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# Palau Public Health Strategic Plan

2015-2020



*Healthy Communities with Access to High Quality Health Care Services*

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## Public Health is...

Tobacco-Free ♦ Parks ♦ Playgrounds ♦ Sidewalks ♦ Knowledge ♦  
 Wellness ♦ Adequate Housing ♦ Clean Water ♦ Drug-Free ♦ Affordable  
 Care ♦ Clean Air ♦ Communication ♦ Family ♦ Community ♦ Consistency  
 ♦ Emergency Preparedness ♦ Alcohol Only in Moderation ♦ Playing ♦  
 Good Parenting ♦ Smart Choices ♦ Meeting Obligations ♦ Strong  
 Foundation ♦ Clean Teeth ♦ Power ♦ Stress-Free ♦ Safe Roads ♦ Friends ♦  
 Faith ♦ Traditions ♦ People ♦ Sustainability ♦ Kle Belau ♦ Awareness ♦  
 Openness ♦ Prevention ♦ Working Together ♦ Portion Control ♦ Eating  
 Less ♦ Living Within Our Means ♦ Customs ♦ Positive Influences ♦ Klechi  
 Belau ♦ Spirituality ♦ Basketball ♦ Role Modeling ♦ Access ♦ Love ♦  
 Smog Control ♦ Health Related Billboards ♦ Experience ♦ Fitness ♦ Fruits  
 ♦ Vegetables ♦ Fish ♦ Swimming ♦ Running ♦ Celebrations ♦ Life Jackets  
 ♦ Seat Belts ♦ Family Time ♦ Singing ♦ Values ♦ Holistic ♦ Creativity ♦  
 Paddling ♦ Less Illness ♦ Mosquito Control ♦ Recycling ♦ Local Funding ♦  
 Joy ♦ Hope ♦ Safe Sex ♦ Being Faithful ♦ Diukes ♦ Good Life ♦ Safety Net  
 ♦ Appropriate Services ♦ Pet Care ♦ Sacredness ♦ Collaboration ♦  
 Advocacy ♦ Healthy Environment ♦ Baseball ♦ Foot Care ♦ Breastfeeding  
 ♦ Less TV ♦ Dancing ♦ Surveillance ♦ Long Life ♦ Well-Baby Checks ♦  
 Prenatal Care ♦ Laughter ♦ Cancer Screening ♦ Hand Washing ♦  
 Relaxation ♦ Less Litter ♦ Taking Dinner to a Friend ♦ Building  
 Relationships ♦ Disease Tracking ♦ Having Fun ♦ Eating Local Foods ♦  
 Walking ♦ Accountability ♦ Food Safety ♦ Care ♦ Respect ♦ Helping Out ♦  
 Trash Clean-Ups ♦ Volleyball ♦ Art ♦ Setting an Example ♦ Health  
 Promotion ♦ Refrigeration ♦ Hugs ♦ Nutrition ♦ Safety ♦ Being  
 Adaptable ♦ Immunization ♦ Sanitation ♦ Peace of Mind ♦ Healthy  
 Weight ♦ Outreach ♦ Getting Involved ♦ Recycling ♦ LuLui ♦ Sewer  
 System ♦ Part of Everyday Life ♦ Ngara Kemril a Ues ♦ Risk Reduction ♦  
 Community Activities ♦ Nourishment for Mind, Body and Soul ♦ Balance  
 ♦ Prayer ♦ Pride in a Job Well Done ♦ Peace of Mind ♦ Trust ♦ Basking<sup>2</sup>  
 in the sun ♦

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## Palau Public Health Strategic Plan 2015-2020

**Ministry of Health Vision:**  
Healthy Communities with access to high quality health care services

**Ministry of Health Mission:**

The Ministry of Health shall take positive actions to:

- Attain a healthful environment
- Promote health and social welfare
- Protect family and health safety
- Provide quality healthcare services throughout the Republic of Palau

**Bureau of Public Health Mission:**

The Bureau of Public Health is committed to ensure that all members of the community have access to the resources, education, knowledge, and services needed to achieve the highest possible level of health.

**Definition of Public Health:**

Public health is physical, mental, and spiritual health as well as social relationships and strong family ties. It is everyday life in the community.

**Public Health Values and Beliefs:**

Communities, families, and individuals are responsible for making health related decisions. Individuals, families and communities work together to attain a healthy lifestyle.

The Bureau of Public Health must be non-discriminatory, transparent, and constantly evolving to meet the changing needs of the community.

Palauan culture and values are the foundation of social, spiritual, and family health in the country.

Respect the rights and cultures of all.

The Bureau of Public Health must provide professional, reliable, appropriate and timely services.

Make decisions based on evidence and data.

In being conscious of their health choices and its influence on the community.

The Bureau of Public Health must be an excellent workplace which fosters teamwork, collaboration, open communication and the health of its employees.

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## **Executive Summary**

Strategic planning gives us the opportunity to take a step back from our everyday tasks to look at the big picture of what we are doing and what we are trying to accomplish through our work. Within the Bureau of Public Health, this planning effort has been going on for some years at the program level, within divisions, and in partnership with community organizations. Several years ago, the process began at the Bureau level with a goal of focusing the priorities for the Bureau as a whole and strengthening the seams between programs. The ultimate goal of public health planning is to improve services and focus efforts so that we can best achieve the health goals of the nation.

In planning, we have the opportunity to look forward toward the Vision we hope to create. The result was a Vision of Health which includes: fit and active individuals; loving and supportive families; strong and safe communities; spiritual individuals, families and communities; a healthy environment; a health-minded social and political environment; and an effective, efficient Bureau of Public Health.

