

# Welcome to Public Health in Washington State

A quick reference guide to Washington's  
governmental public health system.

2023



WASHINGTON STATE   
**BOARD OF HEALTH**

# The Role of Public Health:

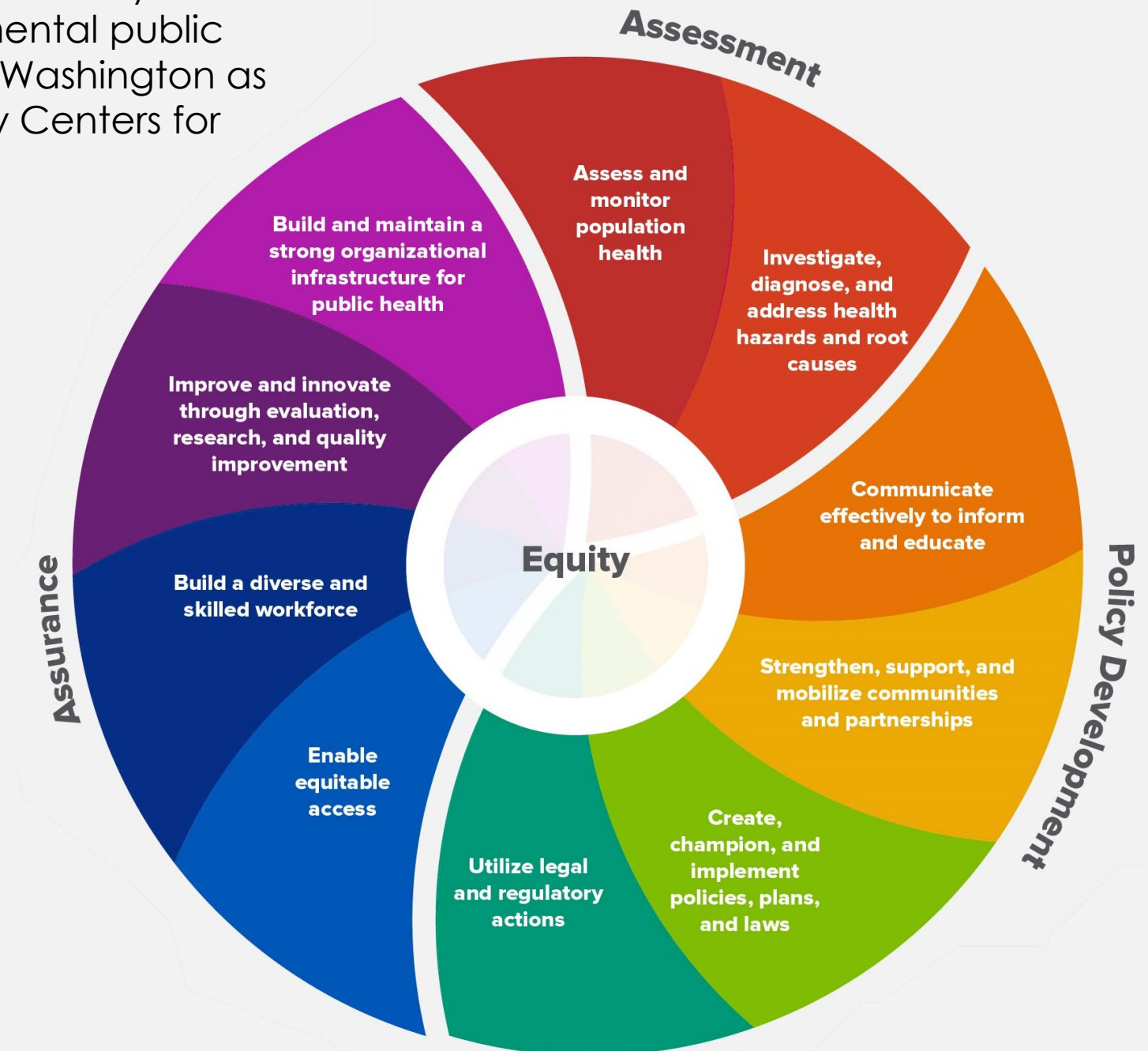
Public health focuses on the population level, promoting and protecting the health of people and the communities where we live, learn, work and play, while health care focuses on diagnosing and treating individual patients.

