
Overview

Part 1 tells the story of public health in transition in America today. This transformation in public health is being driven by the Essential Public Health Services, as delineated by the Public Health Functions Steering Committee in 1995. These services are emerging as the guideposts by which public health agencies will establish direction for strategic planning and action for the foreseeable future. The Essential Public Health Services represent, in many ways, a return to the initial charge of public health. They signal a shift

- in focus from treating disease to sustaining health; from solving isolated problems to creating a preferred future; from an individual's needs to a broader perspective on the health of populations;
- in strategy from treating illness to promoting prevention; from being focused on needs and problems to looking at community-wide assets and opportunities; from being reactive to being proactive;
- in guiding principles from managing individual health system components to supporting the dynamic interaction of these components through a systems and community approach to health; and setting expectations, outcomes, and accountability that can only be achieved through empowerment.

The three-year-plus process of translating the Essential Public Health Services into performance standards is nearing completion as the National Public Health Performance Standards Program prepares for rollout in 2002. In effect, the model community standards described for each Essential Public Health Service are best practices against which all public health agencies and their community partners will soon be compared. Successful performance by local public health systems will reflect the