With this Vision of Health in Mind, we took a look at ourselves. We pointed out our strengths and the places where we are less strong. We listened to the community through surveys and discussions at the Public Health Convention to hear where we can improve our services. Our strategic directions are designed to take advantage of our strengths and address our weaknesses. Moving in these directions, the Bureau of Public Health will be more effective, more responsive to the needs of the community, and more proactive in achieving health. It is the goal of the Bureau of Public Health to:

1. Strengthen and enhance workforce capacity
2. Reduce health disparity and promote health equity
3. Become More Data Driven
4. Preparedness for emerging health threats
5. Increase Efficiency and Align All Programs with Bureau Vision and Priorities

Finally, we looked away from the work of the Bureau itself and out toward the health of the Republic. In order to have the largest impact on the health of the nation, we must understand the health issues that are of the most significance to the population. We must be aware of the most dangerous threats. We must focus our energies in these areas while never neglecting other areas of wellness in individuals or our communities. Eight priority health issues emerged based on review of health statistics with a focus on uncovering the Underlying causes and potential threats to the nation's health. Over the next 5 years, the Bureau of Public Health will pay special attention to:

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1. NCD and its Risk Factors
2. Substance Use (Alcohol and Tobacco)
3. Injury and Violence
4. Emerging and Re-emerging Infections
5. Safe Reproductive and Sexual Health
6. Climate Change
7. Mental and Behavioral Health
8. High Level of Immunization across life span
9. Workplace and Communities promoting health

## Planning Process

The Bureau of Public Health Senior Management team, composed of the four division chiefs and various program managers oversaw the development of the Bureau Strategic Plan. Management team first laid out the timeline and framework for the plan, then discussed and agreed to preserve the current ministry wide vision, current bureau's mission, and values and priorities of the departments. Staff conducted an environmental scan of the bureau and the management team reviewed the environmental scan to formulate potential strategic priority areas. A two day convention was held where community partners were invited to participate in SWOT activities and the prioritization process. After some deliberation and discussion with staff and external partners, priorities were identified.

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## Goals of Strategic Planning

Strategic Planning has been described as a method for making fundamental decisions about the actions that shape and guide an organization over the long term. It is an effort to define an organization's mission and vision to help it envision success. Strategic Planning is a tool to increase collaboration and communication by bringing people together to discuss the organization's common goal as well as to increase efficiency and decrease duplication of efforts. In a large organization such as the Bureau of Public Health, strategic planning can also be used to address cross-cutting issues and manage the seams between the end of one programs and the beginning of another. Its output is a document that will be utilized to guide future decisions, but more than that, strategic planning will be a process that improves decision making by placing the focus on the overall organization's key issues and goals. At its best, strategic planning reflects a collaborative effort to take stock of an organization's current situation and look for creative ways to strengthen or change the present circumstances to meet the needs of the community. The work that the strategic plan sets out to accomplish is not finished when the plan is written for it is a dynamic process which involves reviewing and rewriting as conditions and needs of the community change.

Several goals for writing this strategic plan for the Bureau of Public Health were established at the outset:

1. The plan will clarify the vision and focus of the Bureau of Public Health to serve as a road map for common goal. This clarity will make the purpose of the Bureau and its goals visible to both the employees and the community in order to provide an understanding of whom and what employees works for.
2. The plan will establish a clear organizational structure and clarify functions and connections between programs by bridging the gap between the diverse programs and projects. In doing so, each program can improve its services through the elimination of duplicated works and gear services toward actions that bring the best improvements in health.
3. The plan will increase understanding of the processes involved in moving toward the strategic directions so that the implementation will be simplified. It will elaborate measurable outcomes, incorporate fiscal accountability, and establish clear indicators to track both efforts and impacts of the programs.
4. The plan will be an integrated plan of action in delivering public health strategies that coincide and address both the community indicators and perceptions.

One of the challenges in writing a strategic plan for the Bureau of Public Health in Palau is separating those issues which pertain to the Bureau of Public Health as an institution from those

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which pertain to the public health as a community. The term “public health” has several meanings. It is, on the one hand, a state of being; and the other is the general health of the public, the state of health in the community. Public health is also a process of the collective actions which are taken in order to improve the health of the community. Was this plan to be an organizational plan for the Bureau of Public Health or a public health plan for the nation of Palau? Would it attempt to outline the ideal state of public health in the general sense or would it stand as a guide to improve and streamline the process for getting to that state of improved health? Does it stand as a document for the Bureau itself, or for the community as a whole?

In many ways, it must attempt to be both. In a country the size of Palau, the workforce of the Bureau of Public Health is an integral and important part of the community at large. In many ways the workforce is the community and represents the community. Bureau employees are Rotarians, they are founders of non-profits who sit on the boards of community groups and represent their hamlets; they are “mechases” and “rubaks”, mothers and fathers... they are the community. The separation of Bureau of Public Health goals from community goals seems at times artificial because of this interconnection. Still, as the Bureau moves forward, it must outline its major strategies and its major goals as an institution. With a clear set of objectives, employees can share a vision of where to go when work begins and tackle projects each day in the office.

