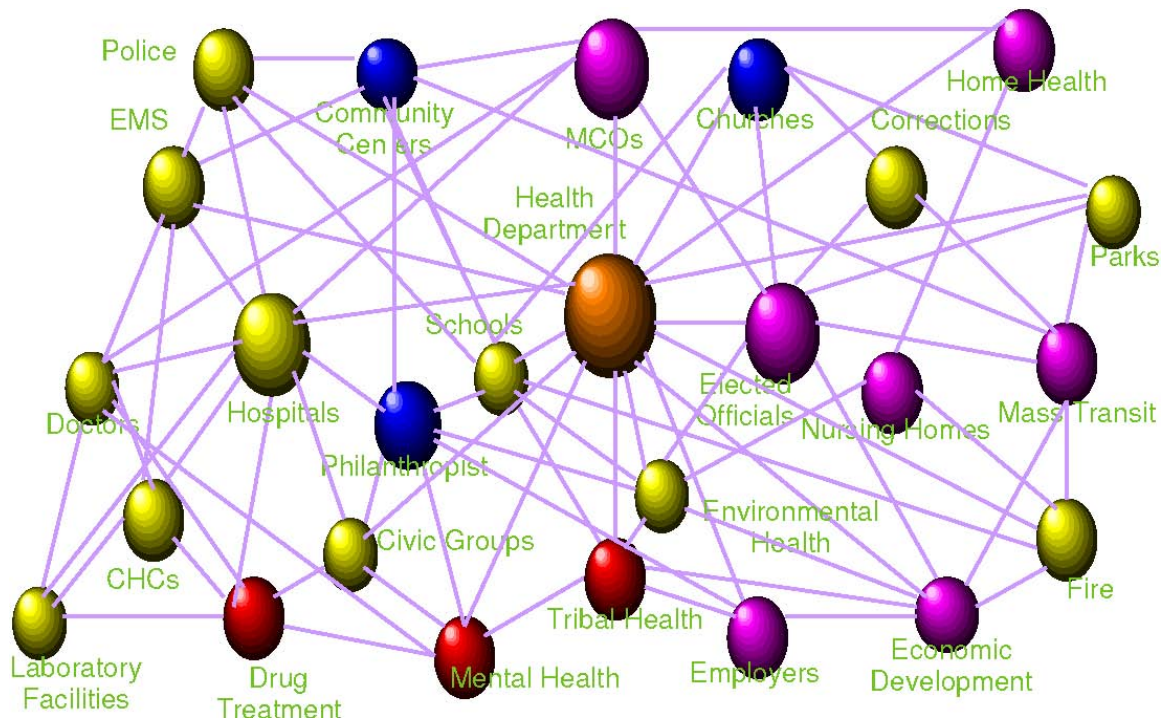


# The Local Public Health System Assessment



**Okeechobee County, Florida**  
**August 2011**



# **The Local Public Health System Assessment**

## **Purpose**

The Local Public Health System Assessment (LPHSA) Instrument is an initiative first established by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in 1998. Collaborative partners for LPHSA development and implementation nationally include the CDC, the American Public Health Association, National Association of County and City Health Officials, The Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, The National Association of Local Boards of Health, and the Public Health Foundation.

This assessment highlights the CDC's Ten Essential Public Health Services, which provide standards for quality in public health. The LPHSA centers around four concepts. First, the assessment highlights the Ten Essential Public Health Services identified by the CDC and other national public health entities, as being a necessary foundation for public health activity. The standards provide an optimal level of performance. Each performance standard represents the "gold standard" or "best-practice" in that area. The standards are intended to support a continual process of quality improvement for local health system partners.

## **The Ten Essential Public Health Services**

1. Monitor Health Status to Identify Community Health Problems
2. Diagnose and Investigate Health Problems and Health Hazards in the Community
3. Inform, Educate, and Empower People about Health Issues
4. Mobilize Community Partnerships to Identify and Solve Health Problems
5. Develop Policies and Plans that Support Individual and Community Health Efforts
6. Enforce Laws and Regulations that Protect Health and Ensure Safety
7. Link People to Needed Personal Health Services and Assure the Provision of Health Care when Otherwise Unavailable
8. Assure a Competent Public and Personal Health Care Workforce
9. Evaluate Effectiveness, Accessibility, and Quality of Personal and Population-Based Health Services
10. Research for New Insights and Innovative Solutions to Health Problems

## **Methodology**

In order to complete the Local Public Health Assessment Instrument (LPHSA), the Okeechobee County Health Department convened several meetings with the Health Council of South East Florida, Inc. during the months of May, and June 2011 to establish and formulate the scope of service, structure and process by which to conduct the County's Health Needs Assessment. Best practices around the LPHS were also discussed. On August 2, 2011 a community meeting comprised of key leaders and stakeholders who represented a cross- section of the local public health care system was convened in Okeechobee County. The meeting included 28 public health system partners who were invited to assess how the Local public Health System in the Okeechobee County was performing in comparison to a set of national standards. Participants included representatives from organizations that contribute to the delivery of health services in Okeechobee County, including the local public health agency, community health centers, social service providers, the Okeechobee School District, faith-based organizations, philanthropic, local governmental agencies, and many others.