Public health activities can be carried out by various partners, but the role of the governmental public health system is set in statute here in Washington as well as guided at the federal level by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

## THE 10 ESSENTIAL PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES

*To protect and promote the health of all people in all communities.*

The 10 Essential Public Health Services provide a framework for public health to protect and promote the health of *all people in all communities*. To achieve equity, the Essential Public Health Services actively promote policies, systems, and overall community conditions that enable optimal health for all and seek to remove systemic and structural barriers that have resulted in health inequities. Such barriers include poverty, racism, gender discrimination, ableism, and other forms of oppression. Everyone should have a fair and just opportunity to achieve optimal health and well-being.



# Social Determinants of Health (SDOH):

## Non-medical factors that influence health outcomes

The conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life. SDOH help explain why some people experience worse health outcomes than others. By improving the SDOH, we can help improve health overall over time. [Explore SDOH](#) by Washington state counties.



# Washington Foundational Public Health Services

[Foundational Public Health Services](#) (FPHS) are specific core public health services provided by Washington's governmental public health system and are the basic services that the public health system should make available to every person in the community. These services, while not reflective of everything public health does, are set in state law, RCW [43.70.512](#) & [43.70.515](#). FPHS must be present in every community to efficiently and effectively protect all people in Washington.



## FOUNDATIONAL PROGRAMS

- Vital Records
- Environmental Public Health
- Communicable Disease Control
- Maternal, Child, and Family Health
- Access/Linkage with Medical, Oral, and Behavioral Health
- Chronic Disease, Injury, and Violence Prevention

## FOUNDATIONAL CAPABILITIES

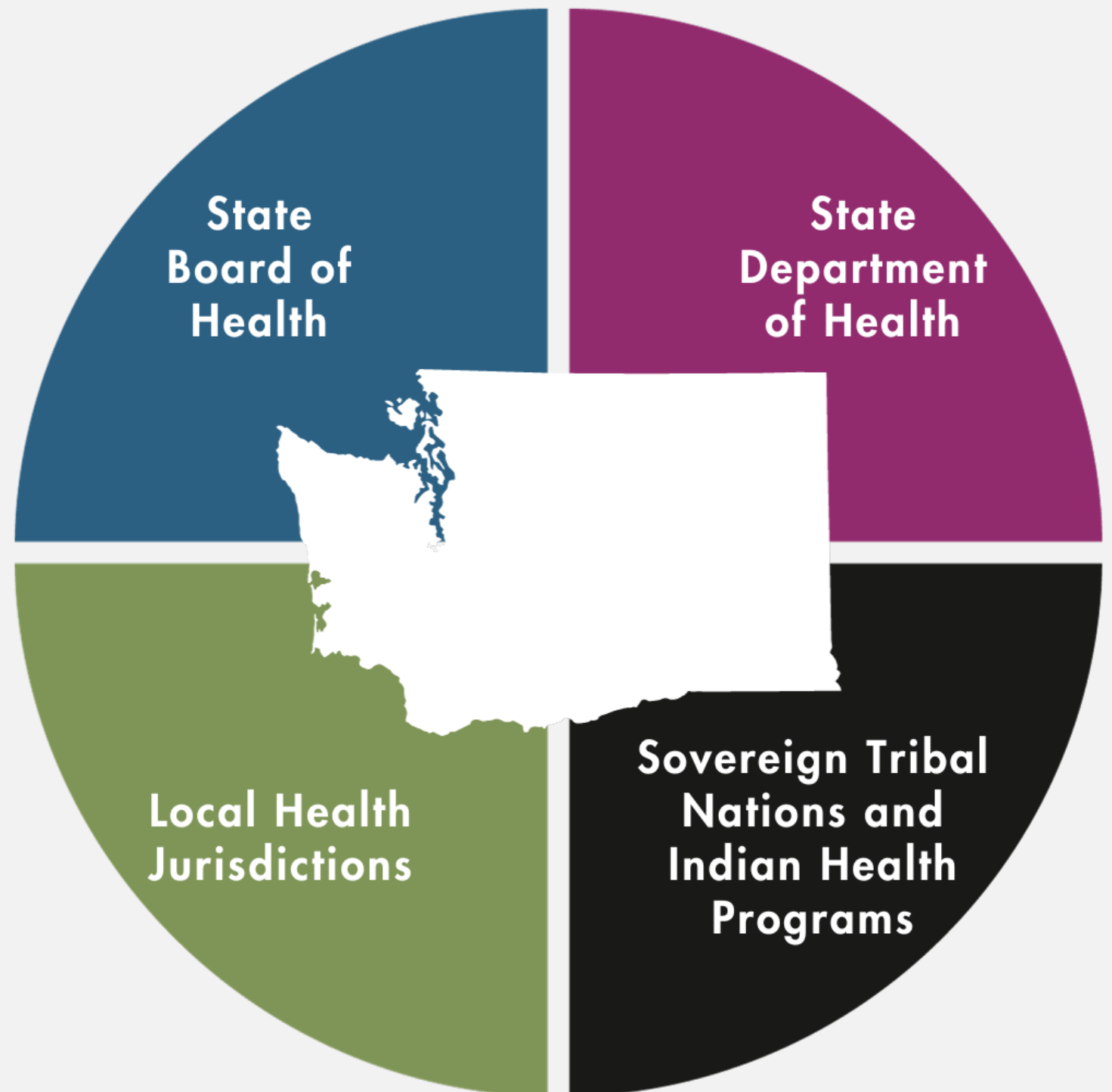
- Assessment (Surveillance & Epidemiology)
- Emergency Preparedness
- Communication
- Policy Development & Support
- Community Partnership Development
- Business Competencies

