



2018 Governance, Responsibilities & Budget

Cambridge Public Health Department

Last updated: December 18, 2018

The Cambridge Public Health Commission, doing business as “Cambridge Health Alliance,” was established as a public authority on June 30, 1996 through a special act of the Massachusetts legislature, Chapter 147 of the Acts of 1996 (the Enabling Act). The Enabling Act charges Cambridge Health Alliance to “perform the duties conferred or imposed upon boards of health of cities in the commonwealth” by state law and provides that the City of Cambridge contract with Cambridge Health Alliance for the provision of public health services in and to the City. The current Health Services Agreement runs from fiscal year 2017 through fiscal year 2024.

Cambridge Health Alliance’s Cambridge Public Health Department (CPHD) enforces existing laws and regulations pertaining to public health, and has the statutory authority to make and enforce new public health regulations within the City of Cambridge. The Cambridge Public Health Department exercises its statutory authority under the Enabling Act and Massachusetts General Laws, chapters 111, 112, and 114. The City’s Inspectional Services Department assumes responsibility for several major categories of public health code enforcement as provided in a 1983 memorandum of agreement.

Cambridge Public Health Department Governance

Patrick Wardell serves as the Chief Executive Officer for Cambridge Health Alliance and, pursuant to the Enabling Act, the Commissioner of Public Health for the City of Cambridge. Mr. Wardell has delegated the operation of the Cambridge Public Health Department to Claude-Alix Jacob, Chief Public Health Officer. However, Mr. Wardell is the signatory of record for all state-level contracts. In addition, Mr. Wardell serves as an ex-officio member of the Cambridge Public Health Subcommittee of the Cambridge Health Alliance Board of Trustees, which is the quasi-board of health for the City of Cambridge.

The Cambridge Public Health Department is advised by the Cambridge Public Health Subcommittee, the Community Health Advisory Council, and through designated committees of the Cambridge City Council such as the Community Health, Environment, and Human Services committees. The Cambridge Public Health Department works closely with the City Manager, City Council, the School Committee, and all city departments.

Local Health Department Responsibilities

In 2005, the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) developed an “Operational Definition of a Functional Local Public Health Department” outlining ten fundamental responsibilities of local public health departments. These responsibilities (often referred to as the



“ten essential public health services”) were developed within nationally recognized frameworks and with input from public health professionals and elected officials across the country. They are linked to the three core functions of public health (assessment, policy development, assurance) established by the Institute of Medicine in 1988. The ten essential public health services are:

1. Monitor health status to identify community health problems.
2. Diagnose and investigate identified 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 health and personal health care workforce.
9. Assess effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services.
10. Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems.

The Cambridge Public Health Department, in partnership with the Cambridge Health Alliance, the City of Cambridge, and community partners, ensures that these obligations are met by providing high-quality services that meet community needs, analyzing data and sharing information, implementing policies, and enforcing regulations. The department’s main focus areas are community health and wellness, communicable disease prevention and control, emergency preparedness, environmental health, epidemiology, regulatory enforcement, and school health.

National Accreditation

The Cambridge Public Health Department achieved national accreditation through the Public Health Accreditation Board in August 2018, becoming one of the first accredited health departments in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The national accreditation program, jointly supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, sets standards against which the nation's nearly 3,000 governmental public health departments can continuously improve the quality of their services and performance.

The accreditation process in Cambridge began in 2013 with the development of a community health assessment to identify the city’s major health needs. This process brought together local leaders in public health, health care, urban planning, housing, public safety, education, business, and the nonprofit sector, as well as hundreds of residents. Data and key themes in the 2014 City of

Cambridge Community Health Assessment informed the city's first ever Community Health Improvement Plan, which has set the city's health agenda through 2020.

For the five-year accreditation cycle that began in 2018, the health department will submit annual reports to the Public Health Accreditation Board that highlight its dedication to high-quality programs and services. In 2023, the department will complete the reaccreditation process, certifying its continued capacity to provide the essential services of public health to the community.

Cambridge Public Health Department Budget

While many U.S. health departments are experiencing fiscal challenges, the Cambridge Public Health Department continues to receive strong support from city leadership. Cambridge Health Alliance received \$7.20 million from the City of Cambridge in fiscal year 2018 to support the Cambridge Public Health Department and other Cambridge Health Alliance public health services in Cambridge. In addition to the city appropriation, the department brought in \$1.23 million in state, federal, and other funding, and from regulatory and clinical services fees. It should be noted that Cambridge Health Alliance provides substantial support to the Cambridge-Somerville Health Care for the Homeless program, the Cambridge Teen Health Center, and the Institute for Community Health. The City of Cambridge appropriation for fiscal year 2019 is \$7.25 million.