

# Polk County Health Department



# 2009 Annual Report

*Promoting, protecting and improving  
the health of all people in Polk County*

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# Message from the Director



Daniel O. Haight  
Director

To the residents of Polk County and our Partners in Public Health,

I am pleased to present you with the 2009 Annual Report of the Polk County Health Department. Every year brings new challenges and accomplishments, many of which are highlighted in this report. One of the major health department accomplishments in 2009 was the construction of a new Lake Wales public health clinic. Ten years ago, local community leaders began requesting the legislature to replace the existing clinic and in August 2009, the grand opening occurred. This 15,585 square foot facility is more than twice as large as the old clinic and allows us to provide state of the art prenatal care, family planning, immunizations, along with WIC nutritional services for families in the greater Lake Wales area.

For all of us, this past year will be remembered as the year we were challenged by the H1N1 flu virus. The rapid appearance of this new germ created many questions and our response was to be prepared for the worst and hope for the best. Our mission to promote, protect, and improve the health of the people of Polk County was put into action as the world scrambled to learn more about this new flu virus.



In the spring of 2009, when the H1N1 flu virus was identified, the Polk County Health Department immediately began implementing our response plan for pandemic influenza. A vaccine against this flu virus was months away, so the health department tracked the spread of H1N1 in Polk County while continually educating the public on how to prevent getting the flu. In total, ten Polk County residents died and many were hospitalized, but our community pulled together to slow the spread and eventually prevent this infection from seriously damaging the economy and the health of many vulnerable citizens.

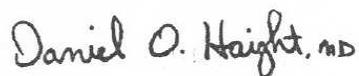
Throughout all of these efforts, the health department worked with key partners in the public health system – hospitals, clinics, doctors, the school board, county emergency management, the Medical Reserve Corps, the media, the Board of County Commissioners, businesses, and colleges and universities. Although I share in the sadness over the people who died from H1N1 in Polk County, I am proud of the health department's response to this threat and our community partners' efforts in protecting thousands of people from contracting H1N1 flu.

The challenge of H1N1 required a tremendous amount of health department resources which was paid for by special federal funds. While we were receiving federal funding for our flu efforts, other programs within our health department were suffering budget cuts in 2009. The Polk County Health Department experienced funding cuts of \$1.3 million from the state.

The health department faced additional cuts from other agencies for the services we provide. These budget cuts affected services such as: infant car seat safety, nutrition, teen pregnancy prevention, chronic disease prevention, lead detection in homes, ensuring safe drinking water, and septic system inspections. Continued economic difficulties in our state will lead to further budget cuts. Our agency strategic plan for 2010-2013 will serve as a tool to help us effectively deal with economic challenges we will face.

To learn more about the Polk County Health Department, go to our website at [www.mypolkchd.org](http://www.mypolkchd.org). It is an honor for our staff to serve the people of Polk County.

To Your Health,



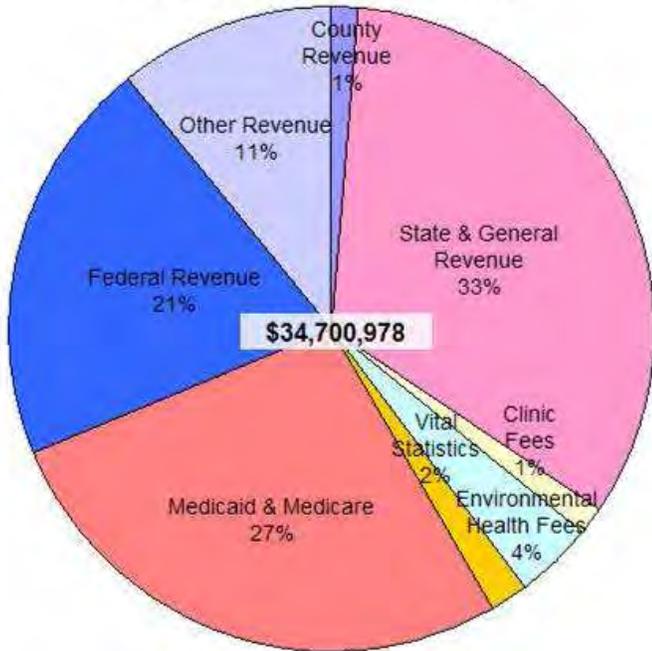
Daniel O. Haight, MD, FACP  
Director, Polk County Health Department  
Associate Professor, University of South Florida, College of Medicine  
Co-Chair, Tampa Bay Regional Domestic Security Task Force, Health & Medical Committee

# Budget and Fiscal Responsibility

The Polk County Health Department is a state agency that relies upon federal, state, and local county government funding to help support our public health programs and services. In addition, the health department generates revenue from contracts and grants, state and county fees, Medicaid, and Medicare.

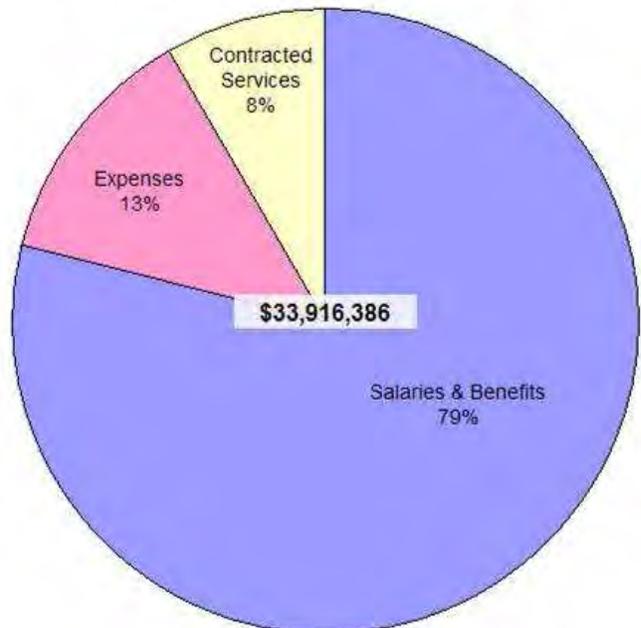
**Revenues** – The total revenue collected in fiscal year 2009-10 was \$34,700,978. See the revenue pie chart for sources of revenue.

**2009-2010 Revenue Receipts**



**Operating Budget** – The health department's approved operating budget for fiscal year 2009-10 was \$33,916,386. See the pie chart to see expenditures by category.

**2009-2010 Approved Operating Budget**



A large portion of the health department's revenue is used to employ over 550 professional and paraprofessional staff to serve approximately 583,000 residents in Polk County.

Some of these staff includes:

- administrative professionals
- advanced registered nurse practitioners
- board certified physicians
- clerical support staff
- dentists and dental assistants
- dieticians
- disease intervention specialists
- environmental engineers
- environmental health specialists
- epidemiologists
- health educators
- licensed practical nurses
- registered nurses
- social workers
- other public health professionals

# Essential Service #1

## Monitor health status to identify community health problems

### Vital Statistics (Birth & Death Records)

The Polk County Health Department is required by Florida law to record births and deaths in Polk County. Births from 1930 to the present and all the deaths that have occurred in the past ten years in Polk County are available from our local office.

In 2009, there were 6,559 births and 5,431 deaths recorded in Polk County. The health department issued 19,913 birth records and 36,562 death records in 2009.

Many people are familiar with the Vital Statistics office where birth and death records are available, but the main reason the health department keeps these records is that it helps describe the health issues of Polk County. For example, the health department learns how many babies are born too soon or too small from birth records and the diseases from which people are dying. This information helps the health department better understand what programs and services need to be provided to assist people in staying healthy.

For information on how to obtain a birth or death certificate, visit the Polk County Health Department web site: [www.mypolkchd.org](http://www.mypolkchd.org)

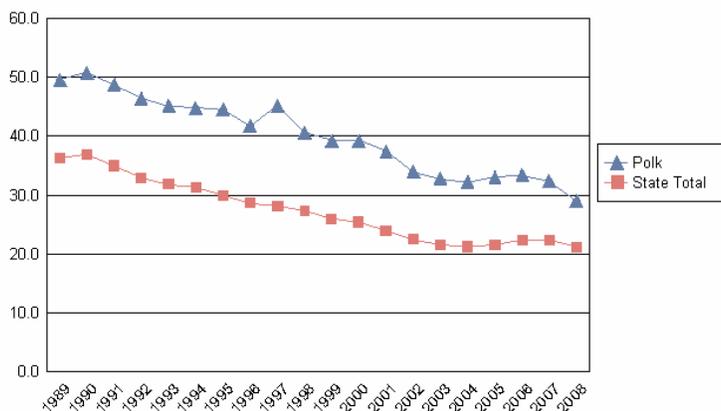
### Teen Pregnancy

Over the past 20 years, Polk County has seen a significant decline in the number of births to teens. During 2008, there were over 1,000 teens (13-19) that gave birth in Polk. Of those, 15 births were to teens aged 14 and younger.

The Polk County Health Department continuously monitors the number of births to teens and works in collaboration with the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Alliance (TPPA) to plan and implement strategies that reduce teen pregnancies. Children born to teen parents are at greater risk for living in poverty, experiencing health problems or difficulty in school, serving time in jail, and/or becoming teen parents themselves.

#### Births to Mothers Ages 10-19

TPPA is coordinated by the Healthy Start Coalition and consists of community partners working together to break this cycle and improve the lives of children and families by encouraging responsible behavior and reducing the number of teen pregnancies.



