



## *The Practice of Public Health*

### **The mission of Public Health...**

*To assure the conditions in which people can be healthy*  
- Institute of Medicine<sup>1</sup>

Public health accomplishes this mission by performing three core public health functions - **assessment, policy development and assurance.**

*“Public health – like a doctor with his/her patient – assesses the health of a population, diagnoses its problems, seeks the causes of those problems, and devises strategies to cure them.*



**Assessment** constitutes the diagnostic function, in which a public health agency collects, assembles, analyzes, and makes available information on the health of the population.

**Policy development**, like a doctor’s development of a treatment plan for a sick patient, involves the use of scientific knowledge to develop a strategic approach to improving the community’s health.

**Assurance** is equivalent to the doctor’s actual treatment of the patient. Public health has the responsibility of assuring that the services needed for the protection of public health in the community are available and accessible to everyone.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Institute of Medicine, Committee on Public Health. Healthy Communities: New Partnerships for the Future of Public Health. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 1996.

<sup>2</sup> Schneider, Mary Jane. Introduction to Public Health. Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, 2011.