2015 Success Launches New Strategic Plan
Our Plan for a Healthier Illinois

How can we create public health systems that do a better job of helping people stay healthy? That’s the question the Illinois Public Health Institute (IPHI) focuses on answering.

There is much positive news to report. As we highlight our work in the last year and launch our new five year strategic plan, we’d like to share how we’re making a real impact.

First, our strategic plan. We’ve got a new and improved mission that recognizes the highly visible and proactive public health leadership we’ve come to embody. Our new mission is:

To mobilize stakeholders, catalyze partnerships, and lead action to promote prevention and improve public health systems in order to maximize health, health equity, and quality of life for the people of Illinois

We’ll be concentrating our efforts over the next five years on improving and influencing health-enhancing policy, catalyzing innovations, and leading health transformational initiatives. You’ll also see us focusing on strengthening our capacity and building resources to create a strong foundation for our continued growth.

This new plan continues our fifteen-year core commitment to the essence of the public health system approach: improving people’s health is best achieved when there is strong collaboration and alignment among partners. We know that collaboration doesn’t just happen; that’s why we focus on being a catalyst and leader.

IPHI will continue to work closely with hospitals, community-based nonprofits, health departments, and many others to improve communities, policies, and systems. We are working toward policies that benefit all Illinois communities, with particular emphasis on underserved communities. Our work has shown the importance of a simple premise: If we all work in our individual silos, we make little progress at either the local, state, or national level. Conversely, if we collaborate and align toward common goals, we can have a profound impact.

This report includes highlights of our work in the past year that reflect how we are successfully finding ways to improve health systems in Illinois. It also looks to the future, outlining how we will expand upon what we’ve achieved to make an even greater impact in 2016. We invite you learn more about our continuing, growing, and urgent efforts to create a healthier Illinois.
The Challenge

Obesity has reached epidemic proportions in Illinois—62% of Illinois adults are overweight or obese. Given that obesity and overweight are primary determinants of cardiovascular diseases, cancer, respiratory diseases, and diabetes—already leading causes of death in Illinois—the implications of this epidemic for our state’s health and resources are staggering. In Illinois, adult obesity alone adds $6.1 billion to annual health care costs. For years, health advocates have been telling people to eat less and exercise more, but the evidence demonstrates that finger wagging in the face of broad societal barriers is not going to produce the results we need.

IPHI’s Approach

In 2010, IPHI launched and continues to coordinate the Illinois Alliance to Prevent Obesity (IAPO), a coalition that has solidified itself as the voice for obesity policy in Illinois. IAPO brings together a diverse group of organizations that are eager to face local challenges related to obesity prevention and effect state-level change. While obesity is often characterized as an individual problem, IAPO focuses on changing laws, systems, and physical environments to help Illinois residents make healthier choices.

2015 Impact

Last year, IAPO focused on several different legislative priorities that aim to curb the obesity epidemic in Illinois. One is the Healthy Eating/Active Living (HEAL) Act, which would raise more than $600 million per year to invest in the health of Illinoisans through a sugary drink tax, relieving the state’s Medicaid burden and funding prevention programs. Originally, 13 organizations signed on in support of the HEAL Act, and we helped grow that number to 65. IAPO has also supported a proposal to create statewide funding for farmer’s market programs in underserved communities, helping increase the number of collaborators from 3 to 13 organizations. Other efforts IAPO has been involved with include protecting daily physical education in all Illinois schools, improving the Safe Routes to Schools Program, and advocating for Medicaid coverage of chronic disease prevention and management programs.

What’s Next?

As the state budget impasse continues, we will continue to advocate for important proposals—including the HEAL Act and an investment in affordable access to farmers markets for low-income families. IPHI will be hosting a state forum project to bring together public health, community organizations, health care providers, and managed care organizations. These stakeholders will build a strategic and operational roadmap for connecting patients who are on the path to having diabetes to effective community services that will stop the disease in its tracks. With state leaders proposing the elimination of daily physical education, IAPO will closely monitor these legislative threats.
The Challenge

Under the Affordable Care Act, nonprofit hospitals must assess community health needs (CHNA) and adopt a health improvement implementation strategy; Illinois health departments also perform regular health improvement planning. With over 5 million residents in 77 Chicago community areas and 130 suburban municipalities, served by 50+ nonprofit hospitals and 6 health departments, Cook County presents a complex tapestry for CHNA. IPHI and our partners recognized how inefficient it was for these groups to separately compile the same data and engage the same community partners. More importantly, we saw that we were missing an opportunity to implement collective solutions to people’s most pressing health needs.