The health department financially supports TPPA by funding part of the salary of Healthy Start's teen pregnancy prevention coordinator. Annually, TPPA holds a teen summit in the spring. This year, the Teen Summit was held at Southeastern University and the event was open to any youth age 10-19. More than 800 local youth attended where a current Pittsburgh Steelers football player and players from the University of Florida Gators football team provided motivational speeches on goal setting and good decision making. Along with the youth, more than 100 volunteers were on hand to discuss issues regarding teen pregnancy and risky behaviors.

For pregnant teens or teen parents, the health department provides school health nurses who support students at two teen parent schools in Polk County. These school health nurses assist pregnant and parenting teens through counseling, coordinating care and providing basic health services and health education.

For more information on Teen Pregnancy Prevention, visit: [www.healthystarthhp.org/tppa.htm](http://www.healthystarthhp.org/tppa.htm)

## Essential Service #2

### Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards in the community

#### Disease Outbreak Investigation and Control (Epidemiology)

The health department has staff who are specially trained in the science of "epidemiology." The staff continuously investigates the sources of infectious diseases reported to the health department and provides the necessary services to prevent or stop the spread of disease.

##### Primary Amebic Meningoencephalitis

In 2009, one case of Primary Amebic Meningoencephalitis (PAM) was reported to the health department. PAM is a rare but nearly always fatal infection caused by an ameba that lives in fresh water, ponds, lakes, and rivers. Prior to this case, there had been no cases of PAM reported in Polk County during the past 10 years. PAM occurs when ameba contaminated water enters the nose during swimming or other water activities and creates an infection of the brain or the lining of the brain. The threat of infection, although very rare, increases especially during hot summer months. Infections do not occur as a result of drinking contaminated water. Annually, the Polk County Health Department issues information about recreational water use. The Environmental Engineering Division posted warnings signs, distributed flyers, talked to residents living around the lake, and issued a press release on water safety precautions.

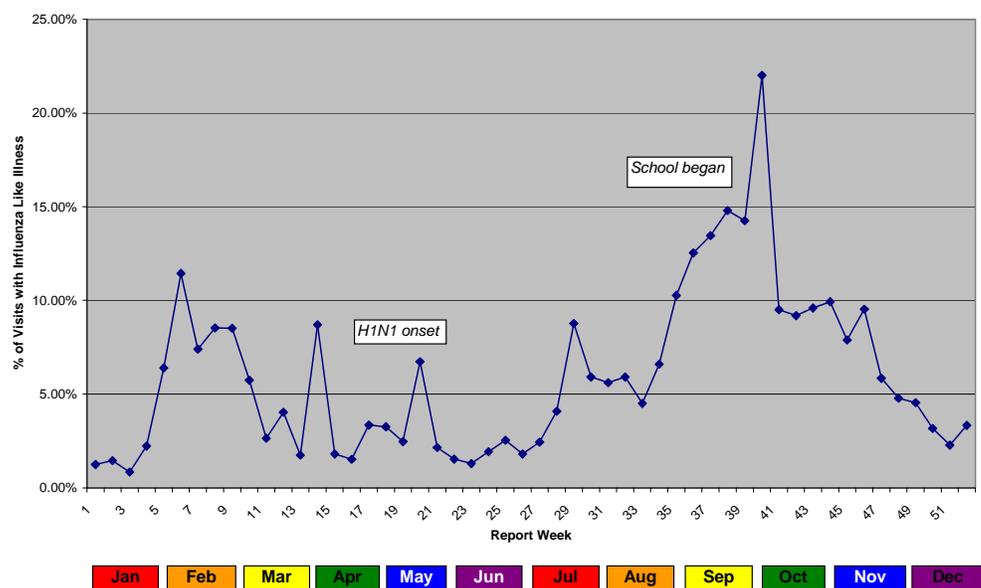
##### Influenza-Like Illness and H1N1 Influenza

The Polk County Health Department continually monitors influenza activity throughout the year, with additional surveillance systems during heightened seasonal activity. One of the most useful of these surveillance systems are sentinel providers. Sentinel Providers are physicians throughout the county that serve in a variety of settings, including urgent care, pediatrics, family practice, gerontology, etc. These physicians report the number of patients seen each week that have Influenza-like illness (ILI), to the Florida Department of Health (FDOH). ILI is defined as a fever of 100.0 °F or greater, plus a respiratory symptom such as cough, sore throat or runny nose.

These weekly counts give the health department a better idea of flu activity in our community. In addition to recording the number of persons experiencing ILI, the sentinel providers collect samples from patients with ILI and send them to the FDOH's state lab for additional testing. This testing helps determine what strains of influenza or other respiratory illnesses are circulating in our community during that time period, and also contribute to influenza strains that should be included in the following season's influenza vaccine.

**Figure 1: Influenza-Like Illness by Sentinel Providers, Polk County, 2009**

In Figure 1, the 2009 data from Polk County's sentinel providers is graphed with the percentage of patient visits attributed to ILI. Throughout February we saw sustained, increased rates of influenza like activity. Increased flu activity in February and March is typical for Florida's influenza season. However, in late April and early May, a slight increase in ILI was observed by sentinel providers, which was later found to be due to a new flu virus that was spreading in Mexico and the U.S. named H1N1 Influenza. Since the H1N1 flu virus was not widely circulating yet, the increase in influenza activity was at first fairly small.



At the end of August, when schools were in session, the health department observed a significant increase in influenza activity that continued through November 2009.

## Essential Service #2 (continued)

### Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards in the community

#### Environmental Investigations

The Environmental Health Division works to keep our residents healthy and our communities free of disease. Most of their work takes place behind the scene, as they protect residents from environmental hazards in their community.



This division investigates several different potential public health risks including:

- **Food-borne illnesses**- Environmental Health staff track and investigate illness complaints when two or more people eat or drink food or beverages and later have diarrhea, nausea and/or vomiting. In 2009, there were 51 groups of food and water-borne illness complaints.
- **Sanitary nuisance complaints** -Environmental Health staff investigate complaints on situations which may threaten or impair the health of the public. These may include failed septic systems or insect and rodent infestations. In 2009, staff investigated 346 complaints.
- **Lead contamination** - The Environmental Health Division provides and promotes blood lead testing for children of Polk County who are uninsured or underinsured. Program staff educate at-risk populations about lead poisoning hazards and prevention. High levels of lead in the blood interferes with brain development in children. Therefore, health care providers and laboratories are required to report elevated lead blood levels to the Health Department. In 2009, there were 8 reported lead cases in Polk County.
- **Mosquito-borne Illnesses** - The health department works closely with Polk County Mosquito Control year round to monitor mosquito-borne diseases. In addition, the environmental health division monitors illnesses that are caused by viruses associated with mosquito bites. These illnesses include West Nile Virus (WNV), Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE), and St. Louis Encephalitis (SLE). In 2009, there were 3 malaria cases reported in Polk County and all of them had been acquired outside of the United States.

#### Hepatitis Program

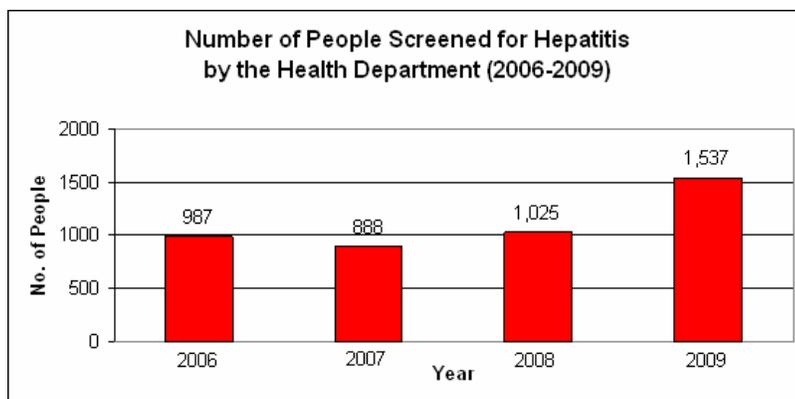
The health department educates the public regarding hepatitis and the availability of vaccines which provide protection from this disease. The hepatitis program provides screening tests for Hepatitis A, B, & C to persons 18 years of age and older who at an increased risk. In 2009, over 1,535 persons were screened by the health department for hepatitis A, B, & C through this program. Of those tested, 13 were positive for Hepatitis B and 153 were positive for Hepatitis C. In addition, there were 738 cases of hepatitis reported from laboratories, physicians, blood banks, and hospitals to the health department.

The program helps prevent hepatitis by providing Hepatitis A & B vaccines to adults who are either at risk for the disease or have complications due to other chronic liver diseases. In 2009, the Hepatitis Program administered 392 Hepatitis A vaccines, 546 Hepatitis B vaccines, and 67 TwinRix (combined Hep A and Hep B) vaccines to at risk persons, free of charge.

The program also provides health information and education to people so that they can take responsibility for their health and protect others by preventing the spread of the disease. Unfortunately, it is a chronic struggle to find medical care for those without health insurance since there is not enough funding to cover the cost of treatment in this program. Some of the medications can be provided for free but the cost of doctor visits and lab tests can total thousands of dollars every year.

In 2009, the Hepatitis Program formed a partnership with Lakeland Centres, a voluntary out-patient methadone treatment center in Lakeland. The program provides counseling and testing for hepatitis, HIV and Syphilis, hepatitis vaccinations and health education to clients of the treatment center.

