



The Network
for Public Health Law

Stronger together

2019 Impact Report
July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019





“We’re proud to be a catalyst for collaboration and to join others who share our passion for this important work.”

A message from our National Director

When I look back over the past year, I’m heartened by the amazing efforts of so many agencies and organizations working in concert on shared objectives and initiatives to protect and improve the health of communities across the country. At the Network, we’ve deepened our relationships with existing partners and created strong connections with new partners to improve health on a variety of law and policy fronts.

By strengthening the capacity of agencies, organizations and communities to explore legal pathways for doing their important work, we’re addressing the social and structural issues that create health inequities. Yet there is so much more to do.

Health crises and other challenges at the national level continue to capture headlines and our attention. Opioid misuse and overdose, food insecurity, outbreaks of measles and other vaccine-preventable diseases, limited access to health care, and the pros—and cons—of sharing increasing amounts of data across institutions and initiatives are just a few. In the past year, we partnered with many of the national organizations and networks at the forefront of these issues, including the National Association of School Nurses, the National Center for Medical-Legal Partnerships, Data Across Sectors for Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Much of our impact happens at the local and individual levels.

In 2019, we reached more than 10,000 individuals in public health and other sectors with practice-based trainings and other educational programming through workshops and webinars and at our national Public Health Law Conference. Much of this work served to support and develop the public health workforce so it can protect the health of communities.

In addition, we engaged with those working on critical needs at the local level, including the East Side Health and Well-Being Collaborative, a partnership of local organizations supporting underserved communities on the East Side of Saint Paul, Minnesota. Together, we have begun to identify ways the organizations can better engage in policy to promote healthy-food access, and improve the mental health and stress resilience in low-income neighborhoods.

You’ll find these and other stories on the pages that follow.

We have great momentum with a number of new partnerships in the coming year. One major initiative is the Harm Reduction Legal Project, made possible with support from Arnold Ventures, a new philanthropic partner. This project provides real-time consultation that enables organizations to successfully operate within existing law and policy while providing assistance to advocates who seek to modify existing legal restrictions on harm reduction interventions including medication-assisted treatment, safe injection and naloxone access.

Well-informed public health policy creates safer, healthier, more vibrant communities for everyone. We’re proud to be a catalyst for collaboration and to join others who share our passion for this important work—because it will take all of us, working hand in hand, to bring about the true health equity we envision.

Donna E. Levin
National Director
The Network for Public Health Law

Addressing Health Inequities

Improving Wellbeing in Low-Income Neighborhoods

Issue

A Saint Paul, Minnesota, community health collaborative sought policy pathways to improve nutrition and mental health in its low-income neighborhoods.

Impact

The Network is working hand in hand with collaborative members to identify policies that will advance specific health initiatives within the community.

Recognizing that health and well-being start where people live, learn, work and play, the East Side Health and Well-Being Collaborative is working with more than 20 community organizations to build and share power and advance the root causes of health.

The Network is a member of the East Side Collaborative's Policy Committee, which works to identify the guidance, knowledge and resources needed to better engage with local, state and federal policies that impact community health. As a participating committee member, we've provided training on the intersection between health, public health, and law and policy, and have helped identify specific policies that support the organization's program goals.



Fueling Medical-Legal Partnerships

Issue

While collaborative approaches consistently strengthen efforts to address the root causes of health disparities, many health care providers, public health practitioners and public interest legal practitioners work independently within their communities.

Impact

We partnered with and provided legal technical expertise to medical-legal partnerships (MLPs) across the nation to jointly address the legal issues that contribute to poor health.

Health teams and lawyers are working together in medical-legal partnerships to address the social and structural problems at the root of health inequities. The Network launched and continues to lead a collaborative initiative with the National Center for Medical-Legal Partnership (NCMLP) and with medical-legal partnerships across the country to provide real-time consultation to these important partnerships. Through this collaboration, we can identify and seek to change those laws, policies and practices that perpetuate the inequities that cause and exacerbate poor health. We can then focus our efforts on promising new initiatives that positively impact health and health equity.