# Washington's Governmental Public Health System:

Responsible for protecting statewide public health

Washington's governmental public health system includes the Washington State Board of Health, the Washington State Department of Health, local health jurisdictions, and sovereign Tribal Nations and Indian health programs.

Together, the governmental public health system delivers Foundational Public Health Services. This relationship is outlined in [RCW 43.70.512](#).



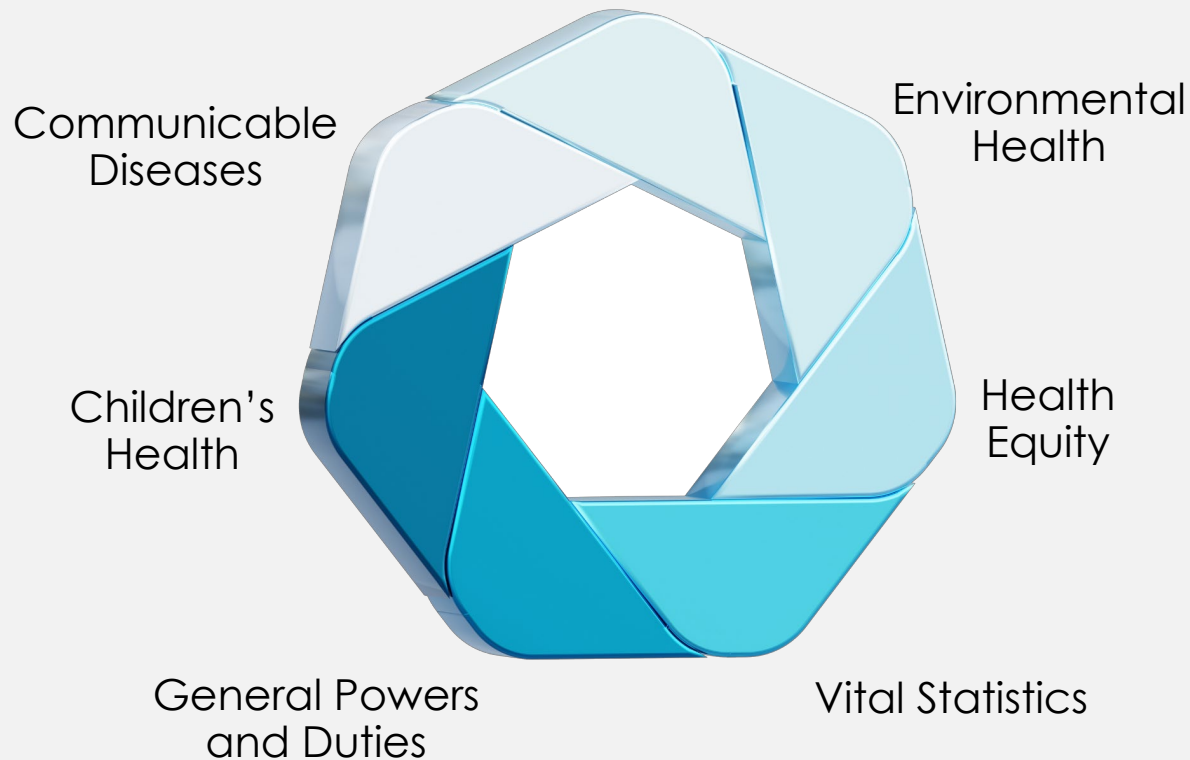


# WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH

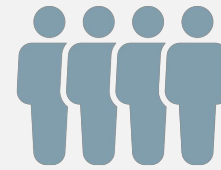
The [Washington State Board of Health](#) monitors the health of the people in Washington and serves as a public forum to inform health policy. The independent ten-member Board was established in [Chapter 43.20 RCW](#).