For more information on hepatitis and liver failure, visit [www.mypolkchd.org](http://www.mypolkchd.org).



## Essential Service #2 (continued)

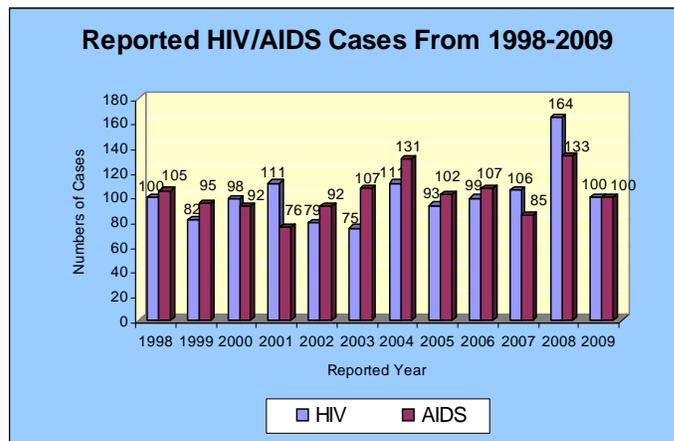
### Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards in the community

#### HIV/AIDS Outreach Program

The HIV/AIDS outreach program works to prevent and control the spread of HIV through education, counseling, and testing services, as required by Florida law. The number of newly diagnosed cases of HIV declined sharply in Polk County in 2009. Polk County had 100 new cases reported of HIV and 100 new cases of AIDS, down from 164 HIV cases and 133 AIDS cases in 2008.

In an effort to address HIV/AIDS in Polk County, the HIV/AIDS outreach program made 9,083 educational contacts, counseled 703 people, and tested 480 people in 2009. People tested for HIV were also offered testing for hepatitis, syphilis, chlamydia, and gonorrhea.

In 2009, the health department also partnered with the West Bartow Front Porch community, who received a \$100,000 Closing the Gap grant for HIV/AIDS prevention among minority populations. As part of this grant, the health department provided a nationally recognized prevention program and participated in community events to provide HIV education, counseling, and testing to reach African-Americans between the ages of 15-24 years of age.



#### Indoor Air Quality

The Indoor Air Quality program was established in response to the growing public health concern of poor indoor air quality. This unit inspects for indoor air problems that may affect the health and wellness of the public.

The most common contaminants that affect indoor air quality include mold, fiberglass, dust mites, formaldehyde and other airborne chemicals released from building materials and furnishings. Upon owner's request, staff investigate homes, office buildings, schools, childcare facilities, and retail stores for indications of indoor air quality problems. In 2009, a total of 153 voluntary indoor air quality investigations were conducted.

In 2009, program staff addressed public health concerns regarding imported Chinese drywall as a potentially hazardous material. The staff assisted southwest Florida counties by answering several hundred calls regarding Chinese drywall concerns from the public in that area. In addition, the staff responded to several similar calls from Polk County residents. For information on Indoor Air Quality, visit: [www.mypolkchd.org](http://www.mypolkchd.org). and click on Environmental Engineering.

## Essential Service #2 (continued)

### Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards in the community

#### Preparing and Responding to Disasters

The Health Department is the lead agency in Polk County for directing and coordinating health and medical responses during emergencies and disasters. An emergency or disaster caused by humans or nature requires action by emergency service personnel to prevent or minimize loss of life or damage to property and/or the environment.

The health department works closely with medical providers and first responders (emergency medical services, fire/rescue, and law enforcement) to ensure that our emergency/disaster response plans are coordinated and practiced. Public health services during emergencies and disasters include: disease control, food and water safety, radiological and biological response, and providing public health information.

The Health Department receives funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) through the Florida Department of Health (FDOH) to enhance our public health preparedness efforts in the area of biological, chemical, radiological agents, and explosive/flammable events.

For more information on Disaster Preparedness, visit: [www.mypolkchd.org](http://www.mypolkchd.org), [www.floridadisaster.org](http://www.floridadisaster.org) or [www.mysafeflorida.org](http://www.mysafeflorida.org).

**H1N1 Vaccination Campaign:** In April of 2009, the Polk County Health Department (PCHD) was alerted to the appearance of a new flu virus that was spreading quickly in Mexico and the United States named H1N1 Influenza. Soon after the initial discovery a worldwide pattern of transmission of this new virus occurred. Because this virus had not been seen before, the health department worked closely with hospitals, local physicians, and the state lab to track flu-like symptoms and positive H1N1 test results. This information was important to help understand how quickly H1N1 flu was spreading, who was most likely to become infected, and how severe the illness was in specific populations such as, pregnant women, infants and children, and older adults.



The goals of the department were to slow the spread of disease, reduce the number of people infected and lessen the severity of illness. The main strategies to accomplish these goals included promoting personal hygiene, encouraging people to stay home when they were sick, to get vaccinated, and to consult with their primary care provider if they developed flu-like symptoms. From the data collected we learned that more serious cases of H1N1 flu were occurring among pregnant women, infants and young children, and adults 25-64 years old with chronic health conditions.

The health department coordinated the efforts of community partners including health care providers, local government, law enforcement, pharmacies, public and private schools, and faith-based organizations to immunize residents with the new H1N1 flu vaccine. Initially, efforts focused on providing the vaccine to those at highest risk for developing serious complications from H1N1 flu. More than 150,000 doses of vaccine were provided to community hospitals, clinics and private physicians. Working with the Polk County School Board, the health department vaccinated 63,000 children and faculty in public schools. Polk County was recognized for immunizing the 3rd highest number of children in schools. When additional vaccine became available the health department held week-end clinics in various parts of the county to provide free vaccines to any residents desiring them.

(Continued on page 12)

## Essential Service #2 (continued)

### Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards in the community

(Continued from page 11)

A key component of our efforts to minimize the impact of H1N1 flu in our community was frequently communicating the latest information with local media, area health care providers, hospitals, schools and colleges. Information was shared through community presentations, newspapers, television, automated phone messaging systems, state and local call centers, and various websites. The Polk County Health Department was recognized for their effective communications tools by the Florida Department of Health.

The Board of Commissioners presented the Polk Health Department with a [proclamation](#) on April 21, 2010 for their tireless efforts during the H1N1 vaccination campaign.

**Intermediate Emergency Management Academy:** In April 2009, six members of the Polk County Health Department Public Health Preparedness unit participated in a week-long field exercise at Camp Blanding near Starke, FL. Participants experienced simulated conditions that may occur in disasters and practiced their response to a category IV hurricane strike along Florida's panhandle.

**Point of Dispensing (POD) Training:** In May 2009, the Polk County Health Department partnered with Polk County's Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) and Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) to conduct a Point of Dispensing (POD) exercise at the Lake Ashton Community in Lake Wales, FL. Health department staff and volunteers were able to provide medication to 168 simulated patients in a timely manner. The exercise ensured that the Polk County Health Department and community partners are prepared to work together to dispense medication to large numbers of people in an emergency.



## Radon Testing

Radon is a naturally occurring, invisible, odorless gas that is found at low levels in outdoor air, but can reach harmful levels when trapped in buildings. According to the U.S. Surgeon General, radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States.

The Polk County Health Department works with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to educate the community about the dangers of radon exposure and encourage them to take action to protect their homes and families. The health department's Radiological Health unit provides radon test kits (\$15 fee) to the public for in-home testing. This unit also measures radon levels in schools, correctional facilities and other public and private buildings. This unit is certified by the State of Florida as a Radon Measurement Business and by the Natural Environmental Health Association as a Radon Laboratory. In 2009, the Radiological Health unit tested 379 radon samples.

For information on radon, visit: [www.mypolkchd.org](http://www.mypolkchd.org).

## Radiological Emergency Response

The Polk County Health Department under contract with the Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Radiation Control is a vital and active member of the Florida Radiological Incident Emergency Response Team. This team works in cooperation with F.E.M.A. (Federal Emergency Management Agency) and participates in annual emergency response exercises in preparation for a possible unexpected radiation release from a nuclear power plant.

The health department radiological health team provides training on the proper handling and disposal of radioactive materials. They also investigate transportation accidents involving radioactive material, lost or stolen radioactive sources, and contamination of a facility or the environment after a spill involving radioactive material in order to protect the public against unnecessary exposure. These incidents are rare and the health department averages 3-4 incident investigations per year. There were no radiological incidents in 2009.

## Essential Service #2 (continued)

### Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards in the community

#### Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) Control

The Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) Prevention & Control Program interviews anyone diagnosed with an STD, as required by Florida law. The purpose of this is to identify and treat others who may have been exposed to prevent further spread of the disease. These diseases include syphilis, chlamydia, gonorrhea, herpes, genital warts, HIV, and many others. Individuals who go undiagnosed and untreated may spread the infection to others and experience long term negative health effects.

In 2009, the Polk County Health Department provided sexually transmitted disease services to over 11,045 clients. Among these clients, 599 were diagnosed with gonorrhea, 2,351 with chlamydia, and 61 with syphilis. From 2008 to 2009, STD cases in Polk County decreased 5% from 3,171 to 3,011 cases.

