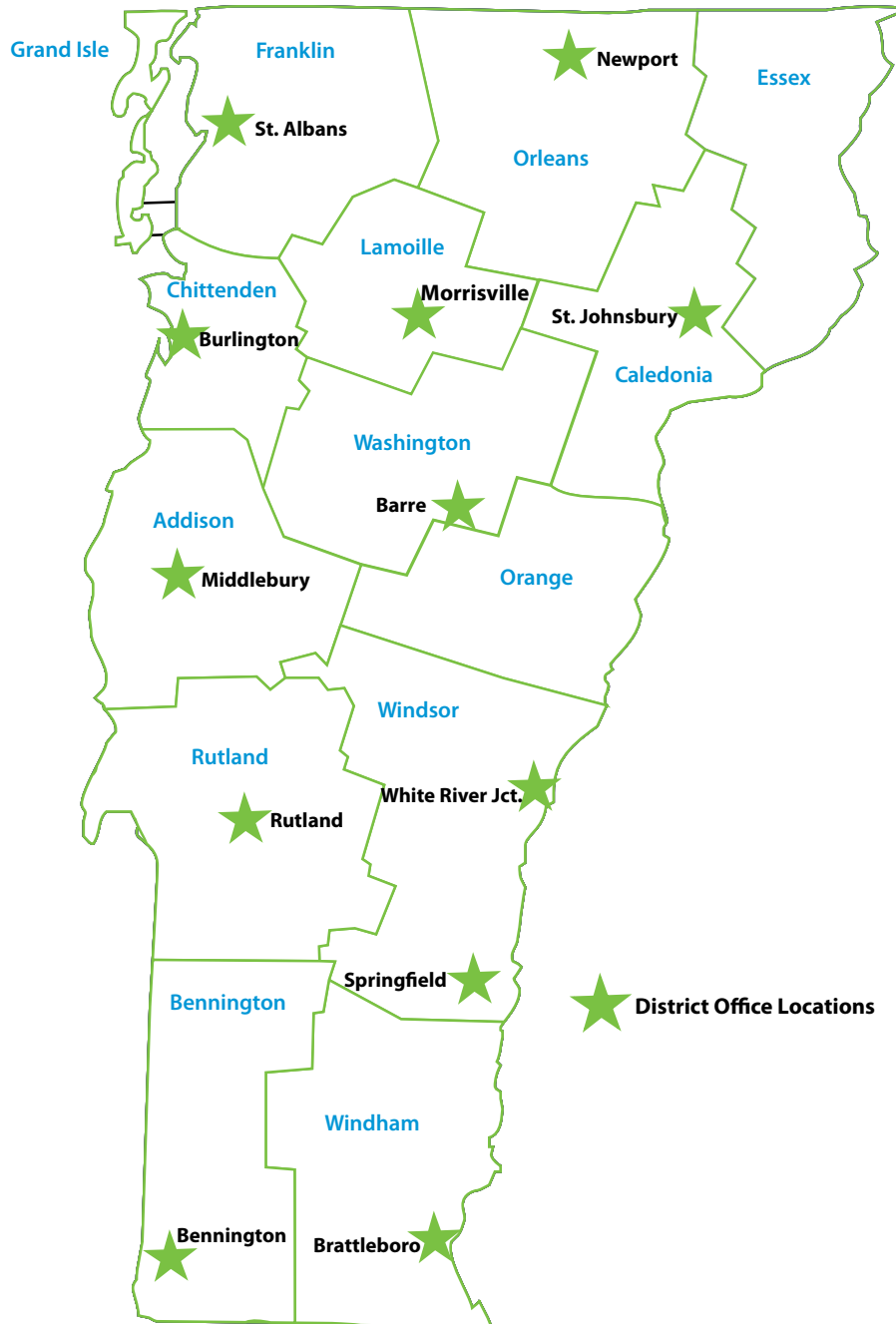
Supports public health and safety and the legal system by investigating deaths in Vermont, performing autopsies, determining cause and manner of death, and providing expert forensic pathology services. Provides information and assistance to families, medical professionals, state and local agencies, law enforcement, attorneys, and courts. Collects and provides data for state and national surveillance systems.

