

Los Angeles County Health Agency Operational Framework

Draft – September