From 2008 to 2009 total reported cases of STDs decreased by 6.3% among teens and young adults 15 - 24 years old. Since prevention and early detection are important in controlling sexually transmitted diseases, STD program staff educates, counsels, locates and screens persons at risk for sexually transmitted diseases. They also work with local homeless shelters and county jails to provide FREE testing and education. Confidential STD screening, treatment and counseling is available at the Auburndale, Bartow, Haines City, Lake Wales, and Lakeland clinics. For more information on sexually transmitted diseases, visit: [www.mypolkchd.org](http://www.mypolkchd.org)

#### Toxic Substances

This program works to provide information to citizens regarding toxic substances that can be found in the environment. Upon request, investigations are conducted in homes, schools and/or worksites where elevated levels of toxic substances such as arsenic, mercury, lead, or asbestos may be present. The Polk County Health Department, in cooperation with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) ensures the proper disposal of toxic materials such as pesticides from residents who use them. For information on toxic substances, visit: [www.mypolkchd.org](http://www.mypolkchd.org)

#### Tuberculosis (TB) Control Program



The Polk County Health Department TB Control staff play a very important part in preventing and controlling Tuberculosis (TB) in our community. Each case of TB is fully investigated and treated to reduce further spread of the disease to others.

TB is a disease that is spread from person to person through the air and can remain hidden for many years in someone that is infected. TB usually affects the lungs but can also affect other parts of the body, such as the brain, the kidneys, and bone.

The health department's TB Control program has four strategies:

- Finding and ensuring complete treatment for all persons with contagious TB disease.
- Testing high-risk groups for exposure to TB to identify persons who may need therapy.
- Finding and evaluating persons who have been in contact with individuals with contagious TB to determine whether they have TB infection and provide them with appropriate therapy.
- Identifying settings at high risk for increased transmission of TB and recommend effective infection control measures to reduce risk.

The TB Control staff work closely with other doctors and clinics who provide TB services in settings such as private clinics, managed care organizations, HIV clinics, correctional facilities and hospitals.

In 2009, the number of cases of TB in Florida declined by 14% to 822 cases. However, Florida continues to rank fourth in the nation for TB. In Polk County, there was a 57% decline in the number of cases to 9.

For more information on the TB Control Program, visit: [www.mypolkchd.org](http://www.mypolkchd.org).

## Essential Service #3

### Inform, educate, and empower people about health issues

#### Chronic Disease Programs

The Polk County Health Department provides health education programs in the community to promote health and prevent the complications associated with chronic diseases. In 2007, the most recent year for data, Polk County had a 9.3% adult diabetic rate and the state of Florida rate was 8.7%.

The **Diabetes Education Program** offers diabetes screenings during special events held in the community and education classes for persons interested in learning more about diabetes and managing this chronic disease. These classes are free and are offered in English and Spanish.

- In 2009, blood glucose screening events were offered at 11 community events where 390 persons were screened. Those with high glucose readings were counseled and referred to medical providers for on-going care.
- There were 23 “Diabetes Survival Skills” classes taught at various locations throughout the county where 237 participants attended.
- The connection between diabetes and depression has also been emphasized because the combination of the two causes more serious problems.

In November 2009, the Polk County Health Department was designated as the health department of the month by the Florida Department of Health’s Women’s Health Program for its diabetes education and awareness campaign. Polk staff held various Pre-Diabetes Lunch & Learn sessions for health department employees throughout the county. For more information on diabetes, visit: [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)

The **Polk Health Care Access Program** is an emergency room diversion pilot project funded with federal, state and local dollars. In 2009, the Polk County Health Department partnered with the Polk County Board of County Commissioners' Polk Health Care Plan, Central Florida Health Care, Lakeland Volunteers in Medicine, and Lakeland Regional Medical Center to carry out the activities of this project.

Components of the program include community outreach, primary care services, and chronic disease management.

#### Community Outreach

Goal: Promote community awareness of available health care resources for the uninsured & underinsured.

Outcomes:

- Three Health Expos were held reaching 383 residents providing health information and screening services.
- Provided funding to support the Board of County Commissioners' mobile outreach unit to provide educational materials and health screening services to residents of Polk County.

#### Primary Care Access

Goal: Increase access to primary, preventive, and ambulatory care resources.

Outcomes:

- Lakeland Primary Care pharmacy was established with over 1,500 patients being served and close to 9,000 prescriptions being filled or refilled.
- A compassionate drug program assisted 377 uninsured or underinsured individuals with obtaining 770 prescriptions.

#### Chronic Disease Management

Goal: Promote measures to avoid preventable ER and hospital utilization through outpatient primary care access and disease management.

Outcomes:

- The **“Living Healthy” Chronic Disease Self-Management Program** is a component of the health department’s initiative to reduce preventable emergency room use and hospitalizations. This program is based on the successful Chronic Disease Self-Management program of the Stanford University School of Medicine. In 2008, the health department began implementing this program by having a registered nurse and a health educator trained in leading these classes.

## Essential Service #3 (continued)

### Inform, educate, and empower people about health issues

This six-week course is provided free to persons interested in discovering new skills for living better with chronic diseases such as arthritis, heart disease, diabetes, cancer, bronchitis, emphysema, asthma and epilepsy. In 2009, there were 6 Living Healthy courses taught throughout the county where 71 participants attended.

Participants learn how to work with their health care team, manage their symptoms, use their medications effectively, exercise safely and easily, handle difficult emotions, communicate better about their health with family and friends, solve problems, and relax.

- In 2009, a registered nurse and health educator received certification as Master Trainers and provided in depth training to 16 lay leaders who can now provide "Living Healthy" classes to county residents.

Class schedules can be found at [www.mypolkchd.org](http://www.mypolkchd.org) under Living Healthy Program.



### Injury Prevention

The Injury Prevention Program partners with the Coalition on Injury Prevention (CIP) and SAFE KIDS - Suncoast Chapter to provide the community with education and resources necessary to reduce the number of accidental deaths in Polk County.

Injuries are the leading killer of Floridians ages 1-44 and the 3rd leading killer overall after heart disease and cancer (Florida Vital Statistics). In 2008, injuries claimed 13,143 lives and accounted for 7.7% of all resident deaths in Florida .

Education programs provided to the community in 2009 included:

**Child Passenger Safety Program-** This program works with Healthy Start & the Florida Highway Patrol to teach parents how to properly install child car seats and provides new car seats to those in need, at a reduced cost. In 2009, approximately 574 caregivers received car seat safety training and over 551 car seats were distributed.

**Buckle Bear Passenger Safety Program-** Through the use of a puppet, songs and story telling, children were taught the importance of staying buckled in their car seats. During 2009, 10 programs were provided to over 283 children.

**Certified Bike Helmet Training-** Sixty people learned how to properly select and fit bike helmets to become certified Bike Helmet Fitters in Polk County.

**Bicycle Helmet Education and Distribution Program-** This program provides bicycle helmets and education to children and adults. Over 1,380 children and adults were fitted and received bicycle helmets and education in 2009.

**Water Safety -** Polk County was involved in a statewide campaign, "Keep Your Eyes on the Kids", that emphasized supervision of children during water activities. The health department partnered with a local YMCA and early learning centers to provide educational programs to parents and children.

Other educational topics provided included Falls Prevention for Seniors and general injury prevention.

Visit: [www.usa.safekids.org](http://www.usa.safekids.org) or [www.nhtsa.gov](http://www.nhtsa.gov) for more information on safety tips.

### Public Information

The Polk County Health Department's Communications Office informs citizens about local health issues – whether through the Web, TV, in print, via telephone or face-to-face. Communications staff responded to 147 media calls and distributed 54 press releases in 2009. The office manages and updates content for the health department's internal and external ([www.mypolkchd.org](http://www.mypolkchd.org)) websites and publishes a bimonthly staff newsletter.

Major health information campaigns in 2009 included H1N1 vaccinations, HIV/AIDS, Dental Care, and Primary Amoebic Meningoencephalitis (PAM) from lake water:

**H1N1 Vaccination Campaign:** In April of 2009, the Polk County Health Department was alerted to the possibility of a worldwide H1N1 Influenza virus.

The health department's main objective was to vaccinate residents in order to slow the spread of disease and lessen its impact on the community. Communication with the public was a key component in the vaccination campaign. Newspaper

(Continued on page 16)

## Essential Service #3

### Inform, educate, and empower people about health issues

(Continued from page 15)

publications, press releases, and interviews with health department officials were used to inform the public about the H1N1 flu virus, proper sanitation precautions, and information on where vaccinations could be obtained.

A H1N1 Flu Hot Line was established in October 2009 for the public to call to receive answers to their questions. Over 1,700 callers took advantage of this opportunity through the end of December.

**HIV/AIDS Program:** In 2009, The Ledger newspaper published a series of articles about people living in Polk County with HIV/AIDS. The series included interviews with various local health department officials discussing the services provided by the HIV/AIDS program such as public education, testing and counseling.

### Tobacco Prevention Program

Tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of death and disease in our society. Tobacco is recognized as a cause of multiple cancers, heart disease, stroke, complications of pregnancy and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and is responsible for 438,000 a deaths in the U.S. each year.

The Polk County Health Department's Tobacco Prevention and Control Program received a \$210,000 "Community-Based Tobacco Interventions" grant to mobilize the community to establish policies supporting long-term, social norm change.

