

City of Milwaukee Health Department  
2008 Proposed Department Reorganization  
Executive Summary

Purpose Statement

The City of Milwaukee Health Department (MHD) is proposing the attached re-organization of its management infrastructure for 2008.

Background

Despite minor adjustments made in 2007 involving reporting relationships, the MHD has essentially been working under the same divisional structural model since abandoning the bureau model many years ago. Public health trends and priorities have changed dramatically since then. Today, there is a stronger emphasis on working farther “upstream” (e.g., addressing some of the social and economic determinants of health, which will be a focus of our Center for Health Equity) and on models to more effectively cross-matrix in addressing our priority health concerns.

Given the impending public health workforce shortage due to retirements and projections of a marked decrease in entry level professionals in the coming decade, another strategy to addressing the greatest health issues impacting the City of Milwaukee is to support public health workforce development. In addition to the establishment of an accredited school of public health at UW-Milwaukee, MHD’s partnership and collaboration with that school as a formal and high-functioning Academic Health Department is essential.

Proposed Plan

**Redefinition of former Health Operations Director position to Public Health Research & Policy Director:** The MHD reorganization restructures the Health Operations Director position to a Public Health Policy & Research Director to serve as principal staff advisor to the Commissioner of Health regarding Milwaukee Health Department policy and research activities and will provide key assistance in establishing a School of Public Health at UW-Milwaukee with MHD as an essential Academic Health Department partner to that school. This position, in close coordination with the Commissioner of Health, will also be responsible for policy coordination, legislation development, and for the oversight of all departmental research, evaluation, and analysis of programmatic effectiveness. This new resource will enhance MHD’s ability to successfully compete for funding opportunities at the state and federal levels, will oversee the review and assessment of public health best practices, and will make policy recommendations to the Commissioner.

**Creation of Community Health Services Officer:** This position is responsible for the development and management of proactive community partnerships that involve private sector entities, healthcare systems, federally qualified health centers, community groups, faith communities, coalitions, and educational institutions that support the MHD’s strategic public health goals and objectives. This position will oversee and work in tandem with departmental program managers in the coordination of strategic partnerships assist in improving health outcomes in the areas of infant mortality, teen pregnancy and STD/HIV. In addition, this position will advise the Commissioner of Health on best practices and community initiatives to further advance public health priorities and public policy.

**Creation of Health Operations Administrator Position:** The Health Operations Administrator serves as the principal staff advisor to the Commissioner of Health regarding Milwaukee Health Department (MHD) operations and administrative services. This position provides ongoing leadership and day-to-day guidance to senior management personnel assigned to the Disease Control and Prevention, Family & Community Health Services division as well as Laboratory, Community Relations, Communications and Clinic Operations as assigned by the Commissioner.

**Consolidation of Disease Control and Environmental Health:** Vibrant and robust Environmental Health Programs remain a core function of modern public health agencies and the proposed reorganization recognizes, integrates and prioritizes this activity. The Consumer Environmental Health Division Manager position will be eliminated and the Division will be shifted under the division formerly known as Disease Control and Prevention (DCP). Disease Control and Environmental Health (DCEH) will also include Home Environmental Health, which will be shifted from its current position in the division of Family and Community Health.

The Disease Control and Environmental Health Division will thus consist of the following areas:

- Home Environmental Health
- Consumer Environmental Health
- Communicable and Emerging Disease
- Acute and Communicable Disease Epidemiology
- Sexually Transmitted Disease and HIV
- Public Health Emergency Planning and Response

This will allow all environmental and inspectional functions to be housed under one division. Consolidation of department environmental programs within the newly formed Division of Disease Control and Environmental Health Services has several advantages:

- Allows for cross-training and improved versatility and response by departmental staff as related to a wide range of community complaint investigations related to adverse environmental exposures. Among these are hazardous materials spill assessments; indoor air quality and mold investigations; and food borne illness outbreak response.
- Supports development and integration of standardized approaches to data collection, management, and analysis and program evaluation through implementation of field information system-based technologies.
- Provides economies of scale to be realized in the deployment and management of environmental health staff related to natural and man-made emergency incidents, and achievement of improved levels of continuity and efficiency in overall response.
- Establishes additional potential career paths for employees, thus enhancing staff retention and improving morale necessary for assurance of a competent future workforce.
- Promotes close working relationships between various professionals in the Division including epidemiologists, public health nurses and communicable disease specialists, allowing for better leveraging of knowledge, skills and abilities among a cross-set of public health professionals, and creating more innovative and creative approaches to intervention and prevention strategies.

**Focusing of Family and Community Health:** Originally, the MCH Manager position was responsible exclusively for maternal and child health programs. Over the last several years the Health Department has pursued several different models of delivering maternal and child health services to the community in an effort to reduce the infant mortality rate and infant health disparities in the City. Two intensive home visiting programs which emphasize healthy birth outcomes have been implemented: Empowering Families of Milwaukee and Nurse Family Partnership. The addition of these programs and the responsibilities associated with securing funding, monitoring the delivery of services and compliance with public health outcomes have significantly impacted the scope of authority and responsibility of this position and its involvement in coalition-building, fiscal, and program planning/evaluation activities.

In 2007 the MHD consolidated many of the programs formerly associated with the Healthcare Access and Services Division under the MCH Manager. The MCH position became consequently responsible for activities and personnel responsible for promoting and facilitating health care access for at risk populations, tobacco control and prevention, and outreach to vulnerable and chronically ill adults. In 2008, this position will also be responsible for the development and implementation of a new Men's Health Program within the Milwaukee Health Department.

In this new structure, the division of Family and Community Health will consist of the following areas:

- Maternal and Child Health, including all current MCH programs such as team nursing and the intensive home visiting programs
- MCH & Chronic Disease Epidemiology
- Men's Health

### Summary and Conclusion

In summary, the proposed 2008 MHD reorganization has been strategically and thoughtfully designed to closely align with the public health and policy issues that will be important over the next 5 years and beyond. These changes are the result of the MHD's efforts to create and organizational structure that will enhance its ability to focus on public health education, research and public health policy initiatives while achieving better coordination and delivery of public health services.