## Statutory Authority

Consultation and integration with DOH, LHJ's, and other state agencies



## Board Membership



Four people with experience in health and sanitation, with one representing federally-recognized Tribes



One county elected and one city elected official who serve on their respective local boards of health



Two consumers of health care



One local health officer



Secretary of Health



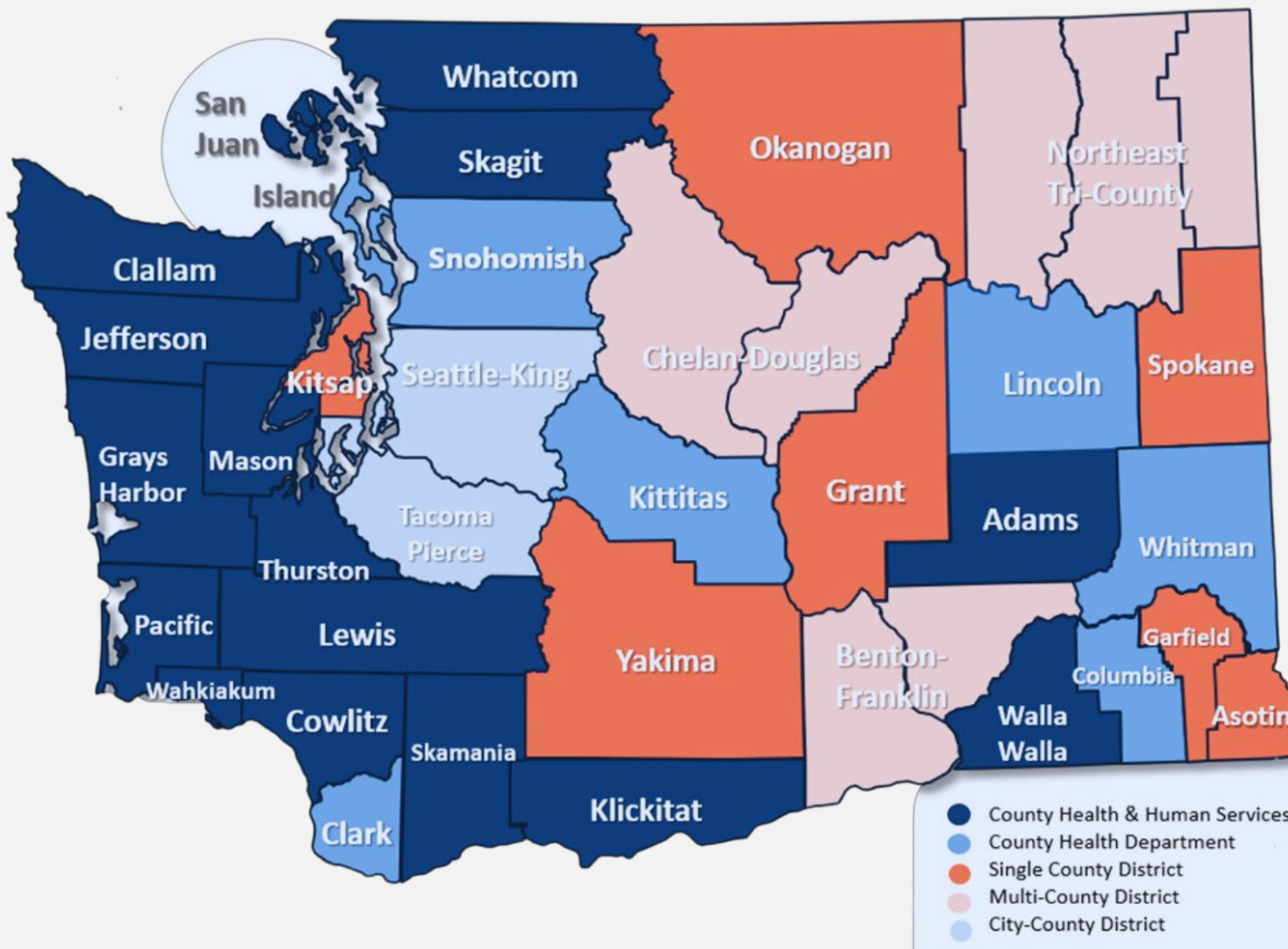
# Washington State Department of HEALTH

The [Washington State Department of Health](https://www.wa.gov/department-of-health) works with others to protect and improve the health of all people in Washington State. It is a cabinet agency led by the Secretary of Health, who is appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the State Senate.