The Tobacco Prevention and Control Program focuses on the following:

**Maintain a tobacco-control partnership (Infrastructure):** The Tobacco Free Partnership is a group of local individuals and community agencies who are committed to a Tobacco Free Polk County. The mission of the Tobacco Free Partnership of Polk County is to form community partnerships with individuals and organizations to educate and serve the citizens of Polk regarding prevention of tobacco use, intervention, and cessation



**Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT):** According to the 2008 Florida Youth Tobacco Survey, 24.5% of high school students and 11.7% of middle school students have used some form of tobacco in the past 30 days in Polk County. This represents a decrease from 2006. SWAT is Florida's statewide youth organization working to mobilize, educate and equip Florida youth to revolt against and de-glamorize Big Tobacco. In 2009, middle school, high school and college students across Polk County participated in school or community based SWAT Clubs. They learned how to become advocates for change and worked at the local level to reveal the truth of how tobacco industries target our youth in Polk County.

**Prevent Initiation of Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults:** Too often, tobacco products are able to get into the hands of our youth. The Partnership works with law enforcement agencies to increase the quantity of compliance checks conducted by enforcement agencies.

Local surveillance has indicated that there is an abundance of flavored tobacco products being sold and distributed in Polk County every day. Since the new FDA law allows for local authorities to restrict additional tobacco product sales, counties across the State of Florida, including Polk, are working towards a ban of all flavored tobacco products not currently covered under FDA restrictions. Removing these products that are designed to attract youth would prevent a new generation of tobacco users from becoming lifetime users.

**Eliminate Secondhand Smoke Exposure - Tobacco Free Policies:** Approximately 50,000 people die each year in the U.S. as a result of secondhand smoke. This program educates, empowers and provides resources to agencies within our county to establish tobacco free policies. In 2009, the program consulted with local organizations to plan and implement tobacco-free policies at their worksites.

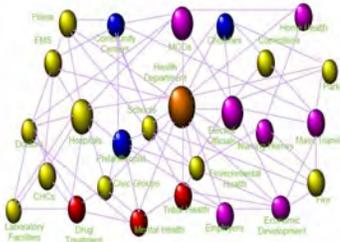
**Promote Cessation from Tobacco Use:** The program promotes **The Florida Quitline Line, 1-877-U-CAN-NOW (1.877.822.6669)**, a free cessation service offering individualized counseling and support to any Florida resident who is ready to quit. In addition, the program provides referrals to local cessation services and promotes the Florida AHEC Network which operates a Quit Smoking Now Referral Line at 1-87-QuitNow 6 (1-877-848-6696).

For more information on tobacco prevention, visit: [www.mypolkchd.org](http://www.mypolkchd.org) or [www.doh.state.fl.us/Tobacco](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Tobacco).

## Essential Service #4

### Mobilize community partnerships to identify and solve health problems

#### Community Partnerships



The Polk County Health Department works with other community partners within the local public health system to identify, prioritize, and solve health problems in the community.

This includes networking, coordination, cooperation, and collaboration to share resources and responsibilities to achieve a common purpose.

Some of the partnerships in which the health department participates include (but are not limited to):

#### Local Public Health System

- Children's Cabinet of the 10th Circuit
- Coalition on Injury Prevention
- Healthy Start
- Medical Reserve Corps (MRC)
- Polk Health Care Alliance
- Polk County Board of County Commissioners
- Polk County Growth Management
- Polk County School Board
- Polk Vision
- Regional Domestic Security Task Force (RDSTF)
- Safe Kids Suncoast Chapter
- School Health Advisory Council
- Step Up, Florida!
- Teen Pregnancy Prevention Alliance
- Tobacco Free Partnership of Polk County
- United Way Health Impact Team



**Medical Reserve Corps (MRC):** The Polk County Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) was started in February 2008. These individuals are trained community-based **volunteers** who donate their time, knowledge and expertise to prepare and respond to local emergencies.

During a disaster, MRC volunteers supplement existing emergency and public health resources in areas in which they are properly trained and equipped.

MRC volunteers include medical and public health professionals such as:

Dentists  
Emergency Medical Technicians  
Epidemiologists  
Fire Fighters  
Lab Workers  
Law Enforcement Officers

Massage Therapists  
Mental Health Counselors  
Nurses  
Nurse Practitioners  
Pharmacists

Physicians  
Radiology Workers  
Records Technicians  
Social Workers  
Veterinarians

Other community members, such as interpreters, chaplains, office workers, and legal advisors, can fill other vital support positions.

In 2009, the Polk County Medical Reserve Corps had 200 volunteers.

The MRC volunteers contribute valuable services to the community. Whether rolling up their sleeves to assist residents in times of disaster, or providing community wellness services such as health screenings and education, these dedicated volunteers are an asset to the health department.

For more information on volunteer opportunities, contact our human resources office at (863) 519-7900, Ext 11078,.

If interested in becoming a MRC volunteer, contact the MRC Coordinator at (863) 519-7900, Ext 11100.

To learn more about the Medical Reserve Corps, visit [www.mypolkchd.org](http://www.mypolkchd.org).



## Essential Service #4 (continued)

### Mobilize community partnerships to identify and solve health problems

#### Operation Safe Communities

Operation Safe Community training is a community based preparedness course. During 2009, the health department trained seven Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) on how to prepare their communities to be self reliant when faced with a major emergency or pandemic outbreak. The training is a train the trainer concept that teaches community residents self care. The training consists of prevention, general care activities, and managing symptoms, staying informed and identifying resources available.



The purpose of the training is to provide basic information to assist caregivers to know when to seek additional medical care by teaching the differences between minor and major medical symptoms in general. In addition, the training provides insight to how to handle basic symptoms and home care. Resources are identified to the participants as a means of locating timely public health and emergency information prior to, during and after a disaster or major health event. The Operation Safe Community training is a means for CERT members to become actively involved in the public health preparedness activities of their communities.

In addition, the CERT partnered with the Polk County Health Department during a public health exercise on April 26, 2009. Members of several Polk County CERTs partnered with the health department and participated in a bio-hazard response exercise which simulated activating a point of dispensing (POD) event. 200 simulated patients (CERT actors) processed through the different patient registration and treatment stations of the POD in record time. The exercise was a definite success because it demonstrated how trained community resident volunteers could be used and vital in a major incident response by becoming the extra set of hands sometimes needed as well as making their community self reliant.

Shortly, there after the exercise, the POD skills gained came in handy because CERT volunteers were activated during the preparation and implementation phase of the H1N1 Mass Vaccination Campaign. CERT volunteers participated in several of the H1N1 PODs. Members worked as logistics in setup and tear down of some of POD sites as well as crowd control and at the registration station assisting patients in reading consent forms for the vaccine.

#### Volunteer Services

The Polk County Health Department, with its limited resources and fiscal constraints, recognizes the value of volunteers in addressing the public health needs of communities. Volunteers with clerical, administrative, technical, and professional skills are recruited continuously to assist the agency.

Private licensed healthcare providers who volunteer or donate their services to the medically indigent residents of Polk County are provided sovereign immunity by the state.

In fiscal year 2008-2009, there were 38 individuals who volunteered at the Polk County Health Department contributing 3, 262 hours of service at an estimated value of \$73,413.



## Essential Service #5

### Develop policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts

#### Administrative Services

The Polk County Health Department Administrative Services division supports over 550 employees of the health department to deliver high quality public health services at 17 sites in Polk County.

Most of the 17 health department sites are owned and operated by the Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) and maintenance of these facilities is shared between the health department and the BoCC.

Administrative support services include:

- Human Resources
- General Services
- Information Technology
- Vital Statistics
- Billing
- Legal Services
- Information Security
- Facilities Management
- Budget
- Finance & Accounting



#### Healthy Communities Initiative

Designing and building healthy communities can improve the quality of life for all people. The way we design and build our communities can affect our physical and mental health.

"Smart growth" is an initiative that helps protect our natural environment and makes our communities more attractive, economically stronger, and more socially diverse. Healthy community design is one aspect of "smart growth" and includes planning and designing communities that make it easier for people to live healthy lives. Healthy community design promotes physical activity, improves air quality, lowers risk of injuries, decreases emissions that contribute to climate change, and increases social connection and sense of community.

In 2009, Polk County Health Department partnered with Polk County's Growth Management staff to develop criteria for Healthy Community Design in order to improve health outcomes in Polk County.

The draft criteria was presented to the Polk County Board of County Commissioners and the Polk County Planning Commission during a joint work session. It was later presented to the community at large during the first meeting of the Urban Form Focus Group. Health department staff also participated in a series of conferences and planning meetings to develop smart growth strategies. The health department was invited to participate on the Central Florida Regional Planning Council to review developments of regional impact.



## Essential Service #6

### Enforce laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety

#### Clean and Safe Drinking Water

Ensuring the safety of our drinking water is one of the most fundamental and most critical responsibilities of modern public health. We have many ways of protecting drinking water. Protecting water sources, treating the water, and testing samples of the water assures it is safe. Another important means of protecting water is by promoting awareness. Safe drinking water does not happen by accident, we all play a role in protecting it. The Polk County Health Department is strongly committed to safeguarding the quality of our drinking water.

The Environmental Engineering Division provides the following programs and services to ensure drinking water in the county is free from disease producing germs and chemical pollutants:

**Public Drinking Water Program-** This program ensures compliance with Federal and State safe drinking water standards for approximately 730 public water systems in Polk County. Staff review and permit water treatment plans, inspect water systems, and monitor all public drinking water systems' compliance with bacterial and chemical contaminant standards. Compliance issues at 54 water systems were resolved through enforcement actions, and approximately 60 systems were restored to compliance through informal follow-up inspections. Visit the Polk County Health Department web site: [www.mypolkchd.org](http://www.mypolkchd.org) for more information on water programs.

