

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

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Although the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene was created in 1969, its historical development began in the nineteenth century. The Department of Health originally was established in 1874 (Chapter 200, Acts of 1874). The separate development of the Department of Mental Hygiene, however, dates from 1886, when the State Lunacy Commission was formed (Chapter 487, Acts of 1886). In 1922 the Commission was abolished and replaced by the Board of Mental Hygiene (Chapter 29, Acts of 1922). The Board, in turn, was replaced by the Department of Mental Hygiene in 1949 (Chapter 685, Acts of 1949). By 1961 the State Board of Health and Mental Hygiene was created to maintain authority over the Department of Health and the Department of Mental Hygiene (Chapter 841, Acts of 1961). The present Department of Health and Mental Hygiene replaced the State Board in 1969 (Chapter 77, Acts of 1969).

The mission of the Department is to assure the people of Maryland their inherent right to a healthful environment and a high level of physical, mental, and social health. Achievement of this goal will be through the development of a comprehensive, continuous, and accessible system of health services for the State of Maryland, which emphasizes the promotion of health and the prevention of disease and disability.

Many programs are by their nature public functions and could not be performed effectively by the private sector. Prime among these is the responsibility for dealing with the epidemiological dimensions of hazards to health affecting the community, such as environmental pollution and communicable disease, and the organization of community efforts to prevent or control their impact.

Twenty-four local health departments report directly to the Deputy Secretary for Health and Mental Hygiene and have access to all Departmental officials as well. The local health departments are the focal point in the delivery of services.

The Department provides or purchases direct care services primarily in the following areas: residential and outpatient care for the mentally ill, the mentally retarded, the chronically ill, including those with tuberculosis, the impaired elderly, persons with addictive conditions, and court-referred youths. It also provides several preventive medicine services directly. It further develops programs for the rehabilitation of troubled youth. The Department also provides a comprehensive program of health care services for the indigent and medically indigent.

The Department is organized on the basis of program similarities under six assistant secretaries to provide effective service delivery. Under the Assistant Secretary for Medical Care Programs are three administrations—Policy, Operations, and Compliance—charged with the reimbursement of health care services for the indigent and medically indigent. The Alcoholism Control, Drug Abuse, Mental Retardation, Developmental Disabilities, and Mental Hygiene Administrations are assigned to the Assistant Secretary for Mental Health, Mental Retardation, Addictions, and Developmental Disabilities. The Assistant Secretary for Health is responsible for the Laboratories, Preventive Medicine, Aged and Chronically Ill, and Juvenile Services Administrations, and the Board of Postmortem Examiners.

All Department-wide services of a regulatory nature, such as State Health Planning and Development, Regulatory Services, Health Services Cost Review, and Program Evaluation are coordinated by the Assistant Secretary for Health Regulation and Policy Analysis.