

## Administrator's Statement

8/17/2018 12:40:42PM

86th Regular Session, Agency Submission, Version 1  
Automated Budget and Evaluation System of Texas (ABEST)

---

### 537 State Health Services, Department of

---

The mission of the Department of State Health Services is to improve the health, safety and well-being of Texans through good stewardship of public resources by efficiently and effectively carrying out core public health functions. The Legislature, through Senate Bill 200, 84th Legislature, Regular Session, 2015, restructured DSHS into a highly-focused public health agency and maintained DSHS as a separate agency within the Health and Human Services (HHS) System, while streamlining programs and services. DSHS fully supports and embraces its restructuring as an organization solely dedicated to public health, and appreciates the Legislature's work to better position DSHS to provide statewide public health leadership. As a separate agency within the HHS System, DSHS impacts the health of all Texans by promoting and improving public and population health outcomes.

Over the last two years, DSHS completed a thorough assessment of its structure and operations in light of its new legislative charge to operate with a renewed focus on public health. DSHS is now structured into four new divisions: Community Health Improvement, Consumer Protection, Laboratory and Infectious Disease Services, and Regional and Local Health Operations. These divisions fulfill the agency's mission by:

- preventing, detecting and responding to infectious diseases
- promoting healthy lifestyles through disease and injury prevention
- reducing health risks and threats through consumer protection
- developing evidence-based public health interventions through data analysis and science, and
- providing public health and medical response during disasters and emergencies.

DSHS' transformation has strengthened relationships with public health partners, and fostered collaborations aimed at improving Texas' public health system. As a smaller, more focused agency, DSHS is positioned to lead the state's public health efforts and work more effectively with local health departments across the state. The reorganized DSHS is better able to support local health departments and optimize initiatives designed to promote the health and safety of all Texans.

Additionally, because of its current size, structure and organization, DSHS is more agile in identifying and responding to infectious diseases, biological or chemical threats, and public health disasters. For example, when Hurricane Harvey hit the Texas coast with little time to prepare and with unprecedented effects, DSHS quickly activated the state medical operations center and worked with local, state and federal partners to deploy health and medical assets to assist with medical evacuations. Moreover, DSHS' ability to rapidly organize highly specialized scientific subject matter experts to efficiently direct the expansion of the state's aerial mosquito vector control efforts exemplifies the agency's capability and capacity for nimble innovation and action as a restructured agency.

Being science and data driven affords DSHS the ability to research and analyze health information to provide key insights to help design evidence-based interventions and measure outcomes. DSHS is now better able to address the root causes of Texas' public health needs through scientific investigation, surveillance and data collection. DSHS' data-driven analysis and response to maternal mortality exemplifies this critical skill set. DSHS is working to measure, analyze and report on maternal death trends and provide evidence-based interventions to help reduce these tragic and often preventable deaths. The Department is also developing public health interventions related to opioid abuse as it relates to maternal mortality through a greater understanding of substance use data, trends, and evidence-based practices.

Although the new DSHS structure has only been in place for a short period of time, DSHS' organizational reinvention is already bearing fruit:

- Agency reorganization aligning complementary functions within the same division.
- Focused effort to strengthen relationships with public health partners, adding value and producing tangible results.
- Collaboration with partners to assess the capabilities and capacities of Texas' public health system and foster improved performance.
- Engagement with stakeholders to identify how DSHS can better meet their needs.
- Creation of a framework that defines DSHS' role as a leader and facilitator of the broader public health system, and its role in directly administering public health

**537 State Health Services, Department of**

---

functions.

Within this context of renewal and rededication to public health, DSHS developed its 2020–2021 Legislative Appropriations Request. The DSHS appropriations request complies with the guidance provided by the Legislative Budget Board and the Governor’s Office of Budget and Policy. The LAR addresses the current and future public health needs across DSHS’ responsibilities.

The LAR includes nine (9) prioritized exceptional items that span program and infrastructure needs and ensure a stable foundation for state public health services. These exceptional items represent DSHS’ refocused mission on public health and seek to provide the Department with the capacity to continue meeting the needs of Texans .

(1) Safeguard the State Public Health Laboratory: The DSHS request supports the state laboratory’s ability to continually provide accurate and reliable test results that provide communities, families, and doctors information to prevent adverse health outcomes and death. The laboratory also provides physicians and health care professionals with crucial information needed to diagnose and treat a range of high-risk/high-consequence diseases. The DSHS Laboratory performs public health testing that no other lab in the state performs in order to identify, investigate, and control individual and community disease, and significant health threats. The laboratory faces challenges jeopardizing DSHS’ long-term ability to protect the health of Texans. These funds would support existing critical public health testing needs, fully implement X-ALD Newborn Screening, promote a safe and efficient laboratory environment, and ensure the retention of highly-trained laboratory science staff.