**Water Toxics Program-** This program conducts well surveillance in impacted areas collecting water samples to be tested for chemicals like pesticides. In 2009, water toxics were sampled at 529 water systems and private wells. Upon citizen request, program staff can collect well water for testing, provide information to owners on potential health effects and provide assistance in obtaining treatment or another source of water when necessary.

**Environmental Laboratory-** This laboratory located in Winter Haven is designed to test drinking water samples to ensure compliance with bacterial contamination standards with over 4,000 bacteriological samples being tested in 2009. The laboratory also tests drinking water for compliance with radioactivity standards. None of the 49 radiochemical tests performed in 2009 resulted in taking corrective actions. The laboratory also performs indoor air quality inspections usually associated with mold; however, in 2009 this office also responded to 150 calls regarding Chinese drywall inquiries.

**State Underground Pollutants Environmental Response (SUPER) Act Program-** The SUPER Act Program is responsible for identifying areas in the county that have contaminated drinking water as a result of leaking underground storage tanks, surface spills and other discharges to the environment. This program sampled 237 private wells in impacted areas, notified the residents of potential health effects and provided assistance in obtaining treatment or other sources of drinking water when needed. The Super Act and Water Toxics Programs have provided treatment units for arsenic, nitrate, pesticides and radiochemicals.

**Stationary Pollutant Storage Tank Program-** Environmental Engineering staff inspect regulated facilities that have storage tanks containing pollutants that could potentially contaminate groundwater. Inspections are done to ensure these facilities comply with state laws to minimize the risk of these pollutants being discharged.

The Storage Tank Regulation Program in Lakeland inspects facilities storing potentially harmful pollutants, ensuring compliance with state requirements designed to prevent leaks of these substances, in order to protect the drinking water supply in Polk and Hardee counties. This compliance verification program is conducted in partnership with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection under contract, and is funded by the Inland Petroleum Trust Fund.

The majority of facilities regulated under this program are retail gas stations, transport and other industries using vehicular fuel, and agricultural facilities with diesel-powered irrigation pumps and some stored pesticides classified as pollutants. Along with this there are some industrial storage tanks such as mineral acids, and a variety of facilities with fuel storage for emergency generators, which have increased significantly since the 2004 hurricane season.

This year was a watershed year for storage tank regulation in Florida, as the deadline fell for replacement of all regulated underground tanks with improved double-walled construction. This was a technological solution to provide added protection and a means of monitoring for leaks. During the year, programs throughout the state, kept up with the challenging task of overseeing the safe removal and proper installation of a huge number of tank systems to meet this requirement, in addition to the annual round of routine facility inspections. The tank removals included many locations that had not previously had environmental testing. As a result 74 tank closure assessment reports were reviewed to identify sites with evidence of contamination requiring cleanup.

## Essential Service #6 (continued)

### Enforce laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety

**Petroleum Cleanup Program-** This program monitors the clean-up of petroleum that has leaked into our soil and groundwater which could potentially contaminate drinking water. During FY 2008-2009, there were 62 contaminated sites that were cleaned up. Since the program's inception, 591 contaminated sites have been closed.

#### Facilities Inspections

The Polk County Health Department regulates several kinds of facilities to protect the public's health through inspecting, permitting, and licensing.

**Mobile Home & RV Parks-** Polk County has 504 licensed mobile home and RV parks, which is the greatest number in the state of Florida. In 2009, Environmental Health Specialists performed 1,264 inspections. The health department inspects each park at least twice per year to ensure compliance with laws regarding:



- garbage collection and disposal
- insect and rodent control
- plumbing and backflow prevention
- sanitation
- space requirements
- sewage collection and disposal

**Migrant Labor Camps-** Environmental Health Specialists conduct monthly inspections of migrant housing during the migrant farm worker season to ensure safe and healthy living conditions for those working in our farm industry.

At the beginning of every migrant season, annual permits are issued to camp owners whose migrant housing meets standards to ensure safe and sanitary conditions. The migrant season varies, but typically runs from mid-October until end of June/early July. In 2009, Environmental Health Specialists performed 175 inspections and site investigations and issued permits to 55 facilities.

**Food Service Establishments-**In 1992, the role of inspecting restaurants was transferred to the Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR). Whenever there is an outbreak of food-borne illnesses associated with a restaurant, the health department does a joint inspection with DBPR to help determine the cause and eliminate it.

The health department routinely inspects and permits the following food service establishments: assisted living facilities, bars, child and adult day care centers, detention facilities, fraternal and civic organizations, hospitals, nursing homes, schools, and theaters. In 2009, Environmental Health Specialists performed over 1,850 inspections at approximately 600 food service establishments in Polk County.

**Group Care Facilities-**The health department inspects facilities such as public and private schools, foster homes and group homes to ensure compliance with sanitation standards. In 2009, Environmental Health Specialists performed approximately 1,369 inspections at over 1,000 facilities.



**Body Piercing and Tanning Facilities-**The health department regulates body-piercing facilities to help protect the public from the spread of infectious diseases. In 2009, Environmental Health Specialists inspected and licensed 15 facilities for proper piercing and sanitizing procedures. In addition, the health department inspected and permitted 86 tanning facilities meeting proper operating standards.

**Facilities Generating Biomedical Waste-** The Biomedical Waste program was designed to protect health care workers, environmental service staff, waste haulers, and the general public from risks associated with potentially infectious materials.

The health department's Biomedical Waste program inspects facilities that generate biomedical waste. Program staff ensure that infectious materials are handled, stored, transported and disposed of in accordance with State Laws.

In 2009, Environmental Health Specialists conducted over 500 inspections in approximately 985 facilities including hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, laboratories, funeral homes, storage and treatment facilities, and medical offices.

For more information on Biomedical waste, visit: [www.doh.state.fl.us/environment/programs/index.html](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/environment/programs/index.html)

## Essential Service #6 (continued)

### Enforce laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety

#### Onsite Sewage Treatment

Sewage contains bacteria, viruses, and parasites that may affect the health of residents if these germs enter drinking water.

The Polk County Health Department inspects, evaluates, and permits the installation of all new and repaired septic systems in the county.

In 2009, Environmental Health Specialists conducted approximately 7,400 septic system inspections and/or investigations. The Environmental Health Division also issued over 2,000 septic system permits.

Septic system permits are issued from health department sites in Bartow, Lakeland, and Winter Haven.

For more information on septic tank permits and inspections, call (863) 534-5942 or visit the Polk County Health Department web site at [www.mypolkchd.org](http://www.mypolkchd.org)



#### Radioactive Material Licensing



In 2009, the health department inspected and licensed 36 facilities in Polk County where radioactive materials are used. This includes hospitals, medical clinics, industrial facilities, and food irradiators. Polk County did not record any radioactive materials incidents in 2009. The Radiological Health unit participated in emergency response drills at the Turkey Point and St. Lucie Nuclear Power Plants.

The unit provided basic radiation training (4 hours) to area landfill personnel and the Polk County Sheriff's Office SWAT team. The unit also conducted one Applied Radiation Physics Class (3 days) for the Department of Health's Bureau of Radiation Control personnel.

#### Swimming Pools and Bathing Places

The health department inspects public swimming pools and bathing places to ensure these facilities meet health and safety standards.

In 2009, Environmental Health Specialists inspected and issued permits to 711 public swimming pools and 12 public bathing places.

Environmental Engineering staff are also responsible for:

- reviewing plans
- issuing new pool construction permits
- collecting samples and analyzing samples from public bathing places



Polk County is one of only 13 counties in the state of Florida authorized to review plans and issue permits.

For more information on how to promote healthy and safe swimming environments in Polk County visit the Polk County Health Department web site at [www.mypolkchd.org](http://www.mypolkchd.org)

#### X-ray Machine Inspection

The health department works to reduce exposure to workers and the public from machines that emit radiation.

Environmental Health Specialists regularly inspect each radiation machine according to a schedule that varies depending upon how the machine is used. This schedule ranges from annually for mammography and cancer therapy machines to every 5 years for dental and podiatry machines.

In Polk County there are more than 900 x-ray machines in over 300 facilities including hospitals and doctors' offices that must be inspected to ensure they are being operated safely and appropriately by qualified individuals.

During 2009, Environmental Health Specialists inspected 380 X-ray machines.

## Essential Service #7

### Link people to needed personal health services

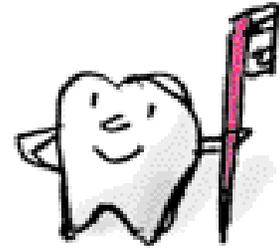
#### Dental Division

The Polk County Health Department (PCHD) Dental Division provides preventive dental health measures including education to promote prevention of cavities, gum disease, and premature loss of teeth.

Good oral health is important to a person's overall health and well-being. Brushing, flossing, and regular dental visits are inexpensive ways to keep a healthy smile.

The Dental program provides:

- Cleanings
- Emergency extractions
- Exams
- Fillings
- Fluoride treatments
- Oral hygiene information
- Sealants
- X-rays



Dental services are available to children and young adults up to the age of 20. While the focus is on Medicaid eligible clients, services are also available to non-Medicaid clients on a fee for service basis.

Polk County Health Department Dental Offices are located in Auburndale, Bartow, and Lakeland. In FY 2009-2010, the health department's dental clinic recorded over 18,000 patient visits. The health department also visited 13 schools, screened 500 students and placed 1,544 sealants as part of its school dental sealant program.