- Medicolegal investigation of natural and unnatural deaths
- Death certificate surveillance
- Expert witness testimony
- Mass fatality response
- Teaching and training of students, medical professionals, and law enforcement
- Child Fatality Review Team
- Vulnerable Adult Fatality Review Team
- Domestic Violence Fatality Review Commission
- Maternal Mortality Review Panel

Rural Health & Health Care Quality

Collaborates with clinical and health system partners to: improve quality and performance of critical access and rural hospitals; expand access to primary, dental and mental health services regardless of insurance coverage; and support recruitment and retention of primary care, oral health and mental health workforce.

- Manage Patient Safety Surveillance and Improvement System
- Provide Public Health nursing support: plan, coordinate and direct functions of clinical nursing in the department
- Educates partners about rural health needs and resources
- Collaborate with internal and external partners to improve access to care
- Improve quality of care in Vermont by supporting ongoing education for hospital leaders



Statewide Locations



Central Office

Vermont Department of Health
108 Cherry Street
Burlington, Vermont 05401
Phone: 800-464-4343 • 802-863-7200
healthvermont.gov



Office of the Chief Medical Examiner

University of Vermont Medical Center
111 Colchester Avenue
Baird-1, JME Facility
Burlington, Vermont 05401
Phone: 802-863-7320
healthvermont.gov/systems/medical-examiner



Public Health Laboratory

359 South Park Drive
Colchester, VT 05446
Phone: 800-660-9997 • 802-338-4724
healthvermont.gov/lab



Barre Office

McFarland Office Building
5 Perry Street, Suite 250
Barre, VT 05641-4272
Phone: 888-253-8786 • 802-479-4200
healthvermont.gov/local/barre



Bennington Office

324 Main Street, Suite 2
Bennington, VT 05201
Phone: 800-637-7347 • 802-447-3531
healthvermont.gov/local/bennington



Brattleboro Office

232 Main Street, Suite 3
Brattleboro, VT 05301-2881
Phone: 888-253-8805 • 802-257-2880
healthvermont.gov/local/brattleboro



Burlington Office

108 Cherry Street
Burlington, VT 05401-9962
Phone: 888-253-8803 • 802-863-7323
healthvermont.gov/local/burlington



Middlebury Office

156 South Village Green, Suite 102
Middlebury, VT 05753
Phone: 888-253-8804 • 802-388-4644
healthvermont.gov/local/middlebury



Morrisville Office

63 Professional Drive, Suite 1
Morrisville, VT 05661
Phone: 888-253-8798 • 802-888-7447
.healthvermont.gov/local/morrisville



Newport Office

100 Main Street, Suite 220
Newport, VT 05855
Phone: 800-952-2945 • 802-334-6707
healthvermont.gov/local/newport



Rutland Office

300 Asa Bloomer State Office Building
88 Merchants Row
Rutland, VT 05701
Phone: 888-253-8802 • 802-786-5811
healthvermont.gov/local/rutland



St. Albans Office

27 Federal Street, Suite 201
St. Albans, VT 05478
Phone: 888-253-8801 • 802-524-7970
healthvermont.gov/local/st-albans



St. Johnsbury Office

107 Eastern Avenue, Suite 9
St. Johnsbury, VT 05819-2638
Phone: 800-952-2936 • 802-748-5151
.healthvermont.gov/local/st-johnsbury



Springfield Office

100 Mineral Street, Suite 104
Springfield, VT 05156
Phone: 888-296-8151 • 802-885-5778
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White River Junction Office

118 Prospect St., Suite 300
White River Junction, VT 05001
Phone: 888-253-8799 • 802-295-8820
healthvermont.gov/local/white-river-junction

public
prevention **Healthy** support
Vermonters
promote equity **valued** Living
communities workforce

Vision

Healthy Vermonters living in healthy communities

Mission

Protect and promote the best health for all Vermonters