

# **City of Milwaukee Health Department Budget Hearing**

Presented to the City of Milwaukee Common Council  
Members of the Finance & Personnel Committee

Alderman Nik Kovac, Chair  
Alderman Joe Dudzik, Vice Chair  
Alderman Ashanti Hamilton  
Alderwoman Milele A. Coggs  
Alderman Terry Witkowski

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By

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City of Milwaukee Health Department

## **INTRODUCTION**

Good morning, Mr. Chair and members of the Finance and Personnel Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you about the City of Milwaukee Health Department's (MHD) 2015 proposed budget. I am pleased to note that MHD was able to meet its funding reduction target. Our budget includes approximately \$12.8 million in O&M Funding and \$11.2 million in grant funding, yielding a total proposed budget of \$24 million. This proposed budget maintains 2014 service levels and supports a strong and talented workforce that is committed to improving the health of individuals and families in Milwaukee.

At its core, public health involves the prevention of disease and ensuring that the public has the necessary information to make healthy choices and prolong life. We partner with public and private organizations at the local, state, and federal level to protect the public's health. More specifically, MHD is committed to improving healthy birth outcomes, increasing immunization compliance for children, reducing lead hazards, employing surveillance to curb the spread of communicable disease, consumer protection and violence prevention through public health methodologies.

MHD's proposed 2015 budget supports several major priorities. Briefly, I would like to highlight a few key areas:

### **ACADEMIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

First, in 2015 MHD will continue to develop and strengthen our role as one of the nation's premier academic health departments. The strategy is important, as it is our duty and obligation precept tomorrow's public health workforce. We currently demonstrate this commitment through our affiliation with both the Medical College of Wisconsin and the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health. Population Health Fellows and Medical Residents from these institutions receive unique practical experience at MHD. Additionally, nursing, clinical laboratory science, dietetics and nutrition students intern with MHD and receive unparalleled real-world experience in public health practices.

Moreover, most notable is our strong relationship with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Joseph J. Zilber School of Public Health (ZSPH). We are now pleased to have several MHD staff serve as Adjunct Faculty with ZSPH. Our MHD employees located at ZSPH enjoy a fertile ground for academic collaboration, data sharing and synergistic research efforts.

## **INFANT MORTALITY**

Infant mortality rates are utilized as a global indicator of population health. Sadly, for more than a decade there has been more infant deaths than homicides in our city. For example, 2013 data indicated that 117 babies died and our overall three-year rolling average Infant Mortality Rate increased slightly to 10.3 deaths per 1,000 live births. These statistics suggest that there is still much work to be done in our community to reach our citywide goal of 9.4 deaths per 1000 live births by 2017.

MHD will continue to address the reduction of infant mortality and the promotion of healthy birth outcomes through comprehensive public education, community partnerships, direct service, research and evaluation. In 2015, we will intensify our work with community partners, including the Milwaukee Lifecourse Initiative for Healthy Families.

## **TEEN PREGNANCY PREVENTION**

In 2008, Mayor Barrett, MHD, and the United Way of Greater Milwaukee set a bold goal to reduce Milwaukee's teen birth rate 46% by 2015. Proudly, in October 2013 Mayor Barrett announced that we met and surpassed this goal three years early. Further, Milwaukee's teen birth rates have declined for six consecutive years, and by 2012, the teen birth rate had dropped by fifty percent. While this is encouraging news, we must redouble our efforts and collaboration with community partners to maintain the trend of declining teen birth rates.

## **DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION**

We are taking action to reduce the burden of disease in our community. The MHD continues to collaborate with community-based organizations to reduce the incidence of HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STI). Our targeted STI/HIV prevention initiative, which includes surveillance and community outreach, is an excellent example of activity tailored to meet critical emerging patterns of disease transmission. We continue to work with community partners including Diverse & Resilient, the AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin, and the Black Health Coalition of Wisconsin on education and outreach initiatives directed toward education and outreach to reduce STI and HIV infection rates.

MHD will continue to deploy staff and resources for outbreak management. Investigations of multiple diseases, including mumps and shigella this past year reinforced this need. What's more, this proposed budget supports our all hazard approach to emergency public health preparedness.