# Local Health Jurisdictions (LHJs)

LHJs carry out essential activities to preserve, promote, and improve public health in local communities. They provide a range of essential public health services such as: Administering immunizations, implementing opioid response taskforces, conducting restaurant inspections, ensuring clean water systems, and connecting people to healthcare. ([WSALPHO-Local-Public-Health-Workforce-Report.pdf](#))



- 35 local health jurisdictions in Washington State, serving all 39 counties.
- 22 of these LHJs are under county governance as either a health department or a health and community services agency.
- 11 LHJs are districts, 3 of which are multi-county health districts.
- The two largest LHJs in Washington are combination city-county health departments, representing both the largest cities (Seattle and Tacoma) as well as the counties (King and Pierce, respectively).



# Local Boards of Health

Local Health Jurisdictions are governed by [Local Boards of Health](#) that oversee the agency, appoint a local health officer, establish fees authorized by law and rule, and enact local measures. [RCW 70.05,060](#)

## PRIMARY ROLES

### POLICY and ADMINISTRATION

- Enforce state and local laws and rules
- Control and prevent disease
- Prevent and control nuisances
- Appoint local health officer
- Establish appropriate fees

### WORK WITH LOCAL LEADERS

#### Health Officers

- Threats and emergencies
- Health hazards
- Enforcement and orders

#### Directors/Administrators

- Budget and finance
- Staffing and oversight
- Program and service delivery
- Reporting and communication

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Educate public
- Promote health and safety
- Participate in health planning
- Gather input and feedback
- Serve as a point of contact



WASHINGTON STATE ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS

# Sovereign Tribal Nations & Indian Health Programs

As Sovereign Nations with inherent rights to govern their own people and lands, Tribes are also known as Tribal Health Jurisdictions (THJs). Washington State is the first state in the nation to include Tribes as part of their governmental public health system.

The [American Indian Health Commission](#) (AIHC) is a Tribally-driven non-profit organization working on behalf of the 29 federally-recognized Indian Tribes and two Urban Indian Health Organizations (UIHOs) in the state of Washington.

The AIHC mission is to support and protect Tribal sovereignty, and to improve the health and cultural well-being of American Indians and Alaska Natives through convening, advocacy, public education, and technical assistance. AIHC serves as a forum where a collective Tribal government voice is shaped on shared health disparity priorities. Tribes and UIHOs work collaboratively with Washington State health leaders, the Governor's office and legislature to address these priorities.

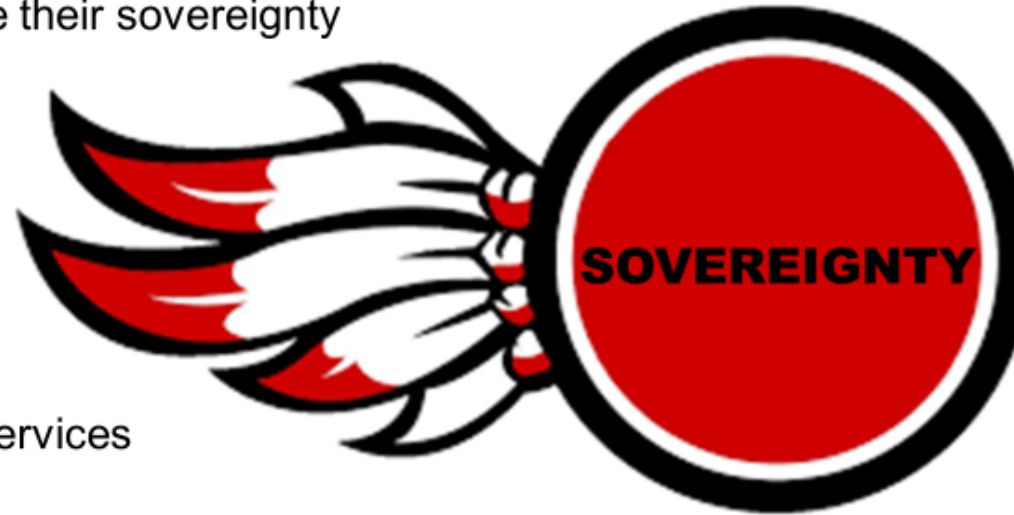
By bringing state and Tribal partners together, specific health disparity priorities are addressed across multiple systems - pooling resources and expertise for greater health outcomes.



# Sovereign Tribal Nations & Indian Health Programs

## Public Health and Sovereignty

- Public Health is a core government function
- Tribes exercise their sovereignty when they **establish, control, operate, and deliver** public health services



## Tribal Foundational Public Health Services



*From "domestic dependent nations" to self-governance*

Sovereignty