Participants were provided with a brief overview of the Essential Public Health Services, goals and the purpose of completing the assessment. The group discussed the assessment and answered questions in reference to the essential public health services and its respective model standards. The discussion was facilitated by staff of the Health Council of South East Florida, Inc. Participants were asked to answer specific questions related to each of the essential public health services and asked to come to a consensus regarding the level of performance for each of the services in the assessment instrument. The answers were recorded manually and subsequently submitted electronically to the CDC for evaluation and results. The results were provided to the Okeechobee County Health Department in early September 2011. The results herein are presented in the aggregate. It is anticipated that this assessment will be conducted again on or before 2016 during which time these benchmarks for improvement provided here can be measured again to gauge progress in community health systems-wide.

## **Results and Data Limitations**

Community health partners should understand the potential data limitations and how to appropriately interpret the assessment results to improve the public health system. The responses to the questions within the assessment are based upon processes that utilize input from diverse system participants with different experiences and perspectives. The gathering of these inputs and the development of a response for each question incorporates an element of subjectivity, which can be minimized through the use of particular assessment methods. Bear in mind that the assessment methods are not fully standardized and these differences may introduce an element of measurement error. Because of the inherent limitations noted, the results below and associated recommendations should be used for quality improvement purposes.

The use of these results by community partners to strengthen the public health system is the most important part of the performance improvement process that the National Public Health Performance System Program (NPHPS) intends to promote. Hence, results should be utilized for guiding an overall public health infrastructure and performance improvement process for the

public health system. The data and results should not be interpreted to reflect the capacity or performance of any single agency or organization.

The following chart highlights the summary scores for each of the ten essential services. This visual provides a snapshot of the overall status of the assessment results. The information provided below presents detailed recommendations and opportunities provided by the CDC for the community's consideration as they move forward with health planning from a systems perspective.

### Performance Assessment Instrument Results

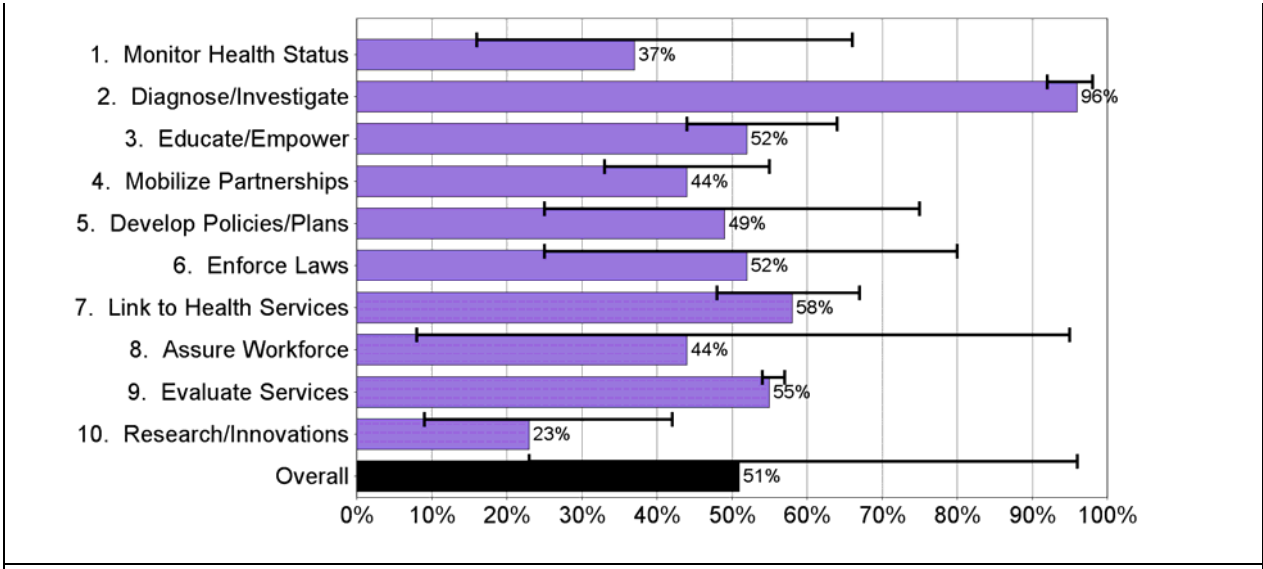
#### How well did the system perform the ten Essential Public Health Services (EPHS)?