IPHI’s Approach

For two years, IPHI and hospital and health department partners explored the prospect of collaborating on CHNA and implementation planning. Then, early in 2015, IPHI and health care and public health leaders launched the Health Impact Collaborative of Cook County, focused on engaging stakeholders to assess community health needs and develop a plan to maximize health and health equity. By defining shared priorities, aligning strategic objectives, and building on existing community capacity, we can leverage our assets to have a profound collective impact on health in communities across the county.

2015 Impact

As the catalyst and facilitator of the Health Impact Collaborative of Cook County, IPHI is helping to lead the largest collaborative CHNA in the country. The initiative now involves 26 nonprofit and public hospitals, six local health departments, and representatives of over 100 community groups. “I am inspired by the commitment of our partners to collaboratively create sustainable health improvement impact,” says Jess Lynch, IPHI’s program manager. For the first time, the Chicago and Cook County Departments of Public Health are producing joint health outcome measures. Over 5,000 community residents answered a health and quality of life survey in four languages. Twenty-four focus groups have helped us understand the perspectives of people impacted by health disparities. This depth of community and partner engagement will provide the foundation to confront and solve the health inequities and challenges of our region.

What’s Next?

IPHI will continue to grow the collaborative, creating meaningful opportunities for cross-sectoral partnerships to reduce health inequities in Chicago and Cook County. IPHI will produce three regional CHNA reports that reflect key health issues county-wide and in the North, West, and South regions of Cook County, which hospitals will customize and enhance with their own unique perspectives. Building on the CHNA, IPHI will facilitate action planning around priority health issues to build alignment across health systems and launch collaborative implementation initiatives. The initiative is building a shared, data-driven blueprint to reduce health disparities in Cook County.
The Challenge

When it comes to community health, medical data doesn’t tell the whole story. “What really makes you healthy isn’t just what’s revealed at the doctor’s office or hospital,” says Peter Eckart, Co-Director of Data Across Sectors for Health (DASH) at IPHI. “Health is primarily determined by social factors like education, income, and jobs.” Most communities lack the resources and capacity to utilize this type of data to help improve health, so local decision-makers are missing critical information that could help them make a greater impact on reducing health disparities.

IPHI’s Approach

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has chosen IPHI, in partnership with the Michigan Public Health Institute, to lead DASH, a national initiative to empower communities by sharing data across multiple sectors to improve health. IPHI is expanding our influence beyond state lines by assisting ten grantees in communities across the nation as they develop, implement, and evaluate multi-sector data sharing projects. By building and disseminating the evidence base for the field, we can deepen and refine our understanding of data sharing strategies and increase the number, capacity, and quality of community data sharing initiatives.

2015 Impact

DASH’s initial focus was to develop a deeper understanding of the field by conducting an environmental scan. Through a literature review, key informant interviews, and a survey, we identified existing and emerging multi-sector data sharing initiatives for community health. The findings reflect a growing national interest in this type of work—which was made even more apparent when we received 409 submissions during the call-for-proposals for DASH. In November, DASH awarded grants to ten local projects that use data-informed approaches to address a range of public health challenges. At the DASH kickoff meeting, we set the stage for a collaborative effort that will identify and share learnings to move the field towards action.

What’s Next?

Over the next 18 months, IPHI will lead a learning collaborative to build capacity and accelerate knowledge of developing and implementing multi-sector data and information systems. DASH will facilitate peer-to-peer learning among the ten grantees, and will expand its reach by creating a shared platform to convey findings with other national multi-project initiatives. DASH will build a virtual network, which will provide expert guidance, technical assistance, shared knowledge, and facilitation of stakeholder engagement across sectors. The networking activities are intended to invite and leverage the participation of other initiatives across the country and extend the use and dissemination of evidence-based best practices.
IPHI is also engaged in many other public health initiatives in Illinois. Here is a sample of some of the projects we’re continuing to focus on in 2016.

