



November 19, 2024

## Heluna Health Launches Local Public Health Resources Index

LOS ANGELES—Heluna Health’s [Center for Outbreak Preparedness Insights](#) today announced the release of its [Local Public Health Resources Index](#) (LPHRI), a novel tool designed to measure and compare essential public health resources at the local level.

Created with an initial focus on the Western U.S., the LPHRI provides insights into the capacity for local preparedness that is crucial to detecting and responding to health threats.

“Local health departments are on the front lines of public health response, often facing the first impacts of an outbreak or other public health crises,” said [Blayne Cutler, MD, PhD](#), president and CEO of [Heluna Health](#). “Effective response relies on adequate resources, which can vary significantly by county and public health jurisdiction. The LPHRI offers a systematic way to assess these variations and address community needs.”

The LPHRI assesses preparedness in four key domains: public health workforce; clinical lab and pharmacy workforce; public health expenditures; and wastewater surveillance.

### Key Insights From LPHRI Findings

According to the 2024 index, California local health departments had higher per capita public health expenditures on average, with more than 2.5 times the median per capita expenditures of local health departments in Arizona and Utah, and more than 1.5 times the median per capita expenditures of those in Nevada.

[Jo Kay Ghosh, PhD, MPH](#), director of research and evaluation at Heluna Health, and author of the index, said that there is a wide range of per capita expenditures within each state.

“This wide range of data underscores the importance of having local-level figures,” Ghosh said.

Public health workforce per capita staffing levels tended to be higher in jurisdictions with small populations and lower in jurisdictions serving large populations, though the levels varied widely by state and type of staffing. For example, California had the lowest epidemiology staffing levels but the highest nurse staffing levels at the local level.

Adoption of wastewater surveillance technologies — tools that can facilitate early disease detection — was uneven: Although 49% of counties reported no testing in 2023, about 4 in 10 counties conducted wastewater testing an average of 340 days that year.

“The LPHRI allows users to explore specific indicators within these four key domains, from epidemiology staffing levels to adoption rates of wastewater surveillance technologies,” Ghosh said. “By making such data accessible, the index provides public health leaders with comparative insights that can guide planning, resource allocation and emergency preparedness strategies.”

## **A Tool for Data-Driven Decision Making**

Cutler said that the LPHRI enables a new level of understanding around local public health readiness.

“This tool was designed to empower communities by providing a clear picture of their resources relative to neighboring geographies, highlighting potential gaps and areas for collaboration,” she said.

Local planners can use the workforce data, for example, to identify jurisdictions with higher staffing levels that could assist during emergencies. Expenditure data offers another layer of understanding, shedding light on investment trends across various county sizes and populations.

“While the tool does not set standards or make predictions, it provides a meaningful benchmark that local health departments can use to better align resources with community needs,” Cutler said.

## **Methodology and Data Transparency**

Heluna Health’s Center for Outbreak Preparedness Insights developed the LPHRI using data compiled from publicly available sources, with input from technical advisers and insights from scientific literature. The index scores reflect the latest available data and, in some cases, provide historical comparisons. Users can view county-level data on a publicly accessible dashboard, and technical notes are available to explain the methodology and data sources.

## **About Heluna Health’s Center for Outbreak Preparedness Insights**

Heluna Health’s Center for Outbreak Preparedness Insights is committed to advancing community health by enhancing local preparedness and response capabilities. Through research, field insights and tools like the LPHRI, the Center for Outbreak Preparedness Insights supports the work of public health professionals and strengthens communities’ abilities to respond effectively to communicable disease outbreaks.

More information about the LPHRI and the Center for Outbreak Preparedness Insights can be found at [helunahealth.org/copi](https://helunahealth.org/copi).

## **About Heluna Health**

For more than 50 years, Heluna Health has collaborated with community-based organizations, public health agencies, healthcare systems, providers, and policymakers to enhance public health interventions that support equitable access to disease prevention, treatment, care and social resources. Heluna Health is at the forefront of efforts to eliminate health disparities among vulnerable populations, dedicating itself to culturally congruent, community-led interventions aimed at systemic change and improved health outcomes.

###

**Contact:** Sarah Lichtman, Director of Media Strategy | [slichtman@helunahealth.org](mailto:slichtman@helunahealth.org) | 540-834-7954