

Get The Facts

Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant

Filling a Critical Funding Gap

For over 20 years, the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant has given all 50 states, the District of Columbia, two American Indian Tribes and U.S. Territories the ability to fund critical public health activities that do not receive any or are not receiving enough federal funding. The PHHS Block Grant was created as a result of a consolidation of several categorical programs in the 1980s—including health education/risk reduction and fluoridation—with the purpose of allowing states the flexibility necessary to respond to the top health threats facing their residents. Ultimately, with the PHHS Block Grant, states strive to achieve the 265 national health objectives outlined in Healthy People 2010. The two overarching goals of Healthy People 2010 are to increase quality and years of healthy life and eliminate health disparities. Block grant dollars are also used to respond to new and reemerging health threats, such as when states responded quickly and effectively when West Nile virus hit the United States in 1999. The Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant allows states the flexibility to use these grant dollars to respond to top state-level public health concerns without duplicating already existing programs.

Sources: CDC, HHS Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

“Fiscal responsibility is imperative in the federal budget and we need to set priorities. But the funding provided to our local area for health services and disease prevention must remain among those priorities. We can't be cutting the federal assistance that is in fact successful and making a difference in our communities.”

-Rep. Sue Kelly (R-NY)

Activities Funded Through the PHHS Block Grant

- Preventive screenings for cancer and diabetes
- Programs to encourage physical activity and proper nutrition habits
- Activities to respond to and control disease outbreaks, ranging from West Nile virus to E. coli to bacterial meningitis
- School-based preventive oral health services, such as protective dental sealants, to prevent cavities in kids
- Public education campaigns on issues such as tobacco prevention, water quality and sexual assault
- Training programs for the public health workforce in areas ranging from tobacco control to food safety



Don't Believe the Myth about the PHHS Block Grant ...

The Myth: Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant funds are duplicative of other already existing federal funding streams. States use these funds to supplant state and local funding for public health programs, freeing up this money to go toward non-health programs.

The Truth: Without the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant, states and localities would not have the funding to run critical programs that prevent or detect early heart disease, stroke, cancer and diabetes. This is because the PHHS Block Grant gives states the flexibility to support critical public health programs that respond to primary state-level health concerns for which no other funding stream is available. At a time when obesity is the second leading cause of preventable death in the United States, programs targeting overweight children and overweight and obese adults would lose their primary funding stream.

PHHS Block Grant funds do not supplant state and local funding; they are used to fill in critical gaps in federal, state and local funding. Also, PHHS Block Grant dollars have been used to launch programs that now receive funding from other sources.

Source: CDC, 2006

In Your State

New Hampshire Dental public health programs in NH receive the bulk of their funding from the PHHS Block Grant. These programs have ensured that thousands of school-aged children have access to school-based preventive oral health services such as protective dental sealants. Through this program, children have also gained access to needed dental treatment at no or low cost, or through Medicaid enrollment. This is especially vital as children with dental problems lose an estimated 52 million school hours annually, with poor children experiencing nearly 12 times as many restricted activity days from dental disease as children from higher-income families.

Alabama PHHS Block Grant dollars fund programs to prevent waterborne and foodborne diseases in Alabama. The Community Waterborne Disease Program keeps hundreds of thousands of Alabamians, especially those who are low-income and reside in rural areas, from getting sick from failing septic tanks. It is funded solely by the PHHS Block Grant and does not duplicate or overlap with any other CDC funded program.

Oklahoma With the highest cardiovascular disease death rate in the nation, Oklahoma has used its PHHS Block Grant dollars to support OKHealth, an ehealth technology risk and disease management program for heart disease and diabetes. Results of this program from 2003–2004 showed participants enjoyed reduced risks for cardiovascular disease and diabetes. For every \$1 invested, the state saved \$2.30.

Sources: CDC, individual state submissions, Mouradian 2000.

“The Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant program is exactly the type of program we should be supporting. The national investment in prevention is currently estimated to be less than 5 percent of the annual health care costs despite strong evidence that prevention can be cost effective and helps people enhance the quality of their lives. In addition, this block grant is excellent public policy because it provides states with great flexibility to address a wide range of activities for states to improve health, save lives, and save scarce health care dollars.”

-Rep. Tom Udall (D-NM)