**Table 1:** Summary of performance scores by Essential Public Health Service (EPHS)

EPHS		Score
1	Monitor Health Status To Identify Community Health Problems	37
2	Diagnose And Investigate Health Problems and Health Hazards	96
3	Inform, Educate, And Empower People about Health Issues	52
4	Mobilize Community Partnerships to Identify and Solve Health Problems	44
5	Develop Policies and Plans that Support Individual and Community Health Efforts	49
6	Enforce Laws and Regulations that Protect Health and Ensure Safety	52
7	Link People to Needed Personal Health Services and Assure the Provision of Health Care when Otherwise Unavailable	58
8	Assure a Competent Public and Personal Health Care Workforce	44
9	Evaluate Effectiveness, Accessibility, and Quality of Personal and Population-Based Health Services	55
10	Research for New Insights and Innovative Solutions to Health Problems	23
Overall Performance Score		51

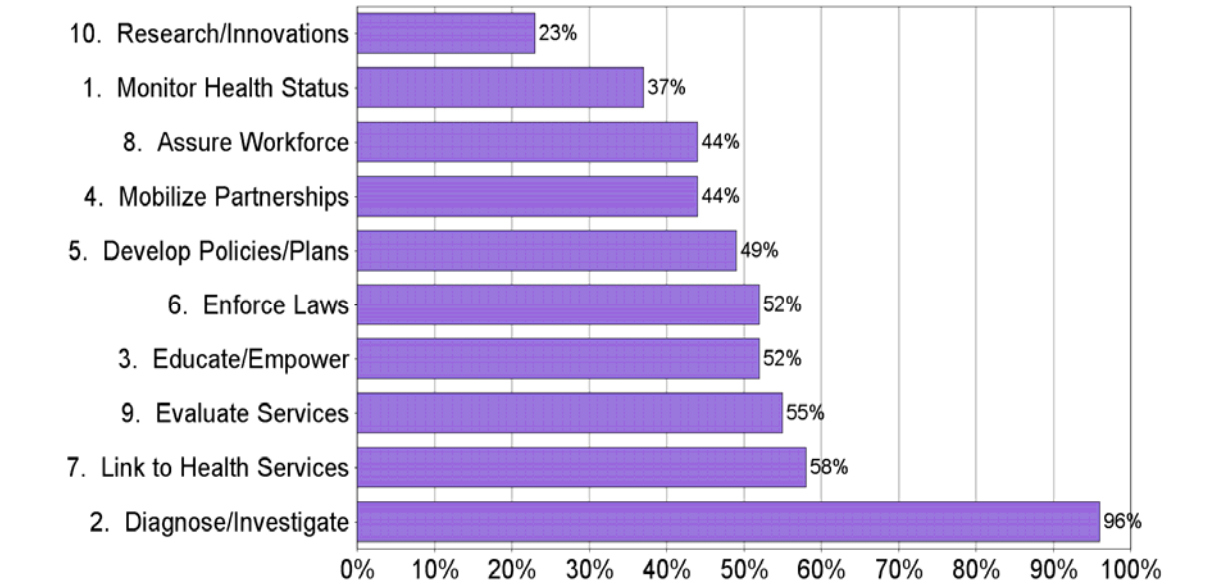
**Table 1** (above) provides a quick overview of the system's performance in each of the 10 Essential Public Health Services (EPHS). Each EPHS score is a composite value determined by the scores given to those activities that contribute to each Essential Service. These scores range from a minimum value of 0% (no activity is performed pursuant to the standards) to a maximum of 100% (all activities associated with the standards are performed at optimal levels).

**Figure 1:** Summary of EPHS performance scores and overall score (with range)



**Figure 1** (above) displays performance scores for each Essential Service along with an overall score that indicates the average performance level across all 10 Essential Services. The range bars show the minimum and maximum values of responses within the Essential Service and an overall score.

**Figure 2:** Summary of EPHS performance scores and overall score (ranked low to high)



**Figure 2** (above) displays each composite score from low to high, allowing for easy identification of service domains where performance is relatively strong or weak.

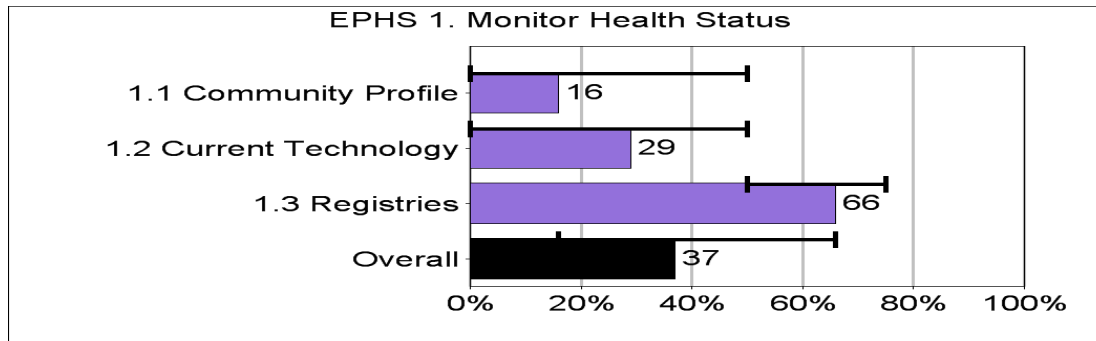
### Score Detail Methodology

The NPHPSP assessment instruments are developed using the Essential Public Health Services (EPHS) as a framework. Within the Local Instrument, each EPHS includes between 2-4 model standards that describe the key aspects of an optimally performing public health system. Each model standard is followed by assessment questions that serve as measures of performance. Each site's responses to these questions should indicate how well the model standard, which portrays the highest level of performance or "gold standard", is being met.

