

## PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET

### **What is public health?**

Public Health is the science of protecting and improving the health of communities through education, promotion of healthy lifestyles, and research for disease and injury prevention.

### **How does public health improve health and prevent disease?**

To prevent problems from happening or re-occurring, public health professionals implement educational programs, develop policies, administer services, and conduct research. Some examples:

- Do you...eat a healthy breakfast...buckle your seatbelt...or have your child immunized? *It's thanks to public health policies and educational programs.*
- Do you...have your blood pressure checked at a community health screening...or take your child to a clinic for a check-up? *It's thanks to services administered by public health.*
- Do you know...about the impact of smoking and second-hand smoke...how to prevent an infectious disease like the flu...the risks of drugs and alcohol and how to talk to your children about them? *It's thanks to research done by public health.*

### **How does public health reduce health care costs?**

Public health reduces health care costs by promoting healthy lifestyles, including disease and injury preventions. For example:

- Annual medical costs for obesity in New Hampshire are estimated at \$302 million—that's \$232 per person. *Public health is helping to reduce obesity by promoting walking to school, daily physical education and worksite wellness.*
- Asthma-related hospitalizations in New Hampshire cost upwards of \$4.2 million per year. *Thanks to public health initiatives, including the ban on smoking in New Hampshire restaurants, tobacco use and exposure to environmental tobacco smoke is declining in the Granite State.* That's especially important since exposure to environmental tobacco smoke is a leading cause of asthma in children and of asthma-related emergency room visits for children.
- A bike helmet costs \$30. In New Hampshire, hospitalization for a traumatic brain injury cost about \$700,000 per admission. *By increasing awareness of the importance of bike helmets, public health is helping prevent bike-related traumatic brain injuries.*
- 85% of New Hampshire's prison population have an alcohol or addiction problem. It costs \$32,750 to incarcerate one person for one year—but it costs only about \$70 per person per year to provide effective drug and alcohol prevention services in New Hampshire. *By providing effective drug and alcohol prevention services, public health can impact crime and the overall cost of incarceration.*