(2) Maintain Critical IT Infrastructure: DSHS seeks funds to support seat management and data center services costs. DSHS provides staff access to computers, devices, and related software through a seat management approach. DSHS also uses Data Center Services (DCS) provided by Department of Information Resources (DIR) to support needed infrastructure for its information technology (IT). DSHS does not have sufficient funding to cover seat management and DCS obligations and is requesting funds for this IT infrastructure necessary to carry out public health functions and agency operations vital to serving Texans timely and effectively .

(3) Combat Maternal Mortality and Morbidity in Texas: DSHS requests funding to build upon current efforts that help prevent the incidence of maternal mortality and morbidity among Texas women. DSHS continues working with a range of partners to address maternal mortality and morbidity in the state. DSHS is seeking to implement additional evidence-based and data driven prevention opportunities for improving maternal health outcomes and decreasing maternal mortality and morbidity. These funds would increase current TexasAIM efforts by implementing maternal safety initiatives statewide, provide tools and trainings to ensure identification and care coordination for women at high risk of adverse maternal outcomes, and increase public awareness and prevention activities to ensure moms and babies have the healthiest birth outcomes.

(4) Increase Secure Access to Texas Vital Records: DSHS requests funds to increase the security, data quality, and efficiency of the DSHS vital records office, and improve customer service. DSHS maintains all vital events records in Texas, including birth and death records. These records are a critical repository utilized by all Texans to establish identity, and they also provide important information on Texas’ most pressing public health issues. This item would fund long-term planning for an effective approach to secure Texas vital records; provide capacity to safeguard records; build upon initiatives aimed at improving data quality; address backlogs in processing vital events requests; and, improve responsiveness to customer needs.

(5) Ensure Stability of Technical and Scientific Public Health Positions: DSHS seeks funds to retain technically skilled and scientific staff positions critical to meeting DSHS’ public health agency responsibilities. DSHS is experiencing high turnover in specialized public health personnel positions requiring unique experience, training, and education. It can take up to two years to train new hires to be fully effective and independent in their job functions . This item would target salary increases for public health nurses, Texas Center for Infectious Disease nurses, meat safety inspectors, and financial staff.

**Administrator's Statement**

8/17/2018 12:40:42PM

86th Regular Session, Agency Submission, Version 1  
Automated Budget and Evaluation System of Texas (ABEST)

---

**537 State Health Services, Department of**

---

(6) Detect and Control Tuberculosis in Texas: DSHS requests funds to enhance Tuberculosis (TB) surveillance, investigation, treatment and education activities. TB is a significant public health issue impacting Texans as Texas has a TB rate higher than the national average. Public health activities aim to control the spread of TB, especially in congregate settings such as public and private schools, daycares and hospitals. This item improves TB prevention by providing direct support to local health departments (LHDs) to support TB investigation and response efforts; increase the state's capacity to meet the growing need for complex investigations and response to TB; and address critical infrastructure renovation and repairs needed at the Texas Center for Infectious Disease, the state's tuberculosis hospital.

(7) Increase Usefulness and Accessibility of the State's Public Health Data: DSHS requests funds to improve public health decision making by affording accurate, timely, and user-friendly data to public health policymakers, local health departments, providers, and communities. DSHS plays a critical stewardship role in the management and analysis of public health data. Key partners rely on timely and accessible health trend data to respond effectively to chronic and infectious diseases, behavioral health issues, injuries, and environmental risks. This item would provide tools to better identify emerging and critical public health issues, improve data visualization for increased usability, and provide technological resources to improve customer service.

(8) Bolster Public Health Capacity to Monitor and Respond to Outbreaks: DSHS seeks funds to build its ability to quickly identify emerging infectious disease outbreaks, receive and investigate infectious disease laboratory results, and respond to incidence of high consequence infectious disease. The state's electronic system for processing and categorizing laboratory reports of infectious disease (NEDSS) is at risk of failure due to aging infrastructure. This system is used by DSHS and jurisdictions throughout the state to identify, investigate and combat emerging infectious disease patterns. Additionally, support for the state's Infectious Disease Response Unit capacity is ending, which is utilized by local jurisdictions for surge medical support required during the transport and care of a patient who is infectious with a high consequence disease. This item would stabilize NEDSS, provide more real time analysis of infectious disease data, and maintain deployable health care response teams for high consequence infectious disease incidents.

(9) Replace Vehicles at the End of Their Life Cycle: DSHS seeks funds to replace vehicles that meet or exceed state fleet replacement criteria. DSHS regional staff use state vehicles while providing core public health services throughout the state. Vehicles are also an important need for the Texas Center for Infectious Disease. This item would replace vehicles at the end of their life cycle to save money through reduced fuel, maintenance, and repair costs.

The LAR additionally includes options for a ten percent biennial base reduction following the LBB guidelines. The fiscal impact of the options included in the ten percent reduction schedule total approximately \$81.3 million for the 2020–21 biennium. The options included in the schedule would significantly reduce programs critical to protecting public health and impede the department's ability to effectively administer its programs and services.

DSHS submits this Legislative Appropriations Request on behalf of some 3,000 dedicated health professionals across the state working to protect Texans from disease and to enhance their health. DSHS looks forward to continuing to work with the Legislature to improve health and well-being in Texas.