Sites responded to assessment questions using the options below. These same categories are used in this report to characterize levels of activity for Essential Services and model standards.

NO ACTIVITY	0% or absolutely no activity.
MINIMAL ACTIVITY	Greater than zero, but no more than 25% of the activity described within the question is met.
MODERATE ACTIVITY	Greater than 25%, but no more than 50% of the activity described within the question is met.
SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITY	Greater than 50%, but no more than 75% of the activity described within the question is met.
OPTIMAL ACTIVITY	Greater than 75% of the activity described within the question is met.

## Essential Public Service #1: Monitor Health of the Community



### **Best Practices in Essential Service #1 are identified as:**

- Conducting a community health assessment to identify public health risks and inform public health planning.
- Reviewing available health data to identify the most prevalent health problems.
- Identifying groups of people who are at-risk for becoming ill for lack of health insurance and other social -economic situations.
- Developing a community health profile to educate community leaders about public health promotion.
- Establishing a website to provide health promotion and disease prevention information about persistent health problems within a community.

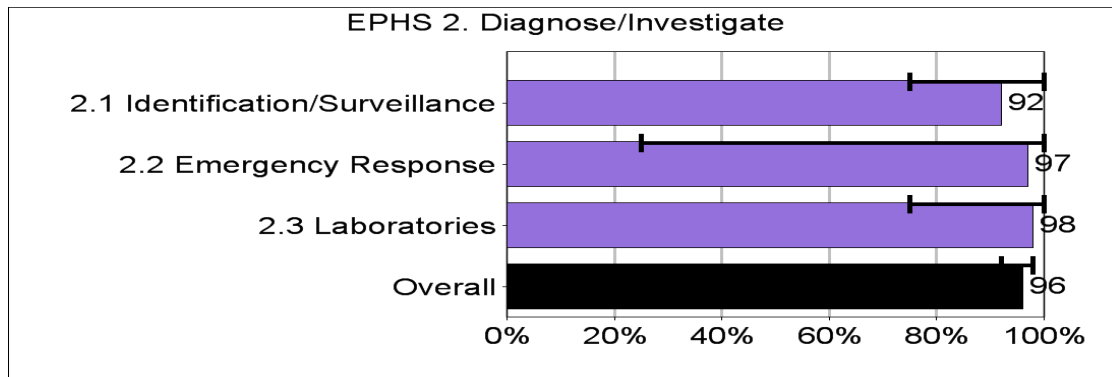
### **Our Local Public Health System Strengths in this area were:**

- Health system partners do a fair amount of monitoring the health status of Okeechobee County residents.
- Health system partners identify racial and ethnic minorities who are at a greater risk of needing and seeking health services.
- Health system partners maintain and regularly contribute to population health registries to report identified health events registries (e.g. disease and immunizations registries).

### **Overall, according to the LPHSA our community moderately meets this standard, but indicated the following areas as opportunities to improve:**

- By conducting community health assessments to monitor progress towards health-related objectives.
- By increasing access to geo-coded health data, and uses computer-generated graphics to identify trends and compare data.
- By promoting community-wide use of the health assessment and community health profile data for systems-wide strategic planning for health improvement.

## Essential Public Service #2: Diagnose and Investigate Community Health Problems and Hazards in the Community



**Best Practices** in Essential Service #2 are identified as:

- Investigating food borne outbreaks.
- Communicating serious health threats to community in timely manner.
- Developing emergency response plans for public health emergencies.
- Responding to public health emergencies including disease outbreaks or terrorism.
- Ensuring access to laboratory with capacity for sampling.

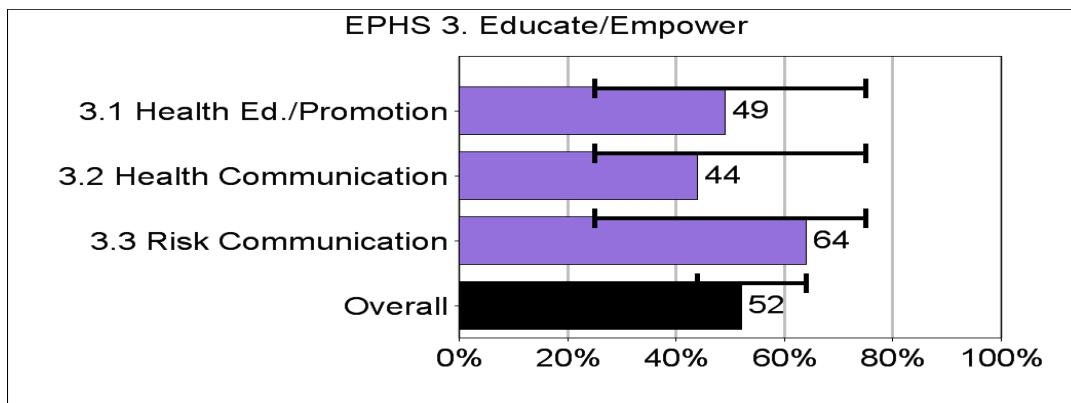
**Our Local Public Health System Strengths** in this area were:

- Health System partners are very active in identifying, diagnosing and analyzing health threats and emergencies.
- The agency partners are aware of and collaborate with local and national surveillance systems to identify and analyze public health threats.
- Health system partners collect reportable disease information and plan appropriately for public health emergencies and disasters.
- Health system partners are collaborative in its approach to investigating and responding to public health emergencies and disasters, and have procedures to alert communities about health threats and disease outbreaks.
- Health system partners have access to laboratory support for investigation of health threats, as well as epidemiologists and statisticians.

