



Public Health Brief

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Friday April 11, 2025

Five BIG Ideas to Help You Understand Public Health

I want to share five big ideas with you. The goal is to help you understand the value and importance of public health, and how it is relevant to you and the lives of your family and our community.

Big idea: Public health works at the community level, while health care works at the individual level.

Many people associate public health with health care. Your health care provider (nurse practitioner, physician's assistant, clinic, urgent care, emergency room, hospital) sees you as an individual. Public health workers care for the health of entire groups of people. In our case, Alpine County Public Health cares for the health of everyone in our community, including full and part-time residents, workers, and visitors.

Example:

- We are privileged to have our Nurse Practitioner, Patience Wenck, at our Alpine County Clinic. To schedule an appointment, call 530-694-2146, leave a message, and someone will get back to you.
- For emergencies, we are grateful to be served by various first responder agencies throughout the county.

Big idea: Public health focuses on preventing people from getting sick or hurt.

Because of public health, many serious diseases that were common in your parents' or grandparents' generations are now very rare in the United States. Public health workers take action to protect people from getting sick or hurt.



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Alpine County Health Department, 75-B Diamond Valley Rd., Markleeville, CA 96120

Alpine County Board of Supervisors, Phone: (530) 694-2281

District 1: Charles Dobson, District 2: Evan Mecak, District 3: Irvin Jim,

District 4: Terry Woodrow, District 5: David Griffith

Examples:

- Becky Thornburg, our Public Health Nurse, leads our vaccination programs. She leads our programs which provide vaccinations to people against diseases that spread from person to person, known as communicable diseases, such as flu and COVID.
- I (Dr. Johnson) am the Communicable Disease Controller, which means I work with our team to protect everyone whenever there is a health threat, such as measles.
- Becky is also our Maternal, Child, and Adolescent Health (MCAH) Coordinator. She educates pregnant women and parents about ways to stay healthy, like eating a variety of nutritious foods.

Big idea: Lots of important public health work happens at the local level. When you hear “public health”, you may only think of federal agencies like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In addition, public health workers take many different actions in our local community to support and protect community health.

Examples:

- Dennis Lampson is our Environmental Health Specialist. He performs a huge variety of essential functions, which include:
 - o inspecting local restaurants to make sure food is prepared safely
 - o ensuring public water supplies, pools, and spas are safe to drink or use for soaking and swimming
 - o working on measures to keep all of us safe from “pests” such as the deer mouse which carries the hantavirus
- Kari Moore, our Public Health Program Coordinator, carries out all activities related to tobacco:
 - o education of licensed retail outlets who sell tobacco products
 - o education of the public, especially youth, on prevention and tools for discontinuing use
 - o ensuring retail outlets do not sell to minors
 - o reviewing and creating policies at the state and local level



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Big idea: Public health workers play a variety of professional roles – and many work behind the scenes.

Public health workers include people with different skills all working together to protect our community's health. These roles aren't always visible in the everyday lives of community members.

Examples:

- I (Dr. Johnson) have recently completed research looking at all deaths among Alpine County residents and visitors to determine what causes might be preventable. This information will then be used to plan activities which can reduce the impact of a variety of conditions which are not spread person-to-person.
- You have granted me the privilege of providing you with these Public Health Briefs, informing and educating you about health and safety guidelines and recommendations so you can make informed choices to protect your health.

Big idea: Public health benefits everyone.

Some people assume public health is only for people who don't have health insurance or those who use benefits or services provided by the government. But public health supports everyone. It is based on the idea that everyone should have an equal chance to be as healthy and safe as possible. That's why public health workers aim to help every member of the community.

Examples:

- Angela Slais, our Deputy Public Health Director, directs our team as we develop partnerships with other community, regional, state, and federal entities working together to improve the health and safety of all members of our community.
- Angela and I work closely with other members of Alpine County's emergency management team in preparing for and responding to emergencies and disasters.
- Angela works with the Deputy Directors of Alpine County's Social Services and Behavioral Health Departments in determining the best way to use available county resources in addressing your needs.
- Angela guides our team as we listen to the needs of our community through a Community Needs Assessment (CHA), and then a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The goal is to identify and address community concerns as we prioritize and address them in the best way possible.



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We are blessed to have such a dedicated team with which to serve you. We are small but mighty! I have shared just a “tip of the iceberg” by listing some of the many diverse activities in which we are involved.

We also want to thank our County Administrative Officer and Health and Human Services Director, Nichole Williamson, and our Alpine County Board of Supervisors. We could not accomplish our goals without their support.

As we close out Public Health Week, we recognize that our current political climate is uncertain. We are finding this season more stressful than that during the height of the COVID pandemic. However, we as a team are determined to be faithful to our mission. We invite your feedback, questions, and concerns as we all join together to do as much as we can to protect the health and safety of the entire Alpine County community.

<https://alpinecountyca.gov/516/Public-Health-Briefs>



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