

# Supporting local health departments in Missouri



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CATEGORY: **Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC)**

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services supported local public health agencies throughout the state to enhance their efforts in the response and coordination of COVID-19 and other emergency preparedness activities. This included increasing personnel, making facilities safer, and implementing new communication strategies.

Counties were able to **continue to provide the customary core functions** of health care needs while ensuring the needs of the COVID-19 response to residents were met.



## The “What”

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) used Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity for the Prevention and Control of Emerging Infectious Diseases (ELC) funding to support local public health agencies (LPHAs) throughout the state. LPHAs used funding to bolster COVID-19 response activities, enhance communications, and expand emergency preparedness resources.

Funding for COVID-19 activities supported LPHAs in their response and coordination of COVID-19 case investigation, contact tracing, case reporting, and other activities necessary to assist communities. It was used to expand personnel, renovate facilities, and purchase mobile testing units. Funding used to expand communications strategies included developing mobile applications to push notifications and purchasing digital signs and billboards to communicate with citizens throughout the counties. Funding for emergency preparedness was used to implement an emergency notification application and purchase a generator to ensure continuity of operations during a power outage.



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## The “So What”

ELC funding supported local COVID-19 testing, mitigation, and prevention efforts in communities across Missouri. Counties were able to continue to provide the customary core functions of health care needs while ensuring the needs of the COVID-19 response to residents were met. For example, Andrew County increased the health department team of 6 by adding over 20 part-time employees to properly respond to COVID-19. These part-time employees conducted contract tracing services and assisted with case investigations. The county was able to conduct 100% of its case investigation and contract tracing services with the addition of these employees. Along with adding more staff, the New Madrid County Health Department used funding for travel and transportation of personnel and testing supplies to testing sites.

Douglas, Miller, Ray, and St. Francois Counties all used the funding to renovate facilities to provide improved COVID-19 testing, education, and other mitigation efforts such as vaccination events. These facilities improved efforts to respond to future outbreaks or pandemic response.

Butler, Franklin, Osage, and Pulaski Counties each purchased vehicles to provide mobile COVID-19 testing and educate on effective mitigation efforts for COVID-19 such as social distancing, explaining the newest recommendations on wearing well-fitting masks

and handwashing to prevent the spread of the virus. These units are especially important to provide these services in rural communities.

McDonald and Platte Counties used ELC funding to enhance emergency preparedness. McDonald County Health Department implemented a Crisis Go application for emergency notifications for staff and health providers. This application provides better communication between staff and health providers, updates county residents with COVID-19 information along with other communicable diseases and allows the ability to upload emergency plans and checklists to ensure all stakeholders know what is needed of them. Platte County Health Department purchased a generator to ensure the continuity of operations, the safety of staff, and continuity of the public’s ability to reach the health department during a power outage.

Adair and Dallas Counties implemented a mobile application that allows their communities to make appointments for COVID-19 testing and gives the LPHA the ability to send push notifications out to the community. These mobile apps increase communication throughout the county and enhance the county's ability to schedule and provide COVID-19 vaccination clinics and tests. Other counties like Harrison, Livingston, Marion, and Mississippi used ELC funding to purchase a digital sign or billboard to provide 24/7 information to enhance public health education, promotion, and notifications regarding COVID-19.

## The “Now What”

Long-term outcomes of these efforts include:

- Continued COVID-19 education, testing, and other preventative measures, such as vaccination.
- Improved communication with local communities to educate, provide important public health information, and advertise available services allows LPHAs to reach members of communities that would not normally seek preventative health care.
- Increased preparedness of LPHAs to respond to future outbreaks by providing them with reliable equipment that will allow them to be self-sustaining for long periods.
- Improved access to care for all individuals in the community, especially those unable to obtain health services due to transportation challenges.

- Enhanced utilization of LPHA physical service areas to allow LPHAs to serve a greater number of people in the community and provide additional resources and services that individuals need to live healthier and longer lives. Renovations also allow LPHAs to serve the members of their community who have mobility issues or disabilities that could lead to greater health risks but oftentimes cause them to not seek care due to physical barriers.

Without these funds, continued health education, health promotion, health care expansion and preparation for future health emergencies and outbreaks would become stagnant as LPHAs do not have local funding to support these efforts. The speed of health moves rapidly, and loss of this funding would lead to a standstill and backslide in all of these areas.