**Overall, according to the LPHSA our community does an excellent job meeting this standard.**



## Essential Public Health Service #3: Inform, Educate, and Empower



### **Best Practices in Essential Service #3 are identified as:**

- Providing health information on ongoing public health issues that is easy for people to get and understand, such as influenza and West Nile Virus prevention, cancer and obesity prevention, and bioterrorism preparedness.
- Developing and providing health promotion activities in partnership with schools, faith communities, work sites, personal care providers and others to reduce health risks and promote better health.
- Developing effective communication processes designed to keep the community at large informed and be able to mobilize resources in times of crisis.

### **Our Local Public Health System Strengths in this area were:**

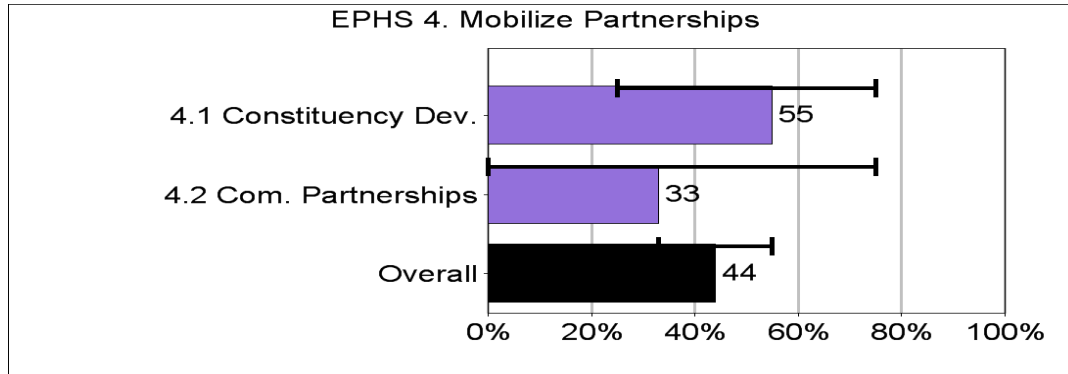
- Health system partners provide community residents with information on seasonal and ongoing public health issues, such as flu and blood-borne illnesses and prevention.
- Health system partners utilize various media channels, including print, radio, and internet to promote health related events.
- Health system partners provide crisis and emergency communications training for employees and establish protocols for the dissemination of public information during a public health emergency.
- Health system partners do a good job ensuring adequate resources should a rapid emergency response is needed.

### **Overall, according to the LPHSA our community does significant work and meets this standard, but indicated the following areas as opportunities to improve.**

- By providing additional health specific education, in particular to diverse groups, targeting health disparities within specific health populations.
- By assessing and evaluating the effectiveness of health education activities.
- By convening other health organizations (e.g., hospital) within community to develop community-wide health improvement plan.
- By identifying groups most in need in terms of health education efforts.
- By assessing community-wide health promotion activities which emphasize collaboration among system partners.

- By coordinating agreements between other community health organizations to determine specific roles and responsibilities toward improving community's health.

## Essential Public Health Service # 4: Mobilize Community Partners



### **Best Practices in Essential Service #4 are identified as:**

- Identifying and convening other health organizations (e.g., hospital, CBO's) within community to develop community-wide health improvement plan.
- Coordinating agreements between other community health organizations to determine specific roles and responsibilities toward improving community's health.
- Expanding partnerships among groups and associations to improve community health.

### **Our Local Public Health System Strengths in this area were:**

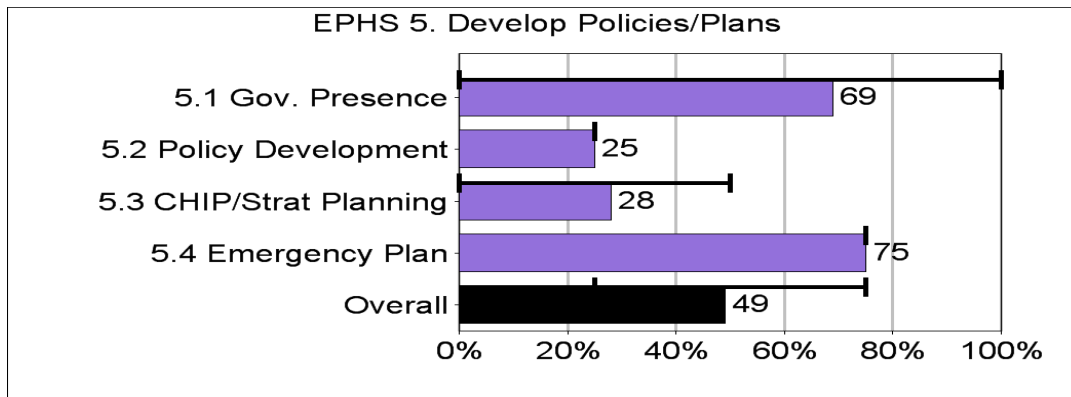
- Health system partners identify key constituents, and encourage these constituents in improving community health.
- Health system partners establish a broad-based community health improvement committee. This was identified as the Shared Services Network.
- Health system partners actively seek new ways to respond to the needs of the community by broadening communication strategies to provide current information about health services and issues.