With our guidance, MLPs are better utilizing public health law and policy to make positive institutional and systemic changes. Conversely, their on-the-ground experience informs our teams about the myriad ways that laws (or the lack thereof) negatively influence health, from enabling hazardous housing conditions to limiting access to health care. By working together, we're amplifying each other's ability to improve both social and structural determinants of health.

Addressing Health Inequities

Improving Access to Critical Data

Issue

For public health agencies, data is essential for public health surveillance, epidemiological investigation, research and program development. However, laws and regulations can pose barriers to effective use, storage and sharing of data.

Together with the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and the de Beaumont Foundation, the Network led an initiative to provide tailored consultations to local health agencies on specific data sharing use cases. This project will increase the capacity of these local agencies to develop and accelerate the adoption of innovative approaches for sharing data to improve the health of their communities.

Impact

In partnership with agencies and organizations in public health and other sectors, the Network helped communities learn how they can best utilize data within the constraints of current laws and policies to plan, monitor and innovate for health improvement.

We also partnered with Data Across Sectors for Health (DASH), an initiative that works to foster multisector collaborations to connect information systems and share data for community health improvement. Together, we developed an online collection of toolkits and other resources focused on privacy, consent and policy documentation.



Improving the Health of Children and Teens

Increasing Access to School Nursing

Issue

School nurses can be critical to children’s health, yet many schools have limited or no access to these invaluable professionals and their services.

Impact

Recognizing the importance of school nursing (a specialized practice of public health nursing), particularly in rural and underserved areas, we continued to expand our strong partnership with the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) to promote greater access to school nursing across the country.

School nurses are a vital public health resource because they reach kids where they spend the majority of their waking time. These nurses understand the complexities between physical and mental well-being and academic achievement.

In 2019, we partnered with NASN leadership and developed a range of tools and resources to help advance the practice of nursing in schools and promote student health and wellness. As a result of our fruitful partnership, NASN presented the Network with its Recognition Award for outstanding service to the organization.

Addressing Food Insecurity through Food Sharing

Issue

A Texas county health department needed help in navigating federal regulations regarding food sharing in schools in an effort to reduce food insecurity among its students.

Impact

Guided by Network experts, health and education officials began work on plans for greater adoption of food sharing tables at schools with the goal of assuring that at-risk kids gain access to safe foods at no extra cost.

Officials in Harris County, Texas, where the food insecurity rate among children is estimated to be close to 24 percent, saw an opportunity to address hunger among its students through food sharing tables, where students place unopened food and drinks they choose not to consume for other students to take.

Unsure how to navigate the perceived legal red tape and potential funding impacts that might result given that the schools are part of the Federal School Lunch Program, Harris County officials contacted the Network. We conducted a comprehensive assessment of federal allowances of food sharing tables and documented how several jurisdictions in California and Washington state have adopted or encouraged these tables in their local schools.

As a result, the County’s health and education officials have begun work on plans that will foster greater acceptance and use of food sharing tables at schools. This will provide at-risk students with access to safe foods at no extra cost, as well as a more equitable chance to learn and succeed.



Improving the Health of Children and Teens

Promoting Equitable Access to Oral Health Care

Issue

Due to a shortage of dental care providers, an inequitable burden of preventable oral health disease persists for many Americans. Public health officials in Minnesota sought legal and policy pathways to expand access to care in their state.

People from rural and low-income communities, racial minorities, individuals with disabilities and the elderly suffer disproportionately from tooth decay and gum disease, and are less likely to visit a dentist than other Americans. In addition, in 2017 nearly 63 million people in the United States lived in dental health professional shortage areas (DHPSAs). As the name implies, these are geographic areas with a shortage of dental care providers. In Minnesota, over half of the state's counties are considered DHPSAs.

Impact

Research and analysis by the Network outlined collaborative practice strategies dental professionals can utilize to expand access to oral health care in Minnesota and nationwide.

Collaborative practice is one strategy to provide care to people who are not currently receiving dental services. It may be used to expand the roles of current providers in the oral health workforce (including dental hygienists and dental assistants) or to support new provider types (such as dental therapists).



