

## Winnebago County Health Department Summary of Services

### **INTRODUCTION:**

WCHD protects and improves community well-being by preventing disease, and promoting factors fundamental to good health. This is accomplished through a range of services that reach almost 70,000 clients/patients with a special focus on setting a fair and adequate baseline of care for all. Everyday residents of Winnebago County benefit from services provided through this Department and collaborative efforts with many organizations.

Health is not something we get at the doctor's office, but instead is something that starts with our families, our schools and workplaces, in our playgrounds and neighborhoods and in the air we breathe and the water we drink. The more health is viewed in this way, the more opportunities there are to improve it. This includes expanding the way we think about health to include how to keep it, not just how to get it back when we become ill.

The Board of Health established mission for WCHD is to "Prevent disease, promote health and enlist the community in efforts to improve the health of all Winnebago County residents".

### **BACKGROUND:**

The original Board of Health for our community was established in 1854, two years after its founding. By the 1960's there were separate City of Rockford and Winnebago County Health Departments funded through general revenue. However, in 1970 there was a voter referendum that established a property tax base to support public health services for the community and to merge both the City and County Departments into one organization. Services currently are provided countywide through four centers (as follows):

***Center for Environmental Health Improvement:*** This Center promotes health for all through a healthy environment. Maintaining a healthy environment is central to increasing quality of life and years of healthy life and seeks to prevent exposure to hazardous substances in air, water, soil and food, and to preserve the built environment.

- **Public Facilities** provides education and inspection services related to public facilities, including food protection, tanning, body piercing, public swimming pools and hotels/motels.
- **Neighborhood Environment** addresses the built environment that can impact human health including poor neighborhood sanitation and housing conditions, demolitions, lead risks, vector problems and the Weed & Seed initiative.
- **Pollution Control** strives to prevent contamination of surface and ground water by infectious or chemical agents that can contribute to illness or other health effects. Reducing such exposures is fundamental to environmental health. Such services include on-site wastewater, soils evaluation, and public and private drinking water supply sampling and related laboratory services.

**Center for Health Protection and Promotion:** This Center coordinates services that address preventive interventions related to the early identification of the disease process, education and linkage with services either by community providers or directly offered clinical services.

- **Disease Control** includes all reportable diseases, TB, HIV and sexually-transmitted infections. This also includes outbreak investigation capacity, in partnership with the Center for Environmental Health Improvement for the purpose of investigating and understanding the contributing factors to an outbreak and to prevent its spread to the broader community.
- **Clinical Health Services** are to screen for early detection of health problems, some being communicable and to either link with appropriate treatment and care or to directly provide such services. These services include sexual health, well women, refugee, and international travel services.
- **Community Outreach and Screening Services** link targeted population groups with age-appropriate health screenings. These include breast and cervical cancer, cardiovascular, school-based vision and hearing and oral health screenings, cleanings and dental sealants.

**Family Health Services Center:** This Center focuses on improving the well-being of mothers, infants and children as a fundamental public health goal, both nationally and locally. Their well-being determines the health of the next generation and helps predict future challenges for families, communities and the healthcare system.

- **Maternal and Child Health** provides a range of integrated services that offer educational and nutritional support for pregnant women, infants and children (with high-risk medical conditions). These services find a doctor for prenatal and post-partum care and children's care and promote an understanding of the stages of newborn development and skills supportive of strong parenthood. These services include women, infant and children food assistant program (WIC), family case management<sup>1</sup>, high-risk infant nursing, HealthWorks (Case Management for wards of the State), well-child exams/immunizations, lead screening and daycare/nurse consultations.
- **Adolescent and School-Health** services work with youth in the community who are at risk of school dropout or have demonstrated risky behavior related to alcohol or other drugs or violence. Services include education, support and information to teens to reach life goals and to delay subsequent pregnancy while increasing awareness of the effects of underage alcohol and other substance abuse. The service areas are teen parent services, alcohol and drug prevention, and violence (Violence Prevention Collaborative).

**Management and Support Services Center:** Provides the infrastructure essential for the provision of public health services in all other Centers. This includes the foundation for planning, delivering and evaluating public health services and supporting the facilities necessary for their operation.

- **Operational Services** includes facilities management such as phone systems, reception, security, HIPAA assurances, staff development, medical and vital records, accounts billing and grants management.
- **Emergency Preparedness, Citizens and Medical Reserve Corps** incorporates close collaboration with both the City and County emergency disaster services and is essential to prevent, detect early, prepare, respond and recover from major health incidences. A recent example was the community-wide response to the H1N1 Influenza Pandemic in 2009.

**Administration:** Works with Board of Health, community officials and other entities to identify and prioritize community needs and develop evidence-based interventions to address those needs. This includes meeting the Illinois certification and evolving national public health accreditation standards for local health departments.