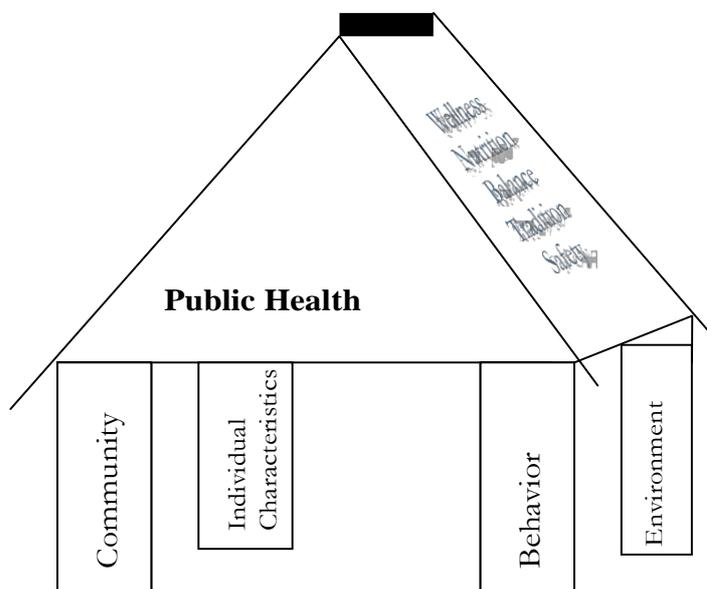
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## Four Pillars of Public Health

**Individual Characteristics**— The health of the public is defined and characterized by the many components of the genes/traits inherited from parents and grandparents of each individual in the community. In Palau, the tendency for people to develop diabetes and obesity has emerged as an inherited trait in the setting of non-traditional foods high in processed carbohydrates being introduced in the diet. These inherited traits in addition to other characteristics such as a person’s spirituality, positive attitude, flexibility, cultural literacy, and respect for others all have an impact on the health of the individual.

**Community** – The community is the catalyst that moves the other 3 pillars and binds them all together. The community is responsible for creating systems that provide services to improve its own health. These services include those provided by the Ministry of Health in addition to community efforts that conserve the unique and rich physical environment, support from families and churches, maintain cultural identity, preserve and honor tradition, and build networks support individuals during difficult times in their lives.

**Behavior** – Personal choices and actions have a direct impact on the health of the individual and the community. When an individual makes a choice to exercise, eat vegetables, and avoid tobacco and alcohol, those choices influence the health of both the individual and the community as a whole. Healthy behaviors also include participating in community activities, building strong family ties, taking time to relax, laughing often, attending customs, respecting tradition, and choosing to do our part to support society. All of these behaviors have a positive influence on public health.



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Environment – The environment plays a significant role in the health of the public for it consists of the social, economic, physical, political and cultural settings in which each individual of the community lives. Making healthy choices will be easier if the environment encourages health. In other words, if there are sidewalks, playgrounds, parks, healthy local foods and sports programs available for people to choose from, making the choice to be healthy becomes much easier. In the larger setting, a country with fewer mosquitoes, safe drinking water, and good sanitation has fewer illnesses. With a healthy and vibrant reef, Palau has access to healthy fish for food and export as well as tourism to bring money into the economy. A healthy economy gives people the resources needed to make healthy choices, which are not always the least expensive choices health positively.

## Vision of Health

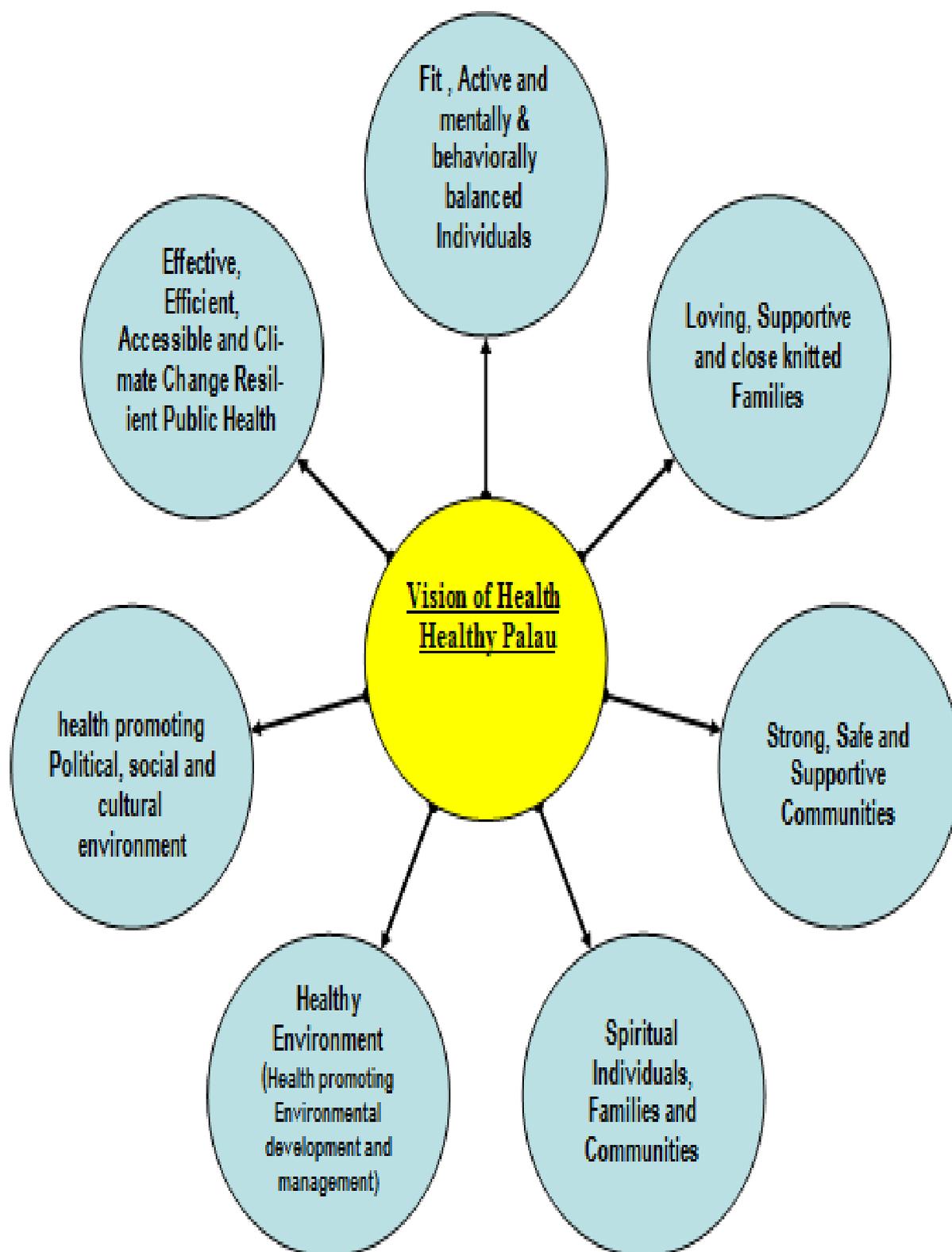
The World Health Organization has defined health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” Here in Palau, public health is woven into the fabric of everyday life and includes an emphasis on family, spirituality, tradition, and community. Public health is physical health, peace of mind, spirituality, social relationships, and strong family ties. It is everyday life in the community.