The Network provided Minnesota public health officials with an outline for how to utilize collaborative practice to expand access to oral health care services within the state, including:

- A workforce analysis.
- How dental hygienists, dental assistants and dental therapists can improve access to care for those who need it most.
- Key legal features of various service models and the barriers that have prevented these approaches from being utilized more widely.
- Why raising Medicaid reimbursement rates is critical to improving oral health care access.

While the research focused on Minnesota, the policies discussed have national relevance.

Making the Case for School-Based Dental Sealants

Despite strong evidence of the effectiveness of school-based dental sealant programs, most states are not taking full advantage of them, thereby missing out on a significant opportunity to improve children's health.

We partnered with the Minnesota Department of Health's Oral Health Program to identify innovative laws and policies that encourage more widespread consideration, adoption and implementation of school-based dental sealant programs at the state level.

Strengthening the Capacity of Communities to Protect and Promote Health

Supporting Decision Making in Times of Emergency

Issue

In the midst of New York City's largest measles outbreak in three decades, health officials from the city reached out to the Network for its expertise in utilizing vaccination laws and mandates to protect the public's health.

Impact

Network attorneys provided the agency with the research and information it needed to make the best evidence-based decisions for its communities—decisions that would prevent or survive legal challenge.

On April 9, 2019, New York City's health commissioner, Dr. Oxiris Barbot, declared a public health emergency in response to a measles outbreak that infected hundreds of residents, mostly children. To stop the potentially deadly outbreak, mandated vaccination for all residents was deemed essential. The careful and studied issuing of an order for mandatory vaccinations was critical to avoiding legal challenges that would further delay the mandate's effectiveness, potentially threatening the lives of hundreds of residents.

The General Counsel for the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

consulted with the Network on how to best issue a mandate that would avoid or survive legal challenge. Our analysis from a 1991 Philadelphia case, as well as information on a mandate in Prince George's County, Maryland, gave confidence to the health department's law department that it could successfully defend a challenge to its vaccination mandate order.

To help others across the country understand the decisions and implications behind the headlines, we convened experts in vaccination law and policy to conduct a webinar on the measles outbreak in the U.S. and on New York City's mandate decision.



Strengthening the Capacity of Communities to Protect and Promote Health

Saving Lives in an Ongoing Epidemic

Issue

Deaths from opioid overdose are still at epidemic levels across the country, and public health agencies are struggling to find large-scale solutions.

Impact

By helping the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) ensure that effective laws and policies are implemented at the state level, communities have the potential to save tens of thousands of lives.

According to the CDC, “More than 47,000 people died from prescription or illicit opioid overdose in 2017, with deaths increasing among men and women, people ages 15 and older, all races and ethnicities, and across all levels of urbanization.”

The CDC equips states with resources to prevent opioid misuse and overdose by tracking and monitoring the epidemic, helping to scale effective strategies and programs, and equipping health care providers with the tools and guidance they need to make informed decisions.

To assist in the CDC’s efforts, we provided a broad and comprehensive overview of the legal, data sharing, data privacy and data utilization issues and strategies for state, tribal and local governments, health agencies and other entities working in overdose prevention and harm reduction.

Our work included:

- Legal and policy “issue spotting” to include a high-level analysis on the potential impact and viability of strategies like increased naloxone access.
- A risk assessment of the types of legal challenges that might occur around particular strategies and suggestions for how to mitigate those risks.
- Providing actionable information regarding the scope of laws governing the use of state prescription drug monitoring programs (PDMPs). This information included the current state of law relating to universal registration and use, reporting periods and requirements, and access to data by public health agencies for use in public health surveillance.



Amplifying the impact of public health: 2019 highlights

Public health is driven by law and policy in ways that are broadly and deeply complex. In 2019, the Network helped tens of thousands of individuals in public health and other sectors cut through this complexity by providing them with the legal expertise and evidence-based information they needed to protect and improve public health.