### **Overall, according to the LPHSA our community moderately meets this standard, but indicated the following areas as opportunities to improve.**

- By increasing and expanding community partnerships to include businesses, diverse groups and citizens.
- By creating, maintaining and updating periodically a current directory of organizations that comprise the local public health system.
- By assessing the effectiveness of community partnerships in implementing prioritized goals.
- By strengthening the volunteer network through retention, recruitment and promotion related activities.

- By optimizing resources to deliver public essential services.

## Essential Public Service #5: Policy Development



### **Best Practices in Essential Service #5 are identified as:**

- Having an established governmental presence at the local level to advocate for policies that will improve public health.
- Having an established governmental presence at the local level to help develop policy, protect the health of the public and to guide the practice of public health.
- Having a process in place by which to effectively coordinate policy, resources and strategies to bring about a community health improvement plan.

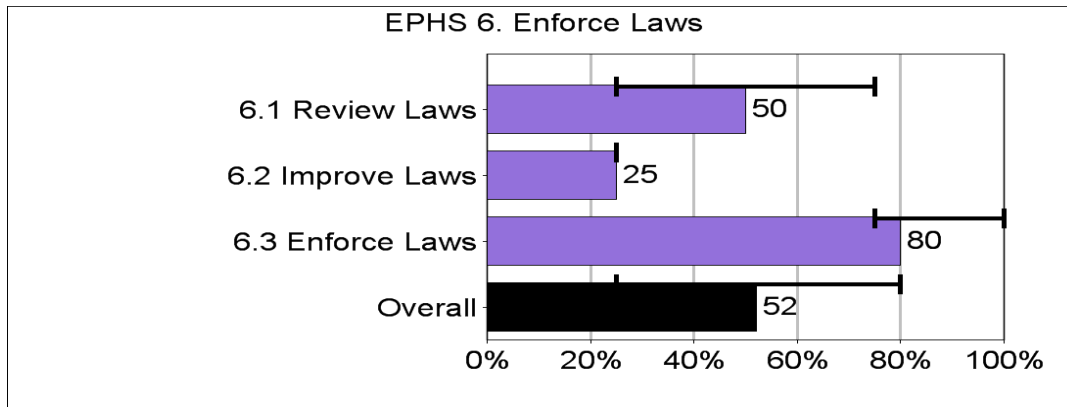
### **Our Local Public Health System Strengths in this area were:**

- Health system partners include a local government public health entity, which was identified as the Okeechobee County Health Department. This public health entity is aligned with the state public health system.
- Health system partners include the presence of a local health planning council and other system partners that conduct regional health planning and implementation activities to improve access to healthcare and advocates on behalf of the underserved.
- Health system partners establish a task force to develop and maintain emergency preparedness and response plans.

***Overall, according to the LPHSA our community moderately meets this standard, but indicated the following areas as opportunities to improve:***

- By assuring participation of stakeholders in implementation of a community health improvement plan.
- By establishing a community health improvement process.
- By ensuring that each entity within the local public health system conducts a strategic planning process, and reviews its organizational strategic plan.
- By participating on state and/or advisory panels responsible for developing strategies to achieve community health improvement objectives.

## Essential Public Service #6: Enforce Laws and Regulations



### **Best Practices in Essential Services #6 are identified as:**

- Enforcing public health code.
- Protecting drinking water supplies.
- Conducting timely inspections (i.e., restaurants, tattoo parlors, campgrounds, day care)
- Conducting timely environmental inspections (i.e. septic systems, pools, lead abatement)
- Following up on hazardous environmental exposures and preventable injuries.
- Serve quarantine/isolation order to individual infected with infectious diseases such as Tuberculosis, SARS, or Smallpox.
- Assisting in revising outdated public health laws and development of proposed public health legislation.