Family, culture, custom, and faith are important parts of public health in Palau. Health in Palau can be determined by observing individuals work together and contribute to the community through charts and data evaluation about individual patients and their diseases. When the community is healthy, then all are able to do be productive members of their family, their community, and their nation. Doing things for others, especially caring for those who have difficulty caring for themselves such as children and the elderly, is an important part of Palauan culture.

As the Bureau of Public Health moves toward planning its actions over the next 5 years, it is with this broad vision of health in mind. It is the ultimate goal of the Bureau of Public Health to play a supporting role as the community brings this vision of health into reality.

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## PALAU MODEL OF HEALTH



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Healthy individuals living in Palau are knowledgeable about health and are free of “lifestyle diseases”. They are able to make the right choices for themselves and are able to do all of their desired activities and the activities of daily living without help. They are fit and active people who have integrated exercise into their daily lives. These individuals choose a balanced diet rich in local foods with appropriate portion sizes. They know how to manage stress and have a social support network in place to assist them when the need arises. Healthy people are aware of risky behaviors and the steps they need to take to minimize risk to their health. They are free of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs and their dental health includes not having cavities as children and keeping permanent teeth as adults. Healthy individuals living in Palau have the information needed to be able to make decisions about their own health so that they can be adaptable, content, happy, and productive.

Healthy Individuals
Well-informed
Fit & active
Spiritual
Responsible
Disease-free
Adaptable
Manage stress
Meet social obligations
Balanced diet
No risky behaviors
Good choices

Family is at the center here in Palau. Healthy families support individuals to be healthy and form the basic unit in community structure. Families lay the foundation for children as they grow and develop. They have the opportunity to build character, to raise children to be somebody, to make education a priority, and to teach traditional custom and culture. Families are also central in spiritual life for families that pray together stay together. In healthy families, there is open communication, consistency between words and actions, and quality interaction between children and adults in the family with some play time together every day. Kids feel loved, respected and safe. Healthy families are drug free and violence free. Good foods are available and health education is part of growing up. At this time of globalization and development, outside influences on family are strong and families are evolving from being extended families to more

Healthy Families
Loving and Supportive
Safe
Spiritual – Pray together
Foundation
Education
Teach tradition and health
Open communication
Quality time together
Build character
Free of violence and drugs
Nourish mind, body and soul

individualistic, nuclear families. In this time of change, it is especially important in Palau to remember the centrality of the family, to keep in mind the original spirit of customary practices and obligations, and to focus on developing loving families where children are nurtured in body, mind and soul.

Being a small island nation, community is crucial in Palau. We are the community and community health is public health. In a healthy community, there is active participation by all community members. Palauans or “Kle Belau,” is embraced, and there is a focus on Palauan tradition, culture, and language. In a healthy community education is valued. People are happy, friendly and helpful. Stigmatization of disease does not exist and the community takes care of those in need, “ngara kemril a ues.” There are community activities available especially for the youth and a wellness center present where people can focus on their health instead of on their illness. The community builds and maintains the systems which provide health education, prevention, promotion and care. These resources are available with easy physical access, are affordable, and reliable.

Healthy Community
KleBelau
Active participation
Palauan culture valued
Education important
Ngara Kemril a Ues
Youth activities
Support for health programs
Resources for health available
Healthy choices integrated
Free of violence and drugs
Culture of wellness

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provided by non-governmental community groups working in collaboration with the Bureau. Healthy choices are integrated into social activities and health education materials are widely available from a variety of sources.

Social and spiritual health is vital to having peace of mind, adaptability, and a positive outlook on life which are important to health. Strong faith and spirituality can provide the support and resources to draw on when illness or stress occur in life. When spiritual health is emphasized, there are prayer groups and support groups available for people who are dealing with similar challenges. Spirituality is integrated into public health services. Collaboration occurs between health and faith-based organizations. The body is viewed as the environment for the soul and spirit and efforts to improve physical health are done to maintain a healthy environment for the soul. Social health provides a network for social support in times of crisis or need. The traditional Palauan customs provide for an extensive support network which comes together at times of birth, death, and homebuilding. In the vision of health in Palau, these customs are strengthened and returned to their traditional roots. The picture of social health in Palau's future maintains traditional obligations as a central component of Palauan society, and includes an ongoing review of the customary requirements. In this way customs can become closer to their original intent and will not become a financial competition which places too high a burden on those meeting their obligations.

## Social and Spiritual Health

Peace of mind
Positive outlook
Faith
Resources to draw on when ill
Belief in something greater
Prayer groups and support groups
Body is environment for the soul
Network of social support
Customs help in times of need
Prayer groups and support groups
Obligations are not overly burdensome

The environment can make healthy living easy or more difficult. Healthy Palau in Healthful Environment will be realized when ecological balance is a source of pride, the ocean which sustains us is protected, and we are living within the means of our environment. A healthful environment also includes billboards promoting healthy lifestyles, local fruits and vegetables. Sidewalks for walking, playgrounds for children to climb and slide, parks in all 16 states, good outlets for stress, clean air, and enough land near homes for children to play, garden for food, and restrained animals are all present. Plastics are used less frequently, waste is separated, and recycling or reusing resources are increased. In a healthful environment, it is safe to walk the streets at night, you can go to sleep with a peace of mind, and children can play freely without harm.

## Healthful Environment

Clean living conditions
Little exposure to dangerous agents
Healthy choices available
Ecological balance
Billboards promote health
Sidewalks and playgrounds
Clean air
Outlets for stress
Accessible places for kids to play
Less plastics and other waste
Safe to walk the streets, even at night

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A healthful environment also includes a healthy social and political environment. A healthy social environment includes social norms and mores which promote good health rather than promoting poor health choices. Wearing seatbelts, sending children to school with healthy foods, exercising, participating in customs, and keeping the area around homes are considered social norms. Heavy drinking of alcohol, use of tobacco, speeding, eating excessive portions, and physical contact in domestic disputes are not accepted as appropriate behaviors. A healthy political environment is stable, ethical, and health-minded. Health legislation is considered of high importance and the health implications of all legislation are discussed. Funding for health is secured to allow for programs to be consistent, reliable, affordable and available to residents of Palau. Health insurance is available and affordable. Certain legislative items are central to promoting health in Palau. These include:

1. Clean air legislation to control diesel fuels, establish emission standards, ban smoking in public places and encourage tree planting;
2. Automobile safety legislation to increase use of seat belts and other safety devices in cars;
3. Alcohol and tobacco legislation to limit billboards, control sales, create drug/alcohol/tobacco free schools, and set times for night clubs to open and close;
4. Zoning legislation to increase sidewalks, parks, designated areas for advertisements, billboards, and agriculture; and
5. Pet legislation to decrease the number of unvaccinated and uncared-for animals on the streets.

Finally, in a healthy Palau, there is a healthy Bureau of Public Health so that the institution is best able to provide the needed services to the community. A healthy Bureau of Public Health is proactive for health and not only reactive to illness. It is a place where employees are supported to make good personal health choices so that they can better serve as role models to the community at large. In a healthy Bureau, employees are proud of the work that they do, offer excellence in care, and have good salaries and benefits with financial incentives to do their work well. They feel connected to the success of the Bureau as a whole and not only to their own personal success. It is a workplace where people hold themselves to high ethical standards for the benefit of the entire community. The workplace is confidential and respectful with criticism given in private while successes are shared with the MOH family. Human resources within a healthy Bureau rely upon Palauan expertise whenever possible and utilize the right personnel with the right training in the right place at the right time.

Healthy Social and Political Environment
Social norms promote health
Unhealthy actions become taboo
Stable, ethical and health-minded government
Health legislation is high priority
Appropriations for health
Clean air legislation
Automobile safety laws enhanced
Alcohol and tobacco controls tight
Zoning for health and recreation
Pet legislation in place

Healthy Bureau of PH
Efficient, ethical, effective
Proactive for health
Employees serve as role models
Pride in a job well done
Financial incentives for good work
Criticism in private, praise in public
Reliance on Palauan expertise prioritized
Right person, right job, right time
Collaborative
Consistently funded
Accountable
Shared vision

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Standards for training are in place and employees are aware of the expectations for their work. Services, functions, and roles are well defined with little duplication of effort. It is an organization in which collaboration is common between divisions and with community organizations. In a healthy Bureau, services are aligned with health indicators and the data which form the basis for these indicators is reliable, consistent and accessible to those who need them. The funding of a healthy Bureau is primarily local with only minimal utilization of outside resources and is available. In a healthy Bureau all are held accountable for their work and are rewarded for their successes. All employees know what they are working toward and share a vision for “Healthy Palau in Healthful Environment.”

## Services Provided

The Bureau of Public Health is accountable to the community to provide primary, preventive, supportive, and rehabilitation services including:

### Primary Care Services:

Offers primary health services with direct patient contact including: walk-in outpatient appointments, immunizations, oral health, maternal and child health, mental and behavioral health, communicable diseases treatment, geriatric wellness including home visits, and screening programs. It also provides primary care services in the community such as blood-pressure and glucose checks at public events, response to complaints about potential vector populations, and school-based health programs.

### Risk and Disease Prevention:

Informs the public of outbreaks and what can be done to contain them; monitors for food, water, and consumer product safety; controls vector populations on the islands; monitors pollution and other environmental hazards; provides risk reduction services such as counseling; prepares for emergencies to reduce morbidity and mortality in the aftermath of such events; and enforces international health quarantine to prevent diseases from entering the country.

### Health and Wellness Promotion:

Provides resources such as public lectures and handouts about specific disease processes; organizes social marketing campaigns with health messages to reach a wide audience; makes information widely available to serve as the basis for good decision making; and helps to create an environment that supports the health of the population.

### Rehabilitation, Healing and Recovery:

Assists individuals and communities deal with the aftermath of a disease or disaster with on-going follow-up and support.

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## Essential Functions of Public Health in Palau:

1. Health (physical, mental, social, spiritual & environmental) status monitoring and analysis—Monitor and analyze health (physical, mental, social, spiritual & environmental) status
2. Epidemiological surveillance, disease prevention, control and risk reduction.
3. Development of policies, planning, implementation and evaluation.—Develop, plan, implement, and evaluate policies
4. Strategic management of health systems, programs and services with advocacy for population health gain.—Advocate population health gain through strategic management of health systems, programs and services
5. Human resource development and planning in public health.—Develop and plan human resources in Public Health
6. Advocacy, regulation and enforcement of laws to protect public health—Advocate, regulate, and enforce laws to protect public health
7. Health promotion, health education, social participation and empowerment toward informed decision and action
8. Ensure the quality and effectiveness of personal and population-based health services and interventions.
9. Ensure access and linkage of people and populations to needed and appropriate health services; and access and linkage of health information to decision makers.
10. Research, translation and implementation of innovative public health solutions.
11. Ensure cultural integration in health protection and promotion.

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## Strategic Directions

### I. How can the Bureau of Public Health play an active role in fostering a broad definition of health that includes physical, mental, social, spiritual, family, community and environmental health?

Rationale: Traditionally, health was “owned” by the community and decisions regarding health were made by practitioners within each hamlet or village. Public health messages were passed down as part of the oral tradition and dictated such things as extraordinary care of pregnant women to prevent problems now thought to be associated with the “thrifty gene” and placental oxygenation. With the coming of Western influence and Western medicine, some responsibilities for health began to shift from the community to the organizations and institutions designed to address health concerns such as the hospital and Bureau of Public Health. At the same time, the Western concept of health as the absence of illness, something which is obtained through taking medications to cure illness, became more visible. It is clear that this focus on illness neglects many important components of the overall health of the individual and completely ignores the importance of the health of the community as a whole. There are many facets to health and it is not possible to determine the health of any individual simply by reading his or her medical chart. An individual with a thick medical record may lead a happy and productive life while one that has never had any physical illness may be isolated, unhappy and unproductive. If the Bureau of Public Health can encourage a broader view of health, one which encompasses community activities, strong families, and a healthy environment then it will go far to improve the lives of those who call Palau their home. The focus on wellness rather than illness also encourages prevention, system-wide changes, and lifestyle modifications which decreases the level of illness and the need for treatment later.

1. Implement a National Wellness Program.
2. Formalize the Social and Spiritual Health Program.
3. Develop and implement campaign to raise awareness of broad definition of health.

### II. What changes can be made at the Bureau of Public Health to create a work environment that supports the health of all Bureau employees?

Rationale: The Bureau of Public Health is one of the major employers in the community. It has an obligation and an opportunity to similarly work to improve the health of its own employees as it works toward improving the health of the community through its programs. By building the systems to support the health of all of its employees, the Bureau can serve as a role model in bringing the sort of changes necessary for the wellness of the community. When patients hear the health messages provided by the Bureau, they also look to see how these messages are incorporated into the lives of those who are giving them. If the Bureau is seen as saying one thing and doing another, it will diminish the impact of the messages

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given. At the same time, restrictions on individual behavior to comply with the health messages may serve to alienate employees and will not have a positive impact on their mental or spiritual health. The opportunity available to the Bureau is to be the role mode of the systems and the process which encourage wellness in its workforce. Similar systems and processes can be put into place in the community at large and raise the level of health of the entire population.

1. Develop a program that encourages physical health of all employees.
2. Create a work environment that promotes employee performance through positive reinforcement.

### III. What can the Bureau do to coordinate and to strengthen its message by speaking with a consistent voice to the community?

Rationale: The Bureau of Public Health is a large institution with multiple programs and divisions. Each of these divisions contains outreach as part of its mission whether through offering screenings, providing health education, or making information accessible to the public. When these activities are coordinated the result is greater than the sum of its parts. Community members can begin to see how the programs are interrelated and how certain lifestyle choices impact a number of different health outcomes. For example, education about children eating refined sugar may lead to both decreases in dental cavities and childhood obesity. On the other hand, when the activities are not coordinated, a risk of fatigue from too many messages, a frustration with frequent visits, and a sense that the Bureau is disorganized may result. By coordinating community outreach, the health messages can be streamlined and simplified, the efforts to bring people together can be maximized, and programs within the Bureau will have greater opportunity to work together.

1. Set standards for health informational materials through all media (i.e. health information style guide).
2. Establish a mechanism that enables us to oversee/coordinate health messages, promotion and advocacy.

### IV. What can the Bureau of Public Health do so that more priority decisions are based on data?

Rationale: Becoming more data driven is one of the key goals of the Bureau of Public Health. A clear understanding of the burden of disease within the country will allow the Bureau to focus its efforts in the most important areas. Additionally having consistent and reliable data will allow programs to monitor their success in terms of health improvements rather than through surrogate markers of success. Narrowing the focus of information gathering will allow simplification of the process of data collection and data management.

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In the current climate, programs collect, store, and analyze their own data without the other programs knowing what information is being collected. This leads to duplication of effort, conflicting information as the same data are collected by different groups in different ways, and frustration in data access.

The creation of a unified data set containing key indicators will allow managers to tailor their programs to the real needs of the community and to monitor their success over time.

1. Create a tool that standardizes a reliable data collection system and streamline data management processes to avoid duplication of effort.
2. Create a data system that is accessible to those who need it.
3. Create a structure to review data and make priority decisions based upon it.

## V. What can the Bureau of Public Health do to become more self-reliant and to prepare for possible changes in the funding stream?

Rationale: The Bureau of Public Health would like to gain independence so that it can make its own decisions about finances and control the flow of funds through the Bureau. The Bureau of Public Health aspires to have the flexibility to set its own priorities based upon the health needs of the community instead of the funding available. In order to be financially self-sufficient, it must make decisions about programming to streamline efforts, to take on cost-saving projects, and to avoid waste and duplication of effort. Given the possibility of significant reductions in US Federal Funding and/or local funding in the next few years, the Bureau of Public Health must begin to look at ways to raise capital from other sources or to cut its costs significantly in the upcoming years. At the Compact Review Commission Economic Symposium, it was estimated that in order to be fiscally self-sufficient, the Palau National Government will need to decrease expenditures by 40%. The Bureau of Public Health needs to be proactive in meeting these potential changes if it is to avoid facing unplanned programming and personnel cuts in the future. Self-reliance goes beyond fiscal self-sufficiency. Self-reliant can be defined as certain, independent, courageous, responsible, trustworthy, self-confident, secure, valiant, and brave. The Bureau of Public Health would like to have the internal capacity to meet its needs without needing to bring in costly consultants and expatriates for short term contracts. It aims to foster an environment in which the employees are proud of their work and take pride in the accomplishments of the Bureau as a whole. The community will trust that the Bureau will respond to health threats appropriately, will provide high quality clinical care, and will be responsible and ethical stewards of the resources given to them.