Research and Analysis

Sound, evidence-based decision making is critical to building greater quality of life in our communities—and even saving lives. The research reports, briefs, surveys, articles and other resources we produce serve as valuable guides and applied tools that enable those we serve to leverage laws and policies to advance health and health equity. In the last year, the Network:

- Developed **239** reports, briefs, surveys, research articles and other resources on pressing and emerging issues in public health.
- Reached more than **70,000** individuals online with our research, reports and resources.

Strategic Consultation and Guidance

From disseminating best practices to designing action plans, the guidance we provide helps individuals and organizations working in public health and other sectors develop policy, access laws, understand regulations and advance initiatives.

As trained issue spotters, we help these individuals and organizations identify the key considerations central to their unique challenges and provide law and policy pathways they can leverage to make a difference.

Over **500** individuals and organizations received this critical assistance from our national network of public health law and policy experts.



The top public health issues receiving our assistance



Knowledge Building and Training

We empower those working in public health and other sectors, expanding their capacity to leverage laws and policies to make critical advances in health and health equity.

- We provided more than **9,500** individuals in public health and other sectors with education and training through **122** webinars, workshops and presentations.
- For the fourth year in a row, we conducted an American Public Health Association (APHA) pre-meeting workshop on “Becoming Better Messengers,” where we introduced Moral Foundations Theory and provided strategies for becoming more trusted and effective messengers in a polarized political environment.
- Utilizing a framework that outlines the “Five Essential Public Health Law Services,” the Network, in partnership with the Center for Public Health Law Research, is providing specialized coaching services to help health agencies execute a comprehensive approach to creating, improving and implementing laws and policies that support their public health objectives.
- In October 2018, more than **500** practitioners, policymakers, lawyers, advocates and researchers joined us for our 2018 Public Health Law Conference on Health Justice: Empowering Public Health and Advancing Health Equity. Attendees explored law and policy pathways to improving access to health care, protecting vulnerable populations and providing protections against discriminatory practices.

Raising Awareness and Connecting

We serve a community of people who are engaged in the important work of advancing health and health equity, as well as those interested in supporting and advocating for change. They look to us as thought leaders and experts in how to advance the nation's health through law and policy.



Our biweekly **Network Report e-newsletter** kept **close to 9,000** subscribers informed about key emerging issues in public health policy and law.

Subscribers included:

- Officials, lawyers and practitioners at local, state and federal levels.
- Researchers and educators.
- Advocates at local and national levels.
- Health care professionals.



Our social media postings reached **9,921 Facebook followers**



4,261 Twitter followers



3,121 LinkedIn followers

More than 65 media outlets and publications turned to the Network as a trusted source for their reporting on public health laws and policies. These included:



Thank you to our partners and supporters

American Public Health Association
 American Society of Law, Medicine & Ethics
 Arnold Ventures
 Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
 Center for Public Health Law Research at Temple University
 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
 ChangeLab Solutions
 Data Across Sectors for Health
 de Beaumont Foundation
 Eastside Health and Well-Being Collaborative
 Harris County Public Health
 Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
 Lawrence/Douglas County Health Department
 Michigan Department of Health and Human Services
 Michigan University
 Minnesota Department of Health
 National Association of County and City Health Officials
 National Association of Local Boards of Health
 National Association of School Nurses
 National Center for Medical-Legal Partnerships
 National Conference of State Legislatures
 Public Health Law Center at Mitchell Hamline School of Law
 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
 Safe States Alliance
 Trust for America's Health

Working hand in hand to extend the reach of philanthropy

Building Healthy Communities: The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) is the nation's largest public health philanthropy. Core to the work it funds is the belief that within our communities, we all should be surrounded by conditions that enable us to live the healthiest lives possible, including access to healthy food, quality schools, stable housing, good jobs with fair pay, and safe places to exercise and play. Unfortunately, in many communities there are persistent barriers to health and to opportunities to thrive.

RWJF recognizes that law and policy are critical tools for advancing initiatives that bring about the conditions needed to advance a "Culture of Health." The work of the Network supports RWJF's efforts to fund work that identifies, develops, tests and spreads the most high-impact policy and practice approaches for changing community conditions. This helps ensure that as the demand for changes increases, there are effective strategies and mechanisms in place to make those changes a reality.

