

Overview: 2022 Fiscal Year Budget for the Department of Public Health

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Gov. Brian Kemp proposed a 2022 budget of \$269.8 million in state general funds for the Department of Public Health (DPH). The agency is also set to receive \$13.7 million from a tobacco industry legal settlement and \$1.4 million from the Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund. In addition to these state funds, the proposed budget includes \$396 million in federal funds. About 57 percent of the agency's total budget comes from the federal government through programs such as Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), the Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Block Grant (TANF).

The information in this overview is derived from GBPI analysis of data from Governor's Office of Planning and Budget. (2021). *The governor's budget report amended fiscal year 2021 and fiscal year 2022*. <https://opb.georgia.gov/document/document/fy-2022-governors-budget-report/download>

By the Numbers

DPH first received funding as a standalone department in FY 2012. Before that, the state's public health spending was part of a division within the Department of Human Resources or the Department of Community Health. DPH leads the state's work in preventing disease, promoting population health and well-being and preparing for emergency response efforts.

The agency funds and provides technical assistance to the 159 county health departments and 18 public health districts. DPH also oversees two attached agencies. The Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission distributes grants to improve quality of life for Georgians with traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries. The Georgia Trauma Care Network Commission distributes money to stabilize and improve the state's trauma care system.

Amended FY 2021 Highlights

The AFY 2021 budget, which started on July 1, 2020 and ends June 30, 2021, proposes a total increase of \$9.2 million in state general funds. Highlights include:

- \$9 million increase to reflect higher revenue collections on fireworks excise taxes and Super Speeder fees that help fund the Georgia Trauma Network Commission
- Utilizing savings from the enhanced Medicaid match during the COVID-19 public health emergency to provide \$289,000 for Grady Regional Coordinating Center's work to coordinate emergency room use and \$379,194 to fund comprehensive health services for infants and children

FY 2022 Budget Highlights

Because agencies were instructed to maintain spending levels from the prior year, state funding for the public health agency did not change significantly. The proposed 2022 budget adds \$946,580 from the prior year, and the key changes include:

- \$506,000 in new funds for Grady Memorial Hospital's effort to coordinate emergency room use in the metro Atlanta area
- \$173,600 in new funds to provide regulation and licensure for body art studios and artists as authorized in the 2019 legislative session
- \$86,000 in new funds for the second year of a three-year pilot to provide PrEP for individuals at risk of contracting HIV

The governor's proposed budget does not contribute much in new state funds for the public health agency as they work to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and other health needs. The proposed budget relies on federal money allocated for the agency to respond to COVID-19, which amounts to about \$1 billion. While this is a significant amount, this funding needs to be spent directly on COVID-19 response and would not address ongoing capacity challenges the agency faces as they also respond to other health priorities (like HIV/AIDs, maternal mortality, chronic disease, the opioid epidemic and others) and provide preventive services not related to COVID-19. The House recognized the need for the state to chip in to address these long-term concerns and not solely rely on one-time federal funds. The House passed their Amended Fiscal Year 2021 budget which included:

- \$18 million in funding to replace and modernize the public health surveillance system, most notably the Georgia Registry of Immunization Transactions and Services (GRITS) which tracks vaccinations

- \$15 million to support the increased use of the AIDS Drug Assistance Program during the COVID-19 pandemic
- \$285,997 for the Department of Public Health to hire a chief medical officer, a deputy commissioner of public health and a chief data officer for the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing public health leadership