

Principles to Guide Discussions around the Integration of DHS, DMH and DPH Services

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors approved in concept the integration of DHS, DMH, and DPH services under a single health agency. The planning and implementation of this action requires the use of core principles to guide a thoughtful discussion leading to decisions that will best serve the needs of the people of Los Angeles County.

DELIVERABLES TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. A structure for the “approved in concept” health agency model, uniting the Departments of Health Services (DHS), Mental Health (DMH), and Public Health (DPH) under a single combined LA County health agency,
2. Possible steps for implementing a health agency,
3. A timeframe for transition to the agency model,
4. The expected benefits and disadvantages of the agency model.

CORE PRINCIPLES

1. **Clarity of Purpose.** Clearly define objectives that will be achieved by changes in organizational structure or processes. Develop a plan and evaluate it to measure benefits and impacts to each department.
2. **Transparent Decision-Making.** Act with integrity and transparency in decision-making to build trust with employees and community stakeholders. Use a consensus-based approach whenever possible.
3. **Autonomy.** Each Department must be empowered to carry out its mission with appropriate authority to manage key matters, including priority setting, budget, operational planning, resource allocation, and equal access to the Board of Supervisors.
4. **Mutual Respect.** During the process of planning integrated services, act in ways that demonstrate respect for each Department’s unique contributions to achieving shared goals.
5. **Synergistic Opportunities.** Identify synergistic opportunities for integration that will protect population, personal, and mental health, prevent disease and injury, and promote overall health and well-being for everyone in Los Angeles County.
6. **Safe and Open Communication.** Promote an environment to fully discuss the advantages and drawbacks to the proposed agency structure and commit to clearly articulating the process by which key decisions are being made.
7. **Essential and Legally Mandated Services.** Preserve and expand the programs and services that have the greatest impact on population health and elimination of health disparities, and promote health care access. Ensure that levels of resources, including dedicated funding streams, which are providing essential and/or legally mandated public health services, are continued in at least current levels in order to maintain access and quality.
8. **Sustained Leadership.** Ensure each Department retains a strong leadership team and the ongoing ability to attract and retain high-quality leaders who are capable of leading challenging initiatives in personal, mental and public health. Preserve a broad set of classifications and positions designated to assess, plan, implement and evaluate essential public health functions at multiple levels throughout each Department.
9. **Partnership and Collaboration.** Maintain and nurture existing key partnerships, both with internal County partners and external stakeholders and service providers, to pursue shared goals and outcomes. Each department has carefully cultivated community relationships that are unique and integration should not interrupt those partnerships but seek to leverage them for improved service delivery for everyone in Los Angeles County.
10. **Commitment to Efficiency.** Consider consolidating key planning, business, and administrative services only when such consolidation adds clear value and leads to meaningful savings and improvement in services, while assuring that access to these services is guaranteed for each Department at a level that is at least equal to what was available before the integration.
11. **Empowered Workforce.** Empower staff through approaches that support learning and growth, encourage innovations that facilitate change, and reward success. Promote cross-Department team-building.