

INFECTIOUS DISEASE



● Chronic Disease ● Environmental Health ● Emergency Preparedness ● Family Health
● Immunizations ● Infectious Disease ● Public Health Laboratory ● Local Public Health ● Minority Health

As formidable as any other threat to the pioneers in the new Arkansas Territory was the threat of infectious disease. Smallpox, yellow fever, and measles and malaria epidemics had nearly wiped out the Native American population in Arkansas and the rest of the country before the Civil War.

In the early 1900s, many significant advances in public health were made as a result of these fatal diseases. With support from John D. Rockefeller, Sr.'s Sanitary Commission for the Eradication of Hookworm Disease, the Board of Health and the Public Health Laboratory made ground-breaking changes to treat infectious diseases. The new Board of Health provided education, testing, and treatment. In addition to these core services, public health inspections and environmental changes led to major improvements in Arkansas's fight against infectious diseases, such as hookworm, malaria, chlamydia, and gonorrhea.

Perhaps the most dramatic and ground-breaking public health work in the state's history came from research done during the 1960s and 1970s by Arkansas-based doctors Paul Reagan, William Stead, and Joseph Bates, which led to a new local-hospital and out-patient treatment for tuberculosis (TB). Arkansas became the model for the nation and, ultimately, had one of the lowest rates of TB in the country.

There were many diseases – measles, pertussis, and the flu – that not only demanded the attention of the Health Department, but also shaped the Department's role as a public health provider in the state over the last 100 years. Today, developments in vaccinations and drug treatments have helped to control and lessen the impact of major infectious diseases in the U.S.

100
Years
of Public Health
in Arkansas



Old State House, original site of the Arkansas Department of Health