

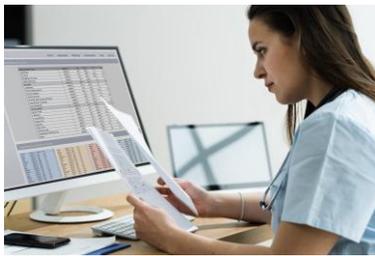
As progress on important public health efforts continued on numerous fronts in the past year - including strengthening public health protections and infrastructure - the transition to a new federal administration brought significant upheaval. Throughout this turbulence, the Network remained focused on bringing clarity and steadiness to moments of uncertainty. [Learn more about our work in 2025](#) and our plans for 2026: [Building on a Year of Challenge: Public Health in 2026](#).

Law & Policy Insights



When Politics Prevent Care: School Nurses Left to Grapple with Confusing Parental Rights Laws

Many states have recently introduced parental rights legislation in response to a perceived lack of parental authority in educational settings. Largely driven by politics, these laws are not created with implementation in mind, causing confusion and compromising the care provided by school nurses, which is essential healthcare for many school-aged children.



Health Data Utilities or HDUs: A Promising New Data Sharing Framework for Advancing Health and Health Equity

HDUs can provide health departments with critical information to respond proactively to emergencies, public health risks, and equity focused use cases. They also address many contemporary concerns around data sharing, such as transparency around governance and ensuring the access and use of data serves the public good.



Hospital Charity Care Gap: Why Patients Still Receive Surprise Bills

Many charity care laws cover charges from hospitals, but do not extend to independent hospital-based providers. For example, a patient who has surgery at a hospital may receive a bill from the hospital and a separate bill from the anesthesiologist who assisted with surgery. As a result, patients who qualify for free or discounted hospital care can still be billed in full by clinicians who practice inside the hospital but operate independently.

Law & Policy Spotlight



Harm Reduction

The Network's recent webinar, [Rights and Protections for Harm Reduction Programs and Clients in an Increasingly Hostile Environment](#), provided an overview of relevant laws and legal rights that apply to harm reduction program clients, staff, and volunteers in response to threats from law enforcement. The webinar was led by Network Deputy Director of Harm Reduction, Amy Lieberman, J.D. If you have questions about navigating the often extremely confusing maze of existing laws and regulations that hamper harm reduction initiatives, contact [Amy](#) for a consultation.

Resources



The Impact of State Parental Rights Legislation on Delivery of School Health Services

More than half of state legislatures have recently enacted measures to further fortify parental rights. Because these laws are largely driven by politics, they have created confusion for school nurses and jeopardized students' access to needed health care.

This resource outlines the concerns surrounding these laws and includes a chart highlighting the key provisions in the laws passed, and guidance on what to monitor.

Webinar



A Healthy Union: How States and Regions Can Lead on Environmental Health and Climate Change

January 29, 2026 | 12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. CT

Join us to hear from Susan Kaplan, author of the new book, [A Healthy Union: How States Can Lead on Environmental Health](#), which highlights groundbreaking state environmental health laws and policies, exploring what has worked, what needs improvement, the role of communities, and how other states and regions can spread these innovations.

Worth Sharing

Public Health for Community Power Coalition

The Public Health for Community Power Coalition, which brings together non-governmental public health organizations to strengthen the role of public health as a force for justice, has produced an informational paper on [power building in public health](#). The paper describes public health's longstanding history of supporting social reform movements and invites public health practitioners to play a role in helping build community power to achieve equity.

Call for Abstracts: APHA 2026 Annual Meeting & Expo

The call for abstracts for the APHA 2026 Annual Meeting and Expo is open. APHA invites abstract submissions on the 2026 theme: “Together We Thrive: Health Across the Lifespan,” or another current or emerging public health issue. The submission deadline is **Tuesday, March 31, 2026**.

**Tell Us What You're Working On.
We're Ready to Help.**

Network attorneys can provide consultation and guidance to:

**REQUEST
ASSISTANCE**

- Identify the ways in which laws and policies may or may not impact a particular project or community; or the potential impact on different populations within a community.

- Provide examples of and compare public health laws or policy strategies from other jurisdictions.
- Analyze the legal authority to implement a policy or law, or reforms.
- Apply equity tools to laws and policies.

Thank you!

Your interest in the work of the Network is important. Together, we can advance law as a tool to improve public health. **Please forward the Network Report and encourage others to [join the Network!](#)**

The Network for Public Health Law provides information and technical assistance on issues related to public health. The legal information and assistance provided in this document does not constitute legal advice or legal representation. For legal advice, readers should consult a lawyer in their state.



Our Contact Information
Network for Public Health Law
7101 York Avenue South, #270
Edina, MN 55435

You are receiving this email because you signed up to receive Network communications, or you attended a Network event or webinar. If you no longer wish to receive this email you can manage your preferences below.

[Email Preferences](#)