### **Our Local Public Health System Strengths in this area were:**

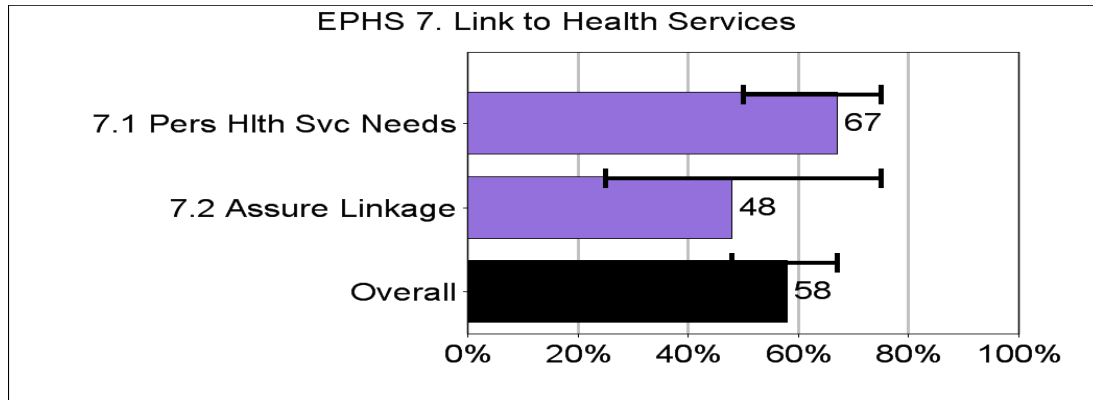
- Health system partners do a good job in identifying organizations within the LPHS that have the authority to enforce health laws, regulations and ordinances and empowering them to do so.
- Health system partners such as The Okeechobee County Health Department are especially empowered to implement necessary community interventions in the event of a public emergency.
- Health system partners assure that all enforcement activities are conducted in accordance with laws, regulations and ordinances.
- Health system partners provide information about public health laws, regulations and ordinances to system partners required to comply with laws.

### **Overall, according to the LPHSA our community met this standard significantly, but indicated the following areas as opportunities to improve:**

- By identifying local public health issues that are not adequately addressed through existing laws, regulations, and ordinances.

- By providing technical assistance to legislative regulatory or advocacy groups for drafting proposed legislation, regulations, or ordinances.

## Essential Public Service #7: Link People to Health Services



### **Best Practices in Essential Services #7 are identified as:**

- Establishing and maintaining a referral network for provision of personal health services to ensure that people who cannot afford health care get the care they need.
- Distributing mass quantities of antibiotics or vaccines in event of widespread disease outbreak (e.g., pandemic flu) or bio-terror-related attack (i.e., smallpox or anthrax)
- Identifying and locating special populations with barriers to personal health services; such as low-income families, minorities, and the uninsured.
- Providing culturally and language appropriate materials so that special groups of people can be linked with preventive services.

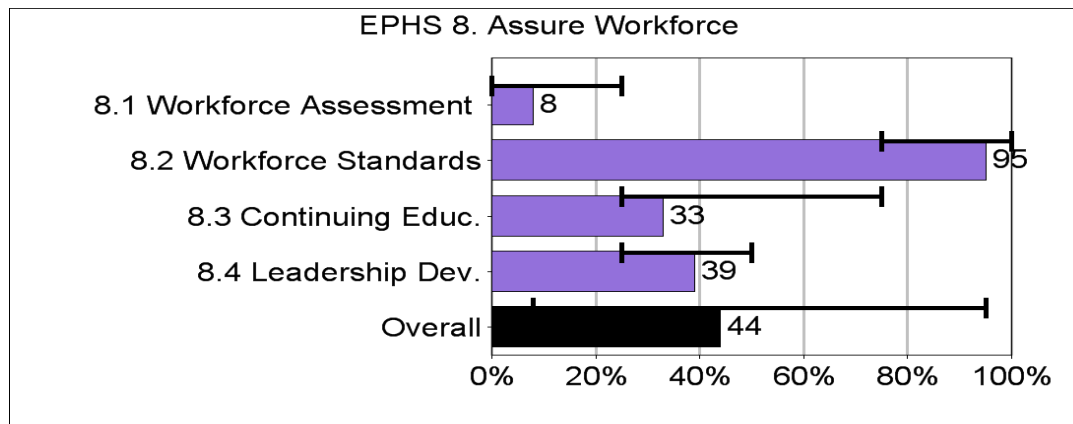
### **Our Local Public Health System Strengths in this area were:**

- Health system partners Identify the personal health service needs of populations who may experience barriers to personal health services.
- Health system partners define personal health service needs for all areas.

***Overall, according to the LPHSA our community met this standard substantially, but indicated the following areas as opportunities to improve:***

- By assuring linkage to needed personal services to patient populations with barriers to care. (e. g. English Limited proficiency populations, the uninsured, underinsured, homeless and disabled patient-populations).
- By providing transportation services for those with special needs.

## Essential Public Service #8: Assure A Competent Workforce



### **Best practices in Essential Service #8 are identified as:**

- Maintaining public health workforce standards and integrating core health competencies needed to provide the essential public health services into personnel systems.
- Funding professional development opportunities for staff.
- Testing emergency response plan during mock event to evaluate performance.