Consultation and Technical Assistance to Health Departments

Pulling together meaningful data about a county or community’s health needs is essential, but can be a daunting challenge for health departments with limited resources and capacity. IPHI helps state and local health departments with community health assessments, planning, implementation, and evaluation activities. Barbara Jeffers, director of the Kane County Health Department, says it can be a struggle to pull together health plans in a timely and comprehensive way. Working with IPHI helped her department overcome those issues. “IPHI has a lot of expertise in helping counties address health issues systematically,” says Jeffers. “Now we have people who have never aligned themselves together—like first responders and educators—and they are partners at the table.”

Enhancing P.E. in Illinois

With strong evidence linking enhanced physical education (P.E.) with improvements in health, academics, and behavior, we’re continuing to advocate for strong, daily physical education in Illinois schools. IPHI works with the Illinois State Board of Education, school organizations, and other stakeholders to improve the quality of P.E. in Illinois. As a result of IPHI’s efforts, the state of Illinois adopted new learning standards that engage children in P.E. to better prepare them to be fit for a lifetime. Through partnerships with the Cook County Department of Public Health, the Illinois Department of Public Health, Chicago Community Trust, and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois, IPHI created an enhanced P.E. training curriculum and leads workshops throughout Illinois to help physical educators implement these standards. Over the current two year initiative, we expect to hold at least 20 trainings for nearly 600 P.E. teachers.

Health Impact Assessment

IPHI is conducting a Health Impact Assessment in collaboration with the Chicago Department of Public Health and the Chicago Department of Planning and Development. The project is engaging community stakeholders to inform the development of a two-mile, elevated walking and biking trail in the Englewood neighborhood of Chicago. The assessment will evaluate the safety, health, and environmental impacts of the trail and provide recommendations for how the development can maximize health benefits for Englewood residents.

Worksite Wellness Toolkit

IPHI is working with local health departments to improve their worksite wellness policies and environments related to food and beverages. After health departments look at their own food and beverage policies, they will work with community partner hospitals, schools, early childcare centers, municipalities, and private worksites to make similar healthy changes. As a first step, IPHI is developing a Worksite Wellness Toolkit focused on best practices for establishing a healthier food and beverage environment in a variety of settings. We also plan to develop a second toolkit focusing on improving physical activity and disease management/education programs at worksites.
Join Us As We Move Forward

Our work is often about things that may not be immediately apparent but always need to happen—like building relationships with a wide range of stakeholders to address urgent health needs. As IPHI looks ahead, we see great potential for our work to improve health systems in Illinois—but one thing is for certain: we can’t do it alone.

We know that in order to create lasting change, everyone in a community needs to be represented in the decision-making process. We’re only as strong as the partners we bring to the table. That’s why we’re committed to crossing boundaries, creating meaningful connections, and developing a shared vision.

IPHI is the catalyst and leader that brings community partners together throughout Illinois, utilizing our most powerful assets to achieve the greatest health impact possible. Through our five year strategic plan, we will continue to mobilize stakeholders to make statewide progress towards lowering health care costs and creating healthier and more equitable communities.

We thank all of our partners and funders, who helped us systematically tackle critical public health challenges this year. We invite you to join IPHI as we work to create a high-functioning public health system that maximizes physical, mental, and social well-being for all people in Illinois.

IPHI is grateful for our many foundation and project partner funders in 2015, including:

- Action Now Initiative
- Action For Healthy Foods
- Advocate Health Care
- American Heart Association – Voices for Healthy Kids
- Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
- Aurora Primary Care Consortium
- Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois
- Chicago Community Trust
- Chicago Department of Public Health
- Community Memorial Foundation / McAlpine Consulting for Growth
- Cook County Department of Public Health
- Illinois Department of Public Health
- Illinois Public Health Association
- Illinois State Board of Education
- Kane County Health Department
- Kankakee County Partnership for a Healthy Community
- Kendall County Department of Health
- Loyola University Medical Center / Gottlieb Hospital
- Mercy Hospital and Medical Center
- Mid-America Center for Public Health Practice at the University of Illinois at Chicago
- Mississippi State Department of Health
- National Network of Public Health Institutes/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- The Pew Charitable Trusts
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- New Orleans Health Department
- Northshore University Health System
- Norwegian American Hospital
- Oklahoma State Department of Health
- Presence Health
- Respiratory Health Association of Illinois
- RML Specialty Hospital
- Rush University Medical Center / Rush Oak Park Hospital
- University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute