

## Local Health Departments are Preparing for the Health Impacts of Climate Change

October 2017

### Salt Lake County Health Department

#### Project Summary



The National Association of County and City Health Officials, with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), selected the Salt Lake County Health Department as one of 11 local health departments (LHDs) to better understand how county and city health officials are preparing for the health impacts of climate

change. The goal of this project was to highlight local efforts to prepare for and build resiliency to the health impacts of climate change and to share these success stories to support new and ongoing initiatives in other LHDs. The project sought to identify best practices and provide real-world case studies. LHDs play an important role in connecting health impacts with the effects of climate change. This project highlights only a few of the many departments actively engaged in climate change efforts.

#### Background

Salt Lake City, the seat of Salt Lake County and the capital of Utah, is located on the Wasatch Mountain Range. Over a third of the entire state population lies within Salt Lake County's 16 incorporated cities and an additional unincorporated area. Salt Lake County occupies the Salt Lake Valley,<sup>1</sup> the Wasatch and Oquirrh Mountain Ranges, and part of the Great Salt Lake and the Jordan River watershed.

#### Climate Challenge

Climate change is causing warmer temperatures, droughts, and more frequent extreme weather events in the region. Many responses to climate change could positively impact the region in multiple ways, simultaneously reducing the burden of disease, saving money, protecting the environment, developing community, and addressing inequality. Salt Lake County's development of a regional Climate Change Adaptation Plan for

Health will provide an organized plan for the county to respond to the health impacts of climate change, serving to build a healthier, more resilient community, and setting an example for other local health departments in Utah.

#### Goal

The Salt Lake County Health Department's goal is to collaborate with agencies across Salt Lake County to develop a simplified, unified Climate Adaptation Plan for Health. By partnering with local stakeholders, the department is working to put together

#### OBJECTIVES

- Complete a Climate Change Adaptation for Health framework;
- Host stakeholder forums for inclusive participation in completing the planning document;
- Host annual Climate and Health Symposium to provide education on climate issues; and
- Participate (as initial convening member) of the Utah Climate Action Network.<sup>2</sup>

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a comprehensive plan to protect the health of its population from the heat waves, water shortages, water quality issues, outbreaks of new diseases, poor air quality, and extreme weather events that it will need to address in the coming decades. The health department developed several objectives to address this overarching goal and has achieved a number of successes so far.

## Achievements and Successes

- Hosted Climate and Health Symposium in 2014, 2015, and 2017;
- Partnered with the National Weather Service to provide health impact information included in regional weather forecasts;
- Developed the Utah Climate Action Network in partnership with Salt Lake City Sustainability Department, University of Utah, Park City, and Alta Ski Area;<sup>2</sup> and
- Participated in fact-finding sessions with Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) on regional climate impacts.

## References

1. United States Census Bureau. Quick Facts webpage. Retrieved September 13, 2017, from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045216>
2. Utah Climate Action Network. About The Network webpage. Retrieved September 13, 2017, from <http://www.utahclimateactionnetwork.com/>

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The mission of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) is to be a leader, partner, catalyst, and voice with local health departments.

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