We are proud to be a key partner in this important endeavor.

Saving Lives and Reducing the Stigma of Addiction: Arnold Ventures

Arnold Ventures is a philanthropy dedicated to tackling some of our nation's most pressing problems. Its focus is on sustainable change, building from the ground up based on research, deep thinking and a strong foundation of evidence.

Examining evidence-based approaches to addressing the current opioid epidemic is central to Arnold Ventures' health initiatives. The Network helped support and advance this work through a comprehensive literature review and summary report that outlined what is known about the impact of a variety of laws designed to reduce drug-related harm.

Now, the Network is moving to transfer this knowledge into direct action. With support from Arnold Ventures, we're launching the Harm Reduction Legal Project, which will provide direct consultation and strategic guidance to individuals and organizations on harm reduction best practices and how to create, expand and defend programs like syringe exchange that we know work.

Supported in our work by leaders committed to improving the health of communities

The Network's National Advisory Board represents some of the country's leading experts and practitioners working at the intersections of law, policy, health care, housing, education and public health. We, and the many others with whom we partner, could not have achieved all that we have without their leadership and guidance. We are deeply grateful for their service.



Michael Botticelli

Executive Director, Grayken Center for Addiction Medicine, Boston Medical Center
One of the nation's leading addiction experts and former Director of National Drug Control Policy at the White House under President Obama.



Barbara Ferrer

Director, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
A nationally known public health leader with over 30 years of experience as a philanthropic strategist, public health director, educational leader, researcher and community advocate.



Steven Gravely

Strategic and Legal Advisor to Health Care Organizations, the Gravely Group
An experienced and respected attorney who has represented health care organizations for over 20 years in a full spectrum of health care legal issues.



Scott Hall

Senior Vice President for Civic and Community Initiatives, Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce
Dedicated to advancing the health and wellness of his community, Mr. Hall leads the Kansas City Chamber's "Health KC" project, an initiative focused on making Greater Kansas City a destination for healthy living.



Howard Koh

Professor of the Practice of Public Health Leadership at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and the Harvard Kennedy School
A recipient of more than 70 awards and honors for interdisciplinary accomplishments in medicine and public health, Dr. Koh served as Assistant Secretary for Health for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under President Obama.



John T. Monahan

Senior Advisor for Global Initiatives to the President of Georgetown University
A respected leader and advisor who has held senior leadership roles in government, diplomacy, politics, philanthropy and academia, including the United States Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of State, Capitol Hill and the Annie E. Casey Foundation.



Rebecca Morley

Strategic Consultant, Healthy Homes and Communities
A passionate advocate for safe, healthy and vibrant communities and the opportunities they offer America's children and families, and a seasoned expert in public health and housing.



Umair Shah

Executive Director, Harris County Public Health, and Past President of the National Association of County & City Health Officials
Sought for his insights into the fields of medicine and public health, Dr. Shah has presented at both the Texas Legislature and on Capitol Hill and is a recognized leader in local public health.



Joaquin Tamayo

Education Changemaker and Senior Policy Advisor at EducationCounsel LLC
A champion for youth and for the advancement of the science of learning and development to drive equity, improvement and excellence in U.S. public education, Mr. Tamayo served three years in the executive branch of the Obama Administration



Aaron Wernham

Chief Executive Officer of the Montana Healthcare Foundation
An experienced family physician turned health policy advocate and expert, Dr. Wernham has worked with underserved communities at the state level and on health policy at the national level, where he developed and led the Health Impact Project, a major national initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.



Kimberlydawn Wisdom

Senior Vice President of Community Health & Equity and Chief Wellness & Diversity Officer at the Henry Ford Health System
A respected leader in efforts to improve the health of those disproportionately affected by poor health outcomes and a former member of President Obama's Advisory Group on Prevention, Health Promotion and Integrative and Public Health, Dr. Wisdom was Michigan's and the nation's first state-level Surgeon General.

Our National and Regional Office Directors



Donna E. Levin
J.D., National Director
Before joining the Network, Ms. Levin spent over 25 years as general counsel at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.