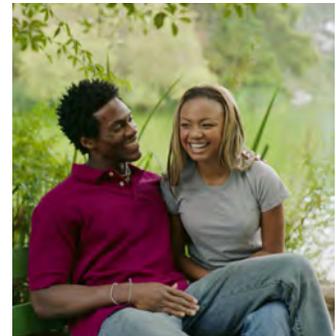
For more information on dental services, visit: [www.doh.state.fl.us/Family/dental/index.html](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Family/dental/index.html)

#### Family Planning

The health department provides family planning services to help women maintain good reproductive health through planned pregnancies.

The Polk County Health Department offers a range of family planning services including:

- Physicals which include pap smears and breast exams
- Birth control methods
- Counseling, testing, and treatment for STDs, HIV and AIDS
- Education on the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle
- Breast and cervical cancer referrals
- Pregnancy testing



Tubal ligations (for women) and vasectomies (for men), are available for eligible low-income residents who are over 21 years of age and desire permanent sterilization.

During 2009, the health department provided family planning services to 7,628 residents of Polk County, which resulted in 16,943 family planning visits to our clinics.

Appointments can be made at any of the following health department clinics: Auburndale, Bartow, Haines City, Lakeland or Lake Wales.

For additional information on Family Planning, visit: [www.doh.state.fl.us/Family/famplan/whatsright.html](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Family/famplan/whatsright.html)

## Essential Service #7 (continued)

### Link people to needed personal health services

#### Healthcare for Pregnant Women

Prenatal care is the care women receive during their pregnancy. Early and consistent prenatal care is essential to decreasing the risks of premature birth, infant death and other complications during pregnancy. It is important for women to seek health care during the first three months of their pregnancy.

##### Prenatal Services

Women receiving prenatal care services are seen by board certified obstetrician-gynecologist and advanced registered nurse practitioners specializing in women's healthcare.

Prenatal services include:

- Physical exams
- Prenatal Education
- Monitoring fetal growth and development
- Pregnancy support groups

In 2009, the health department provided care to approximately 4,000 pregnant women. This included over 24,000 prenatal related visits.

The Polk County Health Department offers prenatal care services at the following clinic locations: Auburndale, Bartow, Haines City, Lakeland, and Lake Wales. The clinic in Bartow specializes in providing high risk prenatal care to women who experience complications during pregnancy. For more information on pregnancy and the importance of prenatal care, visit the following website: [www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/pregnancy\\_gateway/default.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/pregnancy_gateway/default.htm)

##### Continuity of Care for Pregnant Women

Polk County Health Department holds a cooperative agreement with Regency Medical Center to provide continuity of care for low and high risk pregnant women. This agreement is aimed at pregnant women eligible for Medicaid benefits, but who are not members of a Medicaid HMO. In 2009, approximately 858 patients under the agreement delivered babies at Regency Medical Center.

##### CenteringPregnancy

CenteringPregnancy brings together 8-12 women, who are at about the same stage in their pregnancy, to receive prenatal care as a group throughout their pregnancy.

The program provides a setting where pregnant women can develop a personal relationship with their peers and receive emotional support. CenteringPregnancy improves the chances that a baby will be born healthy. These babies are more likely to be full term and not be born underweight.

Studies of CenteringPregnancy show that women participating in these groups are less likely to experience postpartum depression. During each meeting these women check their own weight and blood pressure and are engaged in group discussions on topics related to nutrition, childbirth preparation, and breastfeeding.

Meetings are facilitated by a health care professional. The Polk County Health Department in conjunction with the Healthy Start Coalition of Hardee, Highlands, and Polk Counties was the second site in Florida to receive site approval from the Centering Healthcare Institute.

CenteringPregnancy Programs are available by calling any of the following health department clinic locations: Auburndale, Lakeland and Lake Wales. For more information on pregnancy and the importance of prenatal care, visit the following website: [www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/pregnancy\\_gateway/default.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/pregnancy_gateway/default.htm)



## Essential Service #7 (continued)

### Link people to needed personal health services

#### Healthy Start

The goal of the Healthy Start Program is to give every baby a healthy start in life by ensuring moms receive prenatal care early, babies are born healthy, and infants and toddlers develop and thrive. This program is funded by the Healthy Start Coalition of Hardee, Highlands, and Polk. This is accomplished by providing emotional support and education to moms on:

- continuing their education
- being healthy before they get pregnant
- beginning prenatal care early
- recognizing problems during the pregnancy
- parenting of their infants and toddlers



In 2009, over 6,200 mothers and infants received Healthy Start services in Polk County. The health department coordinates care for women with high risk pregnancies and post-partum women for up to 3 years following their delivery, as well as infants and toddlers (up to age 3). There are 14 public health nurses and 15 family support workers who make home visits to provide families with the following services:

- Parenting education
- Smoking cessation
- Health education in English and Spanish
- Referrals for mental health counseling
- Breastfeeding education and support
- Family planning education and services
- Interconceptional education and Childbirth education

The Healthy Start program works in cooperation with the Florida Highway Patrol to provide car seat safety classes and car seats at a reduced cost. In 2009, about 574 caregivers received safety training and over 551 car seats were distributed.

Healthy Start clients may receive bus passes to travel to medical appointments. They can receive free childbirth education classes provided by certified Childbirth Educators that are members of the Healthy Start Program staff.

Smoking cessation classes are available free of charge to Healthy Start clients through the Area Health Education Centers (AHEC). Those interested in completing their high school education are provided with study books to help them prepare for the General Educational Development (GED) exam.

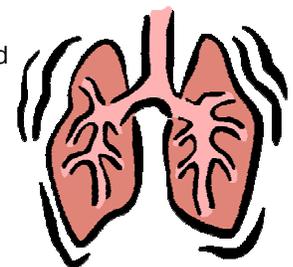
For more information on Healthy Start services, visit: [www.healthystarthhp.org/index.html](http://www.healthystarthhp.org/index.html)

#### Mary Sand Chronic Lung Disease Clinic

The health department's Mary Sand Clinic, located in Auburndale, has been operating since 1971. This clinic provides rehabilitative services for people with chronic obstructive lung diseases or other lung-related conditions.

In 2009, approximately 2,859 visits were made to the Mary Sand Clinic. The health department works closely with the American Lung Association and the Winter Haven Hospital Respiratory Rehabilitation Department to provide necessary follow-up outpatient services including:

- Monitoring blood pressure
- Measuring oxygen levels in the blood
- Breathing exercises
- Stationary bicycle and treadmill exercises
- Unique out of clinic respiratory program utilizing the Harmonica to improve breathing and encourage camaraderie amongst the clients
- Monthly continuing client education program on various subjects related to respiratory concerns
- Psychological and emotional support group



The primary focus of this clinic is to continue the rehabilitation process that was started in the hospital. Support groups are also offered to patients and their families.

For more information on the Mary Sand Chronic Lung Disease Clinic, please visit [www.mypolkchd.org](http://www.mypolkchd.org) or call (863) 965-5400.

## Essential Service #7 (continued)

### Link people to needed personal health services

#### Immunizations

Immunizations are your first line of defense against diseases such as: polio, measles, mumps, rubella, influenza, tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis.

The Polk County Health Department provides the following immunization services:

**Child Immunizations** - Through the "Vaccines for Children" (VFC) program, uninsured or underinsured children and adolescents in Polk County can receive immunizations at no cost through the health department or other private local VFC providers.



In 2009, approximately 43,686 doses of vaccine were given to 12,482 clients under the age of 19.

Children and adolescents can receive immunizations at the following health department locations: Auburndale, Bartow, Haines City, Lakeland and Lake Wales.

For more information on childhood immunizations, visit: [www.doh.state.fl.us/Disease\\_ctrl/immune/community/index.htm](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Disease_ctrl/immune/community/index.htm)

**Adult Immunizations** - Adults need to keep their immunizations up-to-date to protect themselves from diseases that can result in death or disability. These immunizations include tetanus, influenza, pertussis and pneumonia.

Adult Immunizations are available at the following locations: Auburndale, Bartow, Haines City, Lakeland, and Lake Wales.

For more information on Adult Immunizations, visit: [www.doh.state.fl.us/disease\\_ctrl/immune/adult/index.htm](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/disease_ctrl/immune/adult/index.htm).

**Traveler Immunizations** - Many of the diseases that have been eliminated in the United States are still common in other parts of the world. Therefore, when traveling outside the U.S., it is important to ensure you protect your health.

The health department provides specific immunizations for a traveler's destination. In addition, the health department offers prescriptions for anti-malaria medications and critical information on general safety issues, travel alerts, and health information from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Travelers are encouraged to make an appointment as soon as they know their point of destination outside the U.S. and their departure date. It can take several weeks or months to complete the recommended series of immunizations.

The Traveler Immunization Clinics are located in Auburndale (863) 965-5400, Lakeland (863) 413-2620, and Lake Wales (863) 678-0413. Call either location and ask to speak with the Travel Immunizations Nurse.

For more information on traveler immunizations, visit: [www.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx](http://www.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx).



**Flu Shots** - Flu season in Florida normally peaks during the months of November through February. One of the best ways to prevent the flu is to get a flu shot each year. Flu shots are safe, effective, and do not cause the flu.

The Polk County Health Department partners with various agencies across the county to offer flu shots to the community during flu season.

Flu shots are available at the following four health department sites: Auburndale, Bartow, Haines City, Lakeland, and Lake Wales.

For more information on flu, visit: [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu).

