

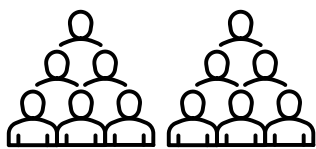


BIG CITIES NEED MORE HEALTH DETECTIVES TO KEEP AMERICANS HEALTHY AND SAFE

New (2024) study of big city health departments show they are in dire need of epidemiologists, which puts at risk the nation’s efforts to quickly detect and respond to health threats.

THE NEED IS URGENT:

To reach full capacity, big city health departments need:



**41% ↑ or
+755**

epidemiologists

EPIDEMIOLOGIST

noun ep-i-de-mi-ol-o-gist
e -p- dē-mē- ä-l -jist

An expert scientist who studies, detects and tracks injuries and disease in our communities.

The Big Cities Health Coalition (BCHC) and the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) recently assessed epidemiology capacity in 35 big city health departments and found that our nation’s largest urban areas do not have the number of injury and disease detectives needed to fully protect and promote the public’s health. Data used in this study are the most recent available, spanning March to June 2024.

Epidemiologists (or “epis”) in BCHC member cities serve on the front lines of public health, protecting more than 61 million, or one in five, Americans. Epis use many types of data to understand who gets what diseases or health conditions and determine why and how we can possibly prevent them. They investigate and respond to outbreaks and work to contain further spread.

Epis are data specialists trained in statistics, computer science, and public health. Current funding allocations for epidemiology and

laboratory capacity (ELC) and other epi funding streams at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) make it very challenging for local health departments to attract and retain the highly skilled people in this field.

Big city health departments rely in part on federal funding from CDC to support positions in epidemiology, through its ELC program and its various disease and injury divisions. Even at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, big city health departments did not have the funding needed to hire a full complement of epidemiologists. As emergency dollars end or are rescinded, the shortfall of these data experts threatens to grow. With the end of pandemic funding, big city health departments anticipate losing 440 epidemiologists, or 24% of the workforce.

To learn more about the funding levels that BCHC recommends for FY25 Congressional appropriations, visit bigcitieshealth.org/advocacy

Read the full report here: <https://bigcitieshealth.org/epidemiology-capacity-assessment-2024>

In 2020, big city health departments shifted many of their epidemiologists to focus on COVID-19 and other infectious diseases. Our cities lack sufficient staff needed to address these areas and are even more short-staffed to address pressing issues such as drug overdose and violence.

MORE THAN HALF OF THE EPIDEMIOLOGISTS AT BIG CITY HEALTH DEPARTMENTS FOCUS ON INFECTIOUS DISEASE



49% Infectious disease



9% Generalist

Program areas supported by the fewest epidemiologists are wastewater surveillance (19), genomics/Advanced Molecular Detection (16), violence prevention (15), injury (14), reproductive health (4), and oral health (3), which together accounted for only 4% of the total.

The paucity of injury and violence prevention epidemiologists is especially striking, as unintentional injury is the third leading cause of death in the United States.

BIG CITY HEALTH DEPARTMENTS HAVE HIGH CAPACITY FOR MONITORING HEALTH STATUS AND INVESTIGATING PROBLEMS, BUT FAR LESS CAPACITY FOR RESEARCH AND EVALUATION *



94% Monitoring health status



89% Diagnosing and investigating health problems



46% Research and evaluation

This gap leaves many local health departments with insufficient capacity to fully assess and improve upon outbreak responses and plan for the future.

* Numbers indicate percentage of departments that report substantial to full capacity for conducting these activities.

BIG CITY HEALTH DEPARTMENTS HAVE THE GREATEST UNMET NEED FOR EPIDEMIOLOGISTS IN THESE AREAS **



171% Injury



128% Environmental health



106% Violence prevention

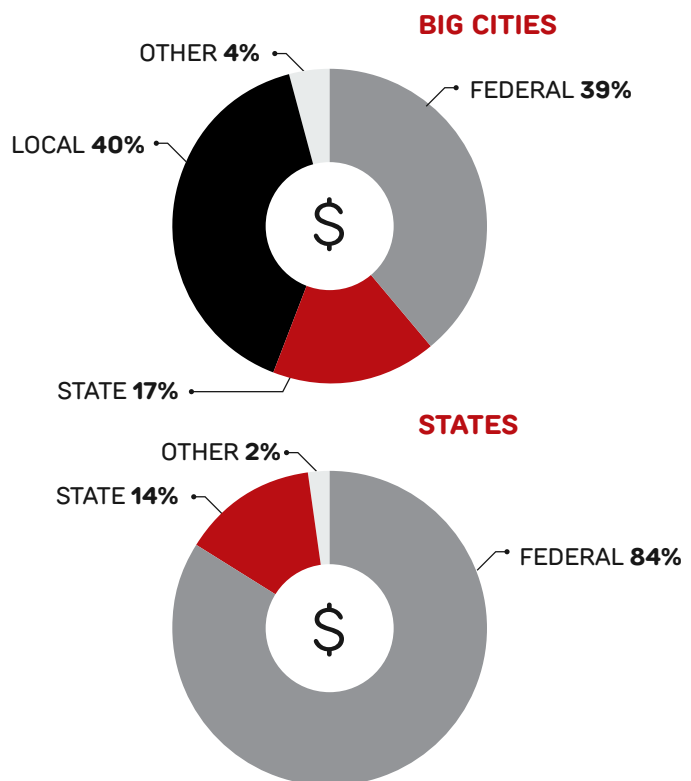


97% Viral hepatitis

** Numbers indicate increase needed to reach ideal number of epidemiologists in that area.

ONE REASON FOR THE GAP

Federal dollars to support epidemiology personnel largely go to state health departments; little of this funding gets to the local level.



The Big Cities Health Coalition (BCHC) is a forum for the leaders of America's largest metropolitan health departments to exchange strategies and jointly address issues to promote and protect the health and safety of the 61 million people they serve. To learn more about how big city health departments are keeping American safe and healthy, visit bigcitieshealth.org

Founded in 1951, the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) represents the interests of State Epidemiologists from all 50 U.S. states and territories, which forms the Council. CSTE is also the professional home to more than 2,700 practicing applied epidemiologists at the state, local, tribal and territorial levels. For information, please visit cste.org