

Oregon's Turning Point Initiative began in 1998 with development of a broad-based partnership, an analysis of the public health system, and development of a public health improvement plan to lead Oregon toward a brighter public health future. Among the many priorities the partnership identified in the plan, two stood out. First, was to review Oregon's public health laws for their ability to protect the population against health threats, an activity that had not been done in 30 years. Increased threats of infectious disease gave public health leaders the incentive to examine and update public health laws.

Oregon Turning Point From Standards to Practice

The second priority was to develop standards for local and state public health that would be consistent with the nationally recognized Ten Essential Services of Public Health and build on Oregon's existing standards. These two priorities determined Oregon Turning Point's work over the past six years.

Dr. Grant Higginson, Oregon's state health officer, has been an active participant in the Turning Point Public Health Statute Modernization National Excellence Collaborative. When the collaborative developed the

Model Emergency Health Powers Act in 2001, Oregon's Turning Point partnership, then directed by Kathryn Broderick, seized the opportunity to use this tool to assess Oregon's emergency health powers. The process began in 2001 and brought together state and local public health leaders, legislators, and other partners to compare Oregon's existing laws with the model act, and to identify improvements needed to make the laws effective in modern crises and emergencies. As a direct result of this effort, the Oregon legislature passed a number of provisions to provide public health the powers needed.

Between 2001 and 2003, the Oregon partnership also conducted a joint state/local process to revise the Oregon Minimum Public Health Standards, incorporating standards also based on the Ten Essential Services of Public Health.

When the Public Health Statute Modernization National Excellence Collaborative developed the Model Emergency Health Powers Act in 2001, Oregon's Turning Point partnership... seized the opportunity to use this tool to assess Oregon's emergency health powers.

Since 2003, Oregon Turning Point has been working with public health consultants, Milne & Associates, LLC, to lead the Oregon Public Health System Assessment project. The consultants convened a broad-based committee to provide

oversight for the project. Then the consultants facilitated assessments of system performance in nine representative Oregon counties, using a national public health standards assessment tool. The assessments provided information

to each of the nine communities on both strengths and areas to be strengthened through community collaboration. They also generated a great deal of interest in public health among partner organizations. The combined assessment results paint a picture of local public health capacity across the state.

In a follow-up to the 2001-02 work of Turning Point, the second project element consisted of a comprehensive review of all of Oregon's public health statutes and regulations using the Turning Point Model Act for comparison. As a result, legislation may be introduced in the next state legislative session to address areas where problems were found.

Oregon Turning Point's continuing legacy can be seen in updated public health laws, revised Oregon standards, and local public health systems working toward improved practice.

At a Glance: Oregon



Aim of Oregon Turning Point

Oregon Turning Point aims to safeguard the public's health by using information to make informed decisions in times of limited resources.

Oregon's Public Health Challenges

Assessments of Oregon's public health system in 2000 and 2002 showed substantial gaps, particularly in the prevention of infectious disease. Despite new funding for bioterrorism responsiveness, gaps continue to exist in public health services. Among vital public health functions, most are performed without adequate resources.

Tobacco use was identified as the leading cause of preventable deaths in Oregon and a voter-approved initiative provided funding over the past five years that led to a dramatic decrease in tobacco use by adults and teenagers. Obesity and cancer are the next leading causes of preventable Oregon deaths.

An assessment of nine local public health systems performed in 2004 identified relative strengths in work related to diagnosis and investigation of health problems, emergency preparedness, and enforcement of public health laws. However, significant shortcomings were found in monitoring health status (particularly regarding information technology capacity) collaboration with community partners, and evaluation of health services.

Oregon Turning Point's Contribution to Improving Public Health

Oregon's public health system provides important services and protections. Coalitions, networks, and clinics have demonstrated that they can come together in partnership with state and other agencies to share information. Oregon Turning Point is helping to improve public health by:

- Supporting collaborative partnerships at local and state levels that include hospitals, physicians, nonprofit agencies, county governments, businesses, schools, faith communities, and environmental health organizations
- Completing a review of Oregon's public health statutes and administrative rules, using the Turning Point Model State Public Health Act as a standard
- Developing standards for local and state public health systems to ensure adequate services to all Oregonians
- Convening health-related organizations to identify health policy changes necessary to meet public health demands in Oregon for the future health and safety of Oregonians
- Conducting assessments in nine communities leading to greater awareness of essential service areas that need improvement as well as essential services that are most consistently being provided

For More Information

Grant Higginson, State Public Health Officer
Oregon Department of Human Services
800 NE Oregon Street, Suite 930
Portland, OR 97232
tel: (503) 731-4000 e-mail: grant.k.higginson@state.or.us