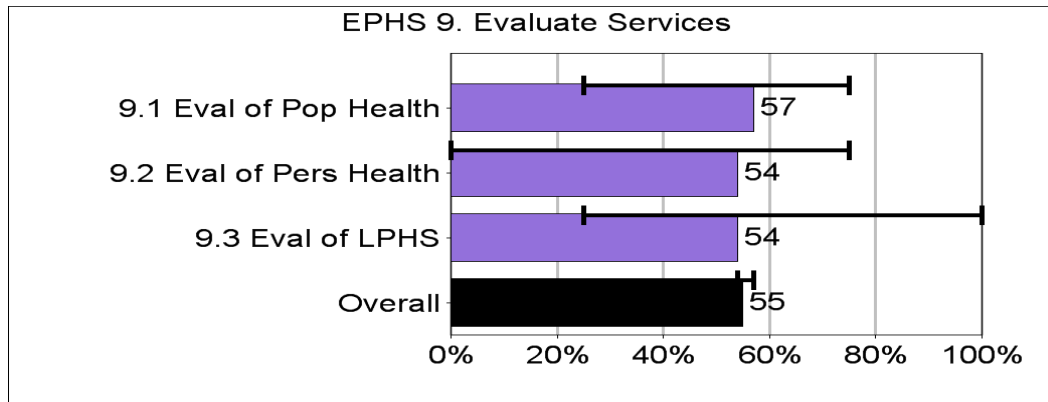
### **Our Local Public Health System Strengths in this area were:**

- Health system partners have done an outstanding job in developing written job standards and reviewing them periodically for all Local Health Department personnel.
- The Local Health Department has done an excellent job in conducting performance evaluations.
- Health system partners provide opportunities for health care personnel to develop core public health competencies.

### **Overall, according to the LPHSA our community has moderately met this standard, but indicated the following areas as opportunities to improve:**

- By establishing a collaborative process whereby gaps in the personal health workforce are addressed.
- By providing additional opportunities for continuing education, training and mentoring.
- By encouraging Public Health Leadership Development via accredited educational institutions.

## Essential Public Service #9: Evaluate Services



### **Best Practices in Essential Service # 9 are identified as:**

- Monitoring trends in disease rates to assess effectiveness of disease prevention activities.
- Monitoring trends in risk factors (i.e., unprotected sex, drinking-and-driving, smoking) to assessing effectiveness of health promotion activities.
- Evaluating effectiveness of public health programs and services.

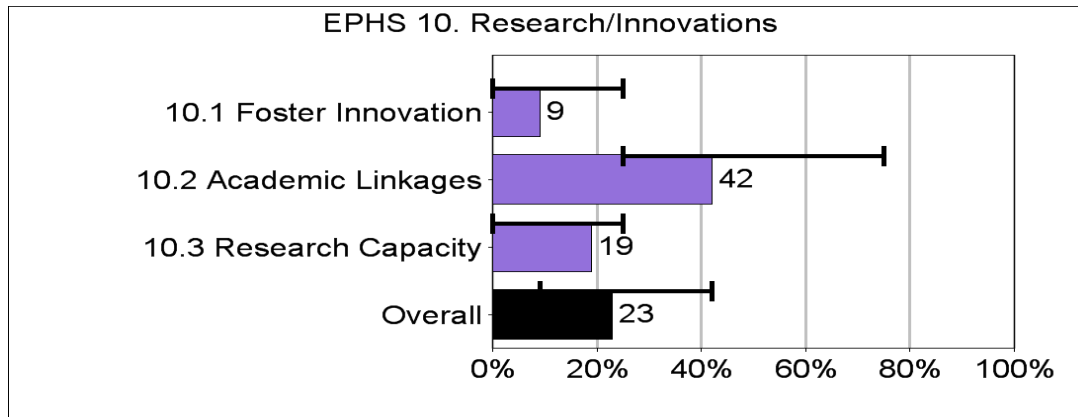
### **Our Local Public Health System Strengths in this area were:**

- Health system partners systematically gather input from residents that represent a cross-section of the community.
- Health system partners identify gaps in the provision of population-based health services.

### **Overall, according to the LPHSA our community significantly met this standard and indicated the following areas as opportunities to improve:**

- By conducting an evaluation of the Local Public Health System every three to five years.
- By using the results of these evaluations to develop strategic and operational plans and guide community health improvements.
- By regularly assessing and evaluating health education programs.

## Essential Public Service #10: Research for New Insights



### **Best Practices in Essential Service #10 are identified as:**

- Monitoring rapidly changing disease prevention research and health promotion research.
- Revising practices in order to remain current with recommended practices resulting from evidence-based research.

### **Our Local Public Health System Strengths in this area were:**

- Health system partners collaborate with an institution of higher learning that conducts research on public health related issues.

### **Overall, according to the LPHSA our community conducts minimal activity in this area, and indicated the following areas as opportunities to improve:**

- By evaluating research activities in epidemiological, policy and service research activities.
- By providing opportunities for staff to pilot test, design and conduct studies to determine the feasibility of implementing new ideas.
- By participating in public health practice based research networks.

All entities that contribute to the health and well-being of the community including public, private entities, civic and business groups, philanthropic, faith and educational institutions, impact the community health system. Collaborative discussion surrounding the results and potential areas for improvement can also increase awareness of the interconnectedness of community health activities. The goal is for agencies to identify strengths and weaknesses of the local health system that can be addressed through specific improvement efforts both as individual entities, as well as community health partners.