Denise Chrysler
J.D., Director, Mid-States Region Office at the University of Michigan School of Public Health
A recognized expert in public health data and information sharing, Ms. Chrysler served for 20 years as assistant attorney general in Michigan.



James G. Hodge, Jr.
J.D., LL.M., Director, Western Region Office at the Arizona State University Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law
Mr. Hodge provides leadership in addressing emergency preparedness and response to public health threats, including infectious disease outbreaks like the Ebola and Zika virus outbreaks.



Kathleen Hoke
J.D., Director, Eastern Region Office at the University of Maryland Carey School of Law
Ms. Hoke draws on her many years of experience as director of the Legal Resource Center for Public Health Policy at the University of Maryland Carey School of Law, a position she continues to hold.



Jill Krueger
J.D., Director, Northern Region Office
Before joining the Network, Ms. Krueger served as assistant attorney general in the Minnesota Attorney General's office and as senior staff attorney at Farmers' Legal Action Group.



Gene Matthews
J.D., Director, Southeastern Region Office at the University of North Carolina Gillings School of Global Public Health
Mr. Matthews, who previously served as chief legal advisor to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, serves as Senior Investigator at the North Carolina Institute for Public Health.

Our Funding

In fiscal year 2019 (July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019) the Network received \$4.1 million in core funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. We received an additional \$800K in project funding from government, public health organizations and other philanthropic organizations, as well as earned income from our national conference.

RWJF Core Funding 83%		\$4.1M	Program Services 86%		\$4.1M
			Strategic Consultation and Guidance	\$2M	
			Research and Analysis	\$850K	
			Knowledge Building & Training	\$800K	
			Awareness & Connecting	\$480K	
Public Health & Other Philanthropic Organizations 7%		\$340K	Management and General Operations 14%		\$700K
Federal & State Government 6%		\$300K			
Earned Income 4%		\$170K			
Revenue Total		\$4.9M	Expense Total		\$4.8M

Please note: the figure above does not represent an audited financial statement.



Looking ahead: Supporting healthy, thriving communities

Reducing Drug-Related Harm

Individuals and communities across the United States are struggling to address the ongoing epidemic of drug-related harm. While some progress has been made, efforts to initiate, expand and sustain promising evidence-based initiatives to reduce this harm are often hindered by laws and policies that reflect an outdated punitive-focused approach to drugs and the individuals who use them.

Funded by a grant from Arnold Ventures (The Arnold Foundation), our Harm Reduction Legal Project works to address the legal and policy barriers that impede the establishment and expansion of evidence-based harm reduction measures, such as naloxone distribution, syringe access programs and access to evidence-based substance use disorder treatment.

The Project provides guidance and consultation at no cost from a range of subject matter experts and from nonpartisan evidence-based publications and training resources.

Addressing Complex Issues through Cross-Sector Collaboration

With a clear understanding of how health equity is intrinsically linked to social determinants of health, the Network has convened a group of attorneys working in education, transportation, health care, social justice and other sectors to map a path for collaboration on law and policy levers and to address critical public health issues. In the coming year, the Cross-Sector Attorneys for Health collaborative will publish a case paper examining medication-assisted treatment for opioid use disorder and the impact different sectors can have in the development of policies in this area. In addition to examining various avenues to improving harm reduction, this paper will help guide other cross-sector collaborations.

2020 National Public Health Law Conference September 16-18, Baltimore, Maryland

At this critical moment for public health in the United States, the Network will again convene hundreds of individuals on the front lines of community health to learn how the strategic use of legal and policy tools can address fundamental drivers of inequity, promote health and well-being, and save lives.

With support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Bloomberg American Health Initiative, our national conference is designed to inspire and engage all those interested in promoting health and health equity in their communities. Together, we'll examine law and policy pathways to:

- Improving child and adolescent health.
- Addressing environmental and climate challenges.
- Eliminating the social and structural barriers to health equity.
- Addressing critical issues like the ACA, opioids, mental health, gun violence and vaccinations.
- Strengthening the legal capacity of public health departments.