1. Create a self-reliance plan identifying clear financial goals and potential sources to diversify funding.
2. Continue to advocate for an annual increase in budget from local government to meet all core business costs.
3. Complete HRD plan for BPH in alignment with MOH.

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## VI. What can the Bureau of Public Health do to maximize efficiency and to ensure that all programs and activities are aligned with the overall Bureau vision and priorities?

Rationale: The current structure of the Bureau of Public Health developed over time as programs grew and required more staff to meet their needs. The result is a silo model with many well-run programs functioning in parallel without natural lines of communication or sharing of resources. Territorialism has been one of the noted weaknesses of the Bureau. In order for the Bureau to function as a whole, structures must be put in place to maximize cross-sharing of information and resources. The overall Bureau vision and goals must take precedence over the vision and goals of the individual programs. Additionally, with the addition of new programs, the official organizational chart has become somewhat different from the functional organizational chart and this is yet different from the stream of funding. The discrepancies between these different layers of organization can lead to confusion and to decreased productivity. Clarification of roles and responsibilities will allow new programs to take a larger role and will decrease duplication of effort. Finally, in order to provide the public with the best possible level of care and services, especially in a time of decreasing funding, efforts must be made to measure efficiency and quality of services and to streamline efforts so that the best health outcomes are reached with the limited resources that are available.

1. Create the 5 year planning process.
2. Review, evaluate and update the plan annually.
3. Clarify functions and roles of Divisions and Programs.
4. Design system and tools to measure efficiency, quality of service, and coverage.
5. Design Comprehensive Referral and Health Maintenance Forms.
6. Create information protocol and periodicity of exchange between Divisions and Programs.
7. Clarify the layers of the table of organization.

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## Priority Health Concerns

The strategic directions presented are directions that the Bureau as a whole must move in responding to the challenges noted in the SWOT analysis and environmental scan. They do not; however, suggest which health issues or service goals are of priority in meeting the needs of the population. The challenge for the Bureau in outlining key service goals is that those areas of effort which are not listed are nonetheless important and must continue to be addressed. For example, while diarrhea is not currently a major health threat, having access to clean water and to unspoiled food remains important for the health of the public. Similarly, immunization rates are remarkably high in Palau and so raising immunization rates is not among the top health priorities for the country in the next 10 years, but this in no way is meant to diminish the importance of maintaining high rates. So the selection of key health concerns at the population level is intended to diminish neither from the need to maintain current levels of care and prevention in other areas, nor from the import of individual health concerns to those who are affected.

In looking at the health of the population in Palau and projecting forward 5 years, there are several key health concerns which are priorities. Each of these health priorities has impacts across the programs and divisions in the Bureau. These include obesity, alcohol abuse, tobacco use, injury, emerging infections and depression. Many of these conditions are conditions typically considered life-style related diseases. Many of them require individual behavior change which is difficult to elicit. One of the goals of the Bureau is to begin to look past individual behavior change and toward systematic changes which can be made to improve upon the health of all individuals. These may be changes in laws such as seatbelt laws, improvements to correct root problems such as adding dividers and reflectors on “unforgiving roads” or changes in underlying custom and common practices such as making it socially unacceptable to give children soda before school.

Many are also interrelated, for example tobacco use and obesity both contribute to heart disease and alcohol abuse is one of the major factors in motor vehicle crashes. All of these problems can be addressed with a multi-disciplinary effort to decrease their impact. They are not problems which are the exclusive responsibility of one public health program or another, but impact all programs in one way or another. It is the hope that by tackling some of the root health problems that many of the health concerns can be addressed. For each problem, several service goals are listed based on anticipated changes in the indicators which measure the health problem.

Two overarching goals address these 9 Priority Health Concerns.

1. All Public Health programs will develop at least one objective and accompanying activities to address each of the eight
2. Design and implement a broad public health promotional campaign for each of 3 themes

A data-base is being created as a component of the strategic plan implementation which will identify all programs and activities which are addressing each of these 9 priority health concerns. They will

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be categorized as to whether they are Primary Care, Disease Prevention, Health Promotion, or Rehab/Healing and Recovery activities and as to whether they address the Individual, Environmental, Behavioral, or Community aspects of health.

**NCD** – Obesity rates in Palau are high as in most of the Pacific. Many obesity-related illnesses are also prevalent in Palau including hypertension and diabetes. According to the CDC, overweight and obesity increase the risk of many health conditions in addition to hypertension and diabetes. These include osteoarthritis, dyslipidemia, coronary heart disease, stroke, gallbladder disease, sleep apnea and other respiratory problems, and some cancers (endometrial, breast, and colon)<sup>4</sup>. In addition, childhood obesity is becoming a prevalent problem. Childhood overweight is associated with heart disease, diabetes, and asthma as well as a significant risk of obesity in adulthood. One study found that approximately 80% of American children who were overweight at age 10-15 were obese adults when they reached the age of 25. If obesity rates can be lowered then rates of HTN, diabetes, and other obesity related illnesses will decrease. If childhood nutrition improves then rates of these diseases when these children reach adulthood will drop and in the short term rates of caries in primary teeth are likely to fall as well.

