

# Care for the Common Good

## Our COVID-19 Journey

Investing in Public Health: Essential Elements



Trinity Health is one of the largest multi-institutional Catholic health care delivery systems in the nation, serving diverse communities that include more than 30 million people across 22 states. We advocate for public policies that advance the common good including expanding health care coverage and care, investing in public health, paying for high-value care, and improving the health of communities.

### Investment in Public Health is Critical to The Nation's Safety and Economic Health

Trinity Health believes that a strong public health infrastructure is essential to building a health care system that can ensure access to high-quality, comprehensive, affordable health care for all. Unfortunately, following years of under-funding and lack of prioritization, America's public health infrastructure was ill equipped to address the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 has clearly illustrated how this underinvestment is contributing to inequities within our health care system and society.

America's community hospitals met the pandemic head-on and have helped to fund and carry out critical public health services. Collaboration between local health departments and health systems formed a community response to the pandemic. It is imperative that [our COVID-19 experience](#) influence policy and funding decision-making.

The ten essential public health services, as defined by the Public Health National Center for Innovation, provide a framework to protect and promote the health of all Americans. The pandemic has laid bare the challenges with delivering these essential public health services, six of which are identified below. Policy recommendations to address the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic as well as the next public health emergency are outlined below.

### Assess and Monitor Public Health

Public health data systems must be interoperable to produce data-driven strategies. Policies to build and strengthen the nation's data infrastructure should:

- Provide funding for robust interoperable data infrastructure across public health, health care providers and states that allow for effective and timely communication to the federal government.
- Require and invest in interoperable vaccine registries.
- Require standardized, accurate and robust data collection that includes race/ethnicity, gender identity and sexual orientation, and reporting and sharing of data between health systems, other clinical providers, public health departments and government for disease prevention, detection and mitigation.
- Strengthen cybersecurity defenses through development of coordinated national defensive measures; expansion of the cybersecurity workforce; disruption of bad actors that target U.S. critical infrastructure; and utilization of a "whole of government" approach to increasing consequences for those who commit attacks.
- Support adoption of a national, unique patient identifier that can support patient access to test results, reporting of immunization information, and care coordination across providers and settings.

### Investigate, Diagnose and Address Health Hazards and Root Causes

A strong public health system must rely on syndromic surveillance and genomic sequencing; critical for early detection of outbreaks and monitoring of variants. Policies should:

- Support investments in syndromic surveillance to detect, report and monitor diseases.
- Support investments to update clinical laboratory infrastructure so that labs have the capacity to both develop and process tests efficiently and accurately.

### Communicate Effectively to Inform and Educate

Public health guidance should be consistently adhered to across federal, state and local governments. Policies should:

- Ensure adequacy of channels to distribute consistent, data-driven and culturally appropriate information to the public on health threats and emergencies.
- Affirm Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance is the source of truth and consistently adhered to by state and local governments.

### Strengthen, Support and Mobilize Partnerships

Health systems play an integral role in the public health system by preparing for, monitoring and responding to public health emergencies. Policies should:

# Investing in Public Health

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- Invest in health system physical infrastructure for facility upgrades and to reconfigure care delivery to make care more equitable and accessible.
- Increase the number of residency slots eligible for Medicare funding.
- Reauthorize the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development programs.
- Provide funding for educational loan pay-downs and vouchers for clinicians and other front-line workers.
- Provide funding for research and demonstration programs related to clinician wellbeing.
- Establish grants for cultural and linguistic competency training in medical residency programs and in-service training for health care professionals.

## Enable Equitable Access

The public health system should be able to effectively address racial inequities and uneven access to care. Policies should:

- Provide stable opportunities for those who are uninsured to enroll in health insurance through marketplaces and Medicaid, including increasing the Medicaid Federal Medical Assistance Percentages (FMAP).
- Expand investments in social influencers of health including affordable housing and access to healthy and affordable food.
- Ensure equity in outreach and education related to health and wellness across populations and communities.
- Provide reimbursement for community health worker education and outreach to address social and health needs, and support community partners in public health activities (e.g. outreach, education, monitoring, contact tracing).
- Support increased access to behavioral health services.
- Maintain telehealth flexibilities after the public health emergency ends, including removing geographic and originating site restrictions.
- Expand access to broadband to all Americans with priority to those in medically underserved communities, including rural and tribal communities.

## Build and Maintain Strong Organizational Infrastructure for Public Health

Investment in public health should build a system that supports emergency preparedness including a national strategy with federal leadership.

### Planning and Strategy

- Provide sustained funding for core public health functions (assessment, policy development and assurance).
- Provide adequate funding for the Hospital Preparedness Program (HPP) and ensure funding reaches hospitals.
- Include health systems in planning to ensure coordination of prevention, mitigation and surveillance efforts between health systems, public health departments and other stakeholders (e.g. community-based providers and services).
- Develop clear roles and responsibilities for government, health care and public health stakeholders before, during and after emergencies that appreciate the importance of community health needs assessments.

### Testing, Contact Tracing and Vaccinations

- Prioritize funding for community collaborations that expand access to immunizations and testing in communities of color, non-English speaking communities, the elderly and those who are poor and vulnerable.
- Incorporate a robust contact tracing strategy to prevent and mitigate the spread of communicable diseases.
- Create certainty and transparency in the vaccine supply chain.
- Provide support for ongoing vaccine research.

### Supply Chain Coordination

- Replenish and develop transparent Strategic National Stockpile policies that include information on the inventory, product specification, location, quality and accessibility of the stockpile.
- Develop a process to track the status of critical product shortages and require supply chain disclosure (location of raw materials, distribution channels) for medical product approvals.
- Establish a coordinated national supply chain through a public-private partnership that includes a "marketplace" for supplies with information on demand. This effort should be led by supply chain experts with government at the table.
- Provide additional tax incentives to expand domestic manufacturing of supplies.

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### Mission

We, Trinity Health, serve together in the spirit of the Gospel as a compassionate and transforming healing presence within our communities.

### Core Values

Reverence • Commitment to Those Who Are Poor  
Safety • Justice • Stewardship • Integrity

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