## **IMMUNIZATIONS**

Non-compliance with immunizations can lead to outbreaks of vaccine preventable disease and severe illness in our community. This risk is greatest among school age children.

In 2013, the Immunization Program held more than 250 clinics where we administered 16,417 shots to 6,247 clients. School-based immunization clinics, parent and school outreach, as well as record reconciliation have significantly increased the percentage of children within Milwaukee Public Schools who meet the minimum immunization requirements for their grade level.

Our current school immunization compliance rate is 88%. This is a remarkable improvement given that in the 2005-2006 school the school immunization compliance rate was forty-five percent. MHD continues to work with community partners and health care providers to ensure immunization services and reduce disparities in vaccination rates to achieve our goal of reaching 90% immunization compliance citywide.

## **LABORATORY**

Our public health laboratory continues to provide world-class ancillary support to MHD operations. MHD's laboratory is a member of the national Laboratory Response Network. This prestigious distinction allows Milwaukee residents to benefit from a cutting edge molecular techniques and real time data exchange. Our certification as a Select Agent Laboratory secures our City's role a key partner in homeland security readiness efforts. Last, the future of our public health laboratory includes the deployment of lean management techniques, collaboration for applied research and partnerships with key agencies such as Milwaukee's own American Society for Quality (ASQ).

## **ACCREDITATION**

MHD continues to make progress towards our goal of becoming a nationally accredited health department. The public health accreditation process is critically important to the growth and long-term viability of our health department. In 2015, we will implement several key steps needed to announce our readiness for review by national surveyors.

## **PREVENTION OF FOODBORNE ILLNESS**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 1 in 6 people experience foodborne illness annually. The national economic cost of foodborne illness is estimated to be approximately 77 billion dollars per year. To address this concern, MHD, utilizes two key strategies to improve food safety. Through the routine inspection of food establishments and enforcement of the food code we protect consumers and reduce the possibility of foodborne illness. This proposed budget solidifies and advances our commitment in this area.

## **VIOLENCE PREVENTION**

Public health's role in the prevention of violence has gained momentum in the last several years. More than two million people are seen annually by emergency physicians for injuries caused directly by some form of violence, such as domestic abuse, other physical assaults, and shootings. The emotional stress associated with violence can lead to a variety of poor health outcomes including depression, substance abuse, and chronic pain. Increasingly violence is considered to be preventable, not inevitable.

A key element in a public health approach to reducing violence is collaboration involving multiple partners including public health, law enforcement, education, business and social service providers working together to produce change. In 2014, we have worked with our partners on various initiatives to raise awareness of and to find solutions to heroin and opiate abuse, human trafficking, domestic violence, sexual assault, and gun violence.

Family Violence Prevention Fund research reports that after separation from an abusive situation, batterers often use visitation and exchange of children as an opportunity to inflict additional physical and/or psychological abuse on victims

and their children. MHD's Office of Violence Prevention (OVP), through its Commission on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault, is the lead partner in a \$400,000 U.S. Department of Justice grant to establish, oversee and evaluate a "Safe Exchange" visitation site for families affected by domestic violence. The site, which just opened in September, will serve 100 families in its inaugural year, and is already being regarded by the funder as one of the strongest programs in the Midwest.

The OVP is also a beneficiary of the Health Department's collaboration with Dr. Mallory O'Brien in the development and implementation of the innovative Data Repository Hub. In partnership with MHD, the Milwaukee Police Department, the Milwaukee County District Attorney, the Municipal Courts, schools and other institutions, the hub will contain merged criminal justice, public health, court and other data, which will provide information to allow us to look at long-term trends in the community. It will allow us to explore episodic violent events, in the larger context of the social, physical, and community environment. It will also allow us to better understand risk factors for violence, and will provide key data necessary to design and implement system changes and develop appropriate prevention strategies in a variety of settings.

## **CLOSING**

Finally, MHD remains fully committed to serving the residents of Milwaukee. This commitment is honored and supported by our workforce. I am proud of the work of the men and women of this Department, who professionally and passionately work to protect the health of our community.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.