

# Lead<sup>the</sup>Way

## Investing in Public Health

### Essential Elements



Trinity Health is one of the largest multi-institutional Catholic health integrated care delivery systems in the nation, serving diverse communities that include more than 30 million people across 22 states. We are building a health system that puts the people we serve at the center of every behavior, action and decision. This brings to life our commitment to be a compassionate, transforming and healing presence in our communities. We advocate for public policies that support better health, better care and lower costs to ensure affordable, high quality, people-centered care for all.

### Investment In Public Health is Critical to The Nation's Safety and Economic Health

The COVID-19 public health emergency has highlighted the importance of a robust public health infrastructure that can protect the health of all communities and populations across the United States. Insufficient investment in public health undermines efforts to prevent disease, to promote safety and wellness and to prepare for, monitor and respond to outbreaks of communicable diseases. COVID-19 has also clearly illustrated how this underinvestment is contributing to inequities within our health care system and society.

In 2018, the U.S. spent \$3.6 trillion on health expenditures, however, only 2.6 percent (\$93.5 billion), was spent on government public health activities such as surveillance, immunization or vaccination services, disease prevention programs, and the operation of public health laboratories.

Trinity Health believes that a strong public health infrastructure is essential to building a health care system that can ensure access to high-quality, comprehensive, affordable health care for all. With a longstanding commitment to addressing health and social issues within communities, Trinity Health promotes access to immunizations and vaccines, advocates for regulation of tobacco use, supports access to integrated, comprehensive behavioral health care, and promotes awareness about physical violence and gun safety.

A strong public health infrastructure requires coordination and cooperation across government, the medical community, community-based partners and others. Trinity Health believes hospitals can and should play a leading role in addressing and responding to public health needs. Additionally, Trinity Health stands behind the understanding that investment in public health is critical to the nation's safety and economic health. This work is guided by the principles outlined below.

### Designing and Financing a Robust Public Health Infrastructure

Investment in public health should build a system that supports all populations. Policies to build and strengthen the nation's infrastructure should:

- Ensure all public health departments can perform core public health functions such as monitoring health status within a community, diagnosing and investigating health problems, performing outreach and education, developing policies and plans to support community health, enforcing laws and regulations, connecting people to necessary health services, assuring a strong health care workforce, and conducting evaluation and research.
- Support a well-coordinated public health system that includes the medical establishment, health and social service providers, government, community-based partners and residents, especially individuals from communities of color, non-English speaking communities, the elderly and those who are poor and vulnerable.
- Integrate community health workers into the health care delivery system to address social and health needs, and support community partners in public health activities (e.g. outreach, education, monitoring).
- Ensure accurate and robust data collection that includes race/ethnicity, gender identity and sexual orientation, and reporting and sharing of data between health systems, providers and public health departments for disease prevention, detection and mitigation.
- Invest in preventive services and address social needs across all populations through population-based payment and care models.
- Reduce risk factors for chronic conditions through education, prevention and coordination across health care settings and community-based organizations.

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- Identify linkages and sharing of data across providers, settings and community partners that promote population health, including behavioral health.

## Ensure Public Health Surveillance

A strong public health system must promote prevention, but also ensure preparedness and response when public health crises arise. A public health surveillance system should:

- Guarantee access to community-based sites for immunizations and testing for communicable diseases for all populations especially communities of color, non-English speaking communities, the elderly and those who are poor and vulnerable.
- Support surveillance of communicable diseases as well as strategies for preparing for and responding to public health emergencies, such as responding to outbreaks with broadscale testing and treatment.
- Support use of interoperable systems for disease surveillance data collection that promote sharing of data.
- Strengthen use of syndromic surveillance to detect, report and monitor diseases.
- Incorporate a robust contact tracing strategy to prevent and mitigate the spread of communicable disease.
- Support adoption of a national, unique patient identifier that can support patient access to test results, reporting of immunization information, and care coordination across providers and settings, which are especially necessary during public health emergencies and other crises.

## Strengthen Hospital Public Health Preparedness and Response

Hospitals play an integral role in the public health system by preparing for, monitoring and responding to public health emergencies. Investment in public health should recognize the role hospitals and health systems can play to:

- Support robust surveillance of communicable diseases for prevention and response.
- Ensure coordination of prevention, mitigation and surveillance efforts between health system and public health departments and other stakeholders (e.g. community-based providers and services).
- Implement communication to the community regarding when to come to the emergency department and how to arrive prepared to be tested and treated.

## Promote Equity Across the Public Health System

A public health system must safeguard access to coverage and health care for all—across populations and geographies. Investments and policies should:

- Expand community-based sites for immunization, testing and treatment.
- Eliminate structural and systemic racism in the health care system to improve public health.
- Ensure equity in outreach and education related to health and wellness across populations and communities.
- Require that data collection for public health and disease reporting includes information on race and ethnicity to support outreach efforts for prevention and treatment.

## Trinity Health: A Longstanding Commitment in Public Health

- **Addressing Opioid Use Disorder:** The Stand Against Stigma campaign's goals are to increase awareness of opioid use disorder as a chronic brain disease and not a moral failing, and to encourage the use of medically appropriate, non-stigmatizing language when talking about persons with substance use disorder. In conjunction with National Recovery Month, the campaign urges employees to share ways they are reducing stigma, and features Trinity Health's focus on de-stigmatizing opioid and substance abuse, emphasizing that treatment is available and can be successful.
- **Reducing Tobacco Use:** The 2019 year-end spending package approved by Congress included a provision to raise the age to purchase tobacco products to 21 years, a policy Trinity Health has long supported at the local, state and federal levels. Trinity Health continues to advocate for comprehensive policies to reduce tobacco use, including e-cigarettes and flavored tobacco. This includes joining a coalition of stakeholders on a letter of support for the Reducing the Youth Tobacco Epidemic Act, which passed the House of Representatives in February 2020.

### Mission

We, Trinity Health, serve together in the spirit of the Gospel as a compassionate and transforming healing presence within our communities.

### Core Values

Reverence • Commitment to Those Who Are Poor • Safety • Justice • Stewardship • Integrity