**Alcohol abuse** – Alcohol is associated with the development of several health problems in the drinker his/herself in addition to increasing the risk of injury in the people in contact with the drinker. Liver cancer is the second most common cause of cancer death in Palau and the third most common cause of cancer. Injuries are the third most common cause of death and many of these appear to be alcohol related including motor vehicle crashes, drownings and boat accidents, and suicide. No research has been done on the effect of alcohol use on the social structure and family dynamics in Palau; however, in other countries alcohol abuse has had wide social implications and this may be true in this setting as well.

**Tobacco use** – In Palau, smoking tobacco is not as common as chewing tobacco as part of the betel nut mix. Betel nut chewing has long been prevalent in Palau. Rates of tobacco use in betel nut are high (85%) and recent evidence suggests that youth are increasingly using smokeless tobacco without the betel nut. In addition, while more tobacco is used in betel nut, the smoking rate was 17% of which 1,197 were Palauan. The use of tobacco has been associated with many health risks from lung cancer and COPD in smokers to oral cancer and cardiovascular disease. In addition to the health risks of tobacco use, the combination of the cost of tobacco and its qualities make it a financial risk for many Palauans as well. Current estimates state that an average 11% (is this the right number?) of income is spent on betel nut and tobacco products.

Betel nut chewing has been practiced in Palau for centuries and public health campaigns that target the tobacco addition to the quid are likely to be more successful than attempts to change the underlying patterns of betel nut chewing. At the same time, if measures to decrease tobacco use also decrease betel nut chewing, this is likely to have a positive impact on health as well. Betel nut chewing even without the addition of tobacco has been associated with deterioration of the teeth and gums, mouth ulcers and peptic ulcers, oral and pharyngeal cancers, and obesity

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be categorized as to whether they are Primary Care, Disease Prevention, Health Promotion, or Rehab/Healing and Recovery activities and as to whether they address the Individual, Environmental, Behavioral, or Community aspects of health.

**Injury / Violence**– Injury was ranked as the 3<sup>rd</sup> leading cause of death in Palau and little has been known about the causes of these injuries and the steps that could have been taken to prevent them. The first situational analysis of injury in Palau has been undertaken after the national injury stakeholder’s workshop in August 2006. The initial analysis revealed that the most common injuries are due to motor vehicle crashes and drowning with many of these being related to alcohol consumption in one way or another. The current system for injury tracking is through manual review of Emergency Room and outpatient visit data. This tracking occurs on an annual basis. There is little coordination with records from the Ministry of Justice. There is, at present no program within the Ministry of Health which undertakes injury prevention programs and no direct funding available for injury prevention.

**Emerging and Re-emerging Infections** – Given its location as a tourist destination in the Western Pacific, Palau is at risk of experiencing the introduction of numerous emerging infections some of which have already entered the country and others which loom as potential threats. The most potentially devastating of these remains Avian/Pandemic flu which could enter the country through bird migration patterns North from Indonesia or through human travel should the virus mutate to allow human to human transmission. Perhaps less devastating, but more eminent threats exist in the forms of Dengue, leptospirosis, and SARS. When the SARS outbreak occurred in 2002-3, the airport in Palau halted all flights from Taiwan. This had a significant impact on tourism in the country; but allowed Palau to isolate itself from the virus. Dengue fever was not endemic in Palau historically; however, in recent years outbreaks have occurred of varying sizes and severities. Most of these outbreaks are quickly controlled with vector control methods and isolation of the sick individuals. Others are found to be more difficult to contain and in 2001, over 1000 individuals became ill with the virus. Though there is some variability in testing based on the availability of test kits, the current reporting suggests that dengue has become endemic in Palau with low transmission rates and only 1-2 cases per month. On top of this background transmission are peaks which may arise from imported strains and new types. Efforts to keep these new types from causing widespread outbreaks will save lives and can prevent them from becoming endemic as well.

**Safe Reproductive and Sexual Health**- Reproductive and sexual health are important to our overall health. The right information can help reduce unintended pregnancy, prevent disease and ensure safe and nurturing sexual relationships.

**Climate Change and Health**- Climate Change is recognized as the biggest public health threat this century. Adverse weather events and climate change are affecting people and services now and this is predicted to increase in the future. Climate change could have significant implications for the health and wellbeing of the population.

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**Mental and Behavioral Health** – In the past 6 years, suicide has been the leading cause of deaths due to injuries in the Republic of Palau. However, a community survey on Perceived Community Problems ranked suicide #7. Palau has one of the <sup>highest</sup> rates compared to other U.S. affiliated Pacific Island states. Most suicides occur in the 16-20 year age category. Since 1984, suicides in Palau have occurred predominantly in males. The major risk factors for suicide are: substance use, prolonged and compounded stressors, emotional, physical and sexual abuse, emotions of anger or shame and underlying psychological pathologies such as schizophrenia, depression etc.

**Immunization-** Childhood immunization rates in Palau are very high and immunizations are now available for all residents free of charge due to grant funding. Rates for adult immunizations have not been equally high and there is room for improvement in accessibility and utilization of services. In addition, making assurances for preserved high childhood immunization rates, in case the funding stream is interrupted, is important as we look forward.

**Workplace and Community Promoting Health-** focus on the creation of a culture of wellness is an important component of the public health agenda for the next 5 years in Palau. One component of this initiative is the establishment of healthy workplaces both to prevent occupational injury/exposure and to utilize the workplace as an avenue for promoting a culture of wellness throughout the Republic. Other than pre-employment health screenings for foreign workers, occupational health programs are nonexistent in most of Palau's workplaces. Workplaces do not always have the resources needed to aid employees in reaching and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. It is the goal of the Healthy Settings Initiative to provide the resources and education needed so that employers can offer health related programs and activities at the job site, while promoting occupational safety. Thus the workplace can become not only a safe environment for employees, but also a resource for overall health of the Palauan workforce.

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