## Essential Service #7 (continued)

### Link people to needed personal health services

#### School Health Services

The Polk County Health Department partners with the Polk County School Board to provide health services to students. The health department employs 27 school nurses and 10 health support technicians who work in over 140 schools to provide the following services:

- healthcare assessments and record reviews
- health counseling
- nutrition assessment (BMI screening)
- referrals and follow-up of suspected or confirmed health problems
- health screenings (vision, hearing and scoliosis)
- education that promotes healthy behaviors

These health department staff provided approximately 500,000 services to over 83,000 students. In addition, school nurses collaborate with parents, teachers, social workers, and other health care providers to develop care plans, identify available health resources, and identify the need for health referrals to address specific health problems.

In FY 2009-2010, School Health provided vision services to 30, 711 children for grades K, 1, 3 and 6 and hearing services to 28,234 children for grades k, 1, and 6 in cooperation with the Early Learning Coalition of Polk County.

For more information on school health services, visit [www.doh.state.fl.us/Family/School/services/sh\\_services.html](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Family/School/services/sh_services.html).

#### Specialty Care Clinic (HIV/AIDS)

The health department's Specialty Care Clinic, located in Bartow, provides HIV education, counseling, testing and treatment services to residents of Polk County. This program is supported through Ryan White grant funding and state funds. Funding from the Ryan White grant has been renewed for FY 2010-2011.

In 2009, board certified infectious disease specialists and specially trained nurse practitioners provided primary medical care services to 930 clients.

In addition to medical services, the clinic also provides clients with nutritional and mental health counseling, assistance with obtaining HIV medications and assistance in accessing specialized medical care, dental care, housing, and transportation.

Confidential HIV counseling and testing is offered at all Polk County Health Department clinics. Anonymous testing is offered only at the Specialty Care Clinic in Bartow.

For additional information on the HIV/AIDS Program, visit [www.mypolkchd.org](http://www.mypolkchd.org)

#### WIC & Nutrition

The Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program is federally funded and serves pregnant, breastfeeding, or postpartum women, infants, and children (up to the age of five) who have low or moderate income and are at nutritional risk. WIC helps to prevent low birth weight infants and infant deaths by improving the diet of pregnant women.

In addition, the program helps to improve the growth of children who participate in the program by providing a combination of the following (at no cost):

- breastfeeding promotion and support
- nutrition education and counseling
- healthy foods
- referrals to health care, immunizations, and community services

In 2009, the Polk County Health Department's WIC Program served an average of 24,179 clients each month at 11 different sites in Polk and Hardee Counties. The WIC Program provides an economic boost to Polk and Hardee Counties.

In 2009, WIC checks were redeemed at local grocery stores by program participants in Polk and Hardee Counties totaling an estimated value of \$18,653,258.

WIC services are offered at the following locations: Auburndale, Bartow, Frostproof, Ft. Meade, Haines City, Lakeland (North & Central), Lake Wales, Winter Haven and Wauchula.

For more information on WIC services and eligibility, visit: [www.doh.state.fl.us/Family/wic/Links/eligibility\\_english.html](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Family/wic/Links/eligibility_english.html).



## Essential Service #8

### Assure a competent public health and personal health care workforce

#### Staff Training & Development

The Polk County Health Department is committed to having a highly trained workforce. To ensure employees are able to handle the rapid changes of public health, the health department has invested time and money into the continuing education and training of its employees.

In 2009, over 1,000 hours of live training were offered to Polk County Health Department staff. A multi-level staff development program was offered including topic areas such as professionalism, leadership, and management skills. The Polk County Health Department employs use of an on-line Learning Management System, which provides a multitude of learning and scheduling options for staff.

In addition to providing internal staff training, the health department supports and funds participation in external learning opportunities at local state colleges and universities for employees to continue their formal education and further develop their careers.

These incentives include tuition waiver and tuition reimbursement programs, educational leave with pay, and distance learning classes. The Polk County Health Department also supports and funds participation in various public health associations and leadership institutes throughout the state.

## Essential Service #9

### Evaluate effectiveness, accessibility and quality of health services

#### Customer Focus Council

The Customer Focus Council was developed in 2009 to address alignment of our local customer satisfaction data collection, compilation and reporting with that of the state Department of Health office. An action plan was drafted which included the following supporting goals:

1. Implement a standardized Customer Satisfaction Process throughout the Polk County Health Department
2. Support staff in continuously improving customer satisfaction
3. Embed customer service as a part of core values
4. Fully meet the customer service standard for voluntary National Public Health Accreditation.

After piloting several survey tools to determine the most effective method to capture responses from our client base, Opinion-meter Touchscreen polling tablets and Kiosks were purchased and piloted in several locations.

## Essential Service #9 (continued)

### Evaluate effectiveness, accessibility and quality of health services

#### Leadership Council

The Leadership Council of the Polk County Health Department was established in 2003 for management and frontline staff to work together to jointly address issues of importance to the department.

**Working on making it better....  
...how are we doing?**



Working towards its mission: *To advance Polk County Health Department as an Academic and Research organization in pursuit of Public Health Accreditation*, the Leadership Council accomplished much in 2009:

- With the goal of applying for national accreditation in 2013, an Accreditation Committee was created to work on reviewing the standards and measures which must be met and began to compile documentation necessary to provide evidence of compliance with all requirements.
- The Academic Committee completed an Organizational Process Map for the acceptance and placement of students and interns at PCHD, designed a database for tracking such students and interns, and initiated development of a share point site that will allow for up to date tracking of students and the associated quality assurance processes at PCHD.
- The Research Committee is looking at what other health departments are researching, how they are being funded for research, and what research opportunities there may be in partnering with local colleges and universities. With information provided by Division Directors, committee members participated in a Research Interest Survey conducted by the Florida Public Health Practice-Based Research Network.

Leadership Council members have also been active in the Strategic Planning process.

#### Strategic Planning

On October 28, 2009, the Polk County Health Department (PCHD) began the process of creating the roadmap for our future. The PCHD Strategic Planning Team held its first planning workshop at the Nature Discovery Center at Circle B Bar Reserve.

Since the workshop, the strategic planning team has created goals that we want to achieve over the next three years. The 2010-2012 Strategic Priorities and goals are:

- **Financial Stability & Growth**

**Goal:** Polk County Health Department will maximize efficiency and funding sources to continually improve the health of the residents and visitors of Polk County.

- **Knowledge Management**

**Goal:** Use experience, information, and data to set direction, make evidence-based decisions, and assess performance.

- **Organizational Development**

**Goal:** Strengthen the health department's capacity to respond to challenges and take advantage of growth opportunities.

Future strategic planning meetings are scheduled to be held over the next year to create measurable objectives and strategies that will help the Polk County Health Department move forward towards creating a healthier future for the people of Polk County.

## Essential Service #10

### Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems

#### Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)

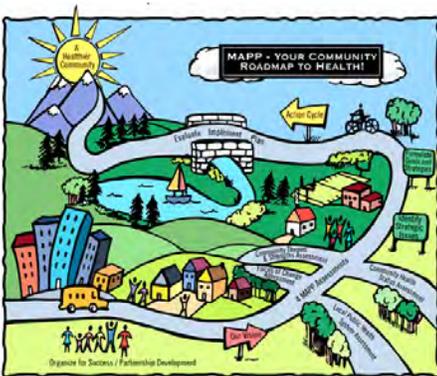
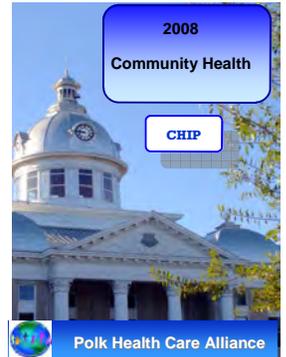
Throughout 2008, the Polk County Health Department worked closely with the Polk Health Care Alliance to develop the first *Community Health Improvement Plan* (CHIP) in Polk County's history. The health department provided the resources and technical assistance to use a process called Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) to create the CHIP.

The CHIP reflects the planned activities of the Alliance from 2008-2011 and focuses on the local health care delivery system, health care funding and policies, and the infrastructure of the Alliance.

MAPP is a strategic planning process developed by the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). MAPP provides direction on how to assess a community's health care resources and health needs and then develop a community-wide plan to improve the overall health of the community.

In 2009, the Polk County Health Department (PCHD) in collaboration with the Polk Health Care Alliance began completing new community health assessments using the MAPP process. Data from these assessments will be used to design a 2012-2015 community health improvement plan (CHIP).

To view the 2008-2011 CHIP and the previous four MAPP assessments, go to [www.mypolkchd.org](http://www.mypolkchd.org), and click on "Data/Reports."



## Polk County Health Department Clinics

Auburndale  
1805 Hobbs Road  
(863) 965-5400



Bartow  
2020 E. Georgia St.  
(863) 519-8242



Haines City  
111 North 11th Street  
(863) 421-3204



Lakeland  
3241 Lakeland Hills Blvd.  
(863) 413-2620



Lake Wales  
835 West Central Ave.  
(863) 678-4144



For more information on any of the topics covered in this report, visit  
[www.mypolkchd.org](http://www.mypolkchd.org).

- END -

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**Report Contributors/Editors**

Daniel Haight, MD, FACP  
Lynne Saddler, MD, MPH  
Sheryl Cooper, RN, BSN, MPH  
Daniel Jimenez, MAS  
Celeste Philip, MD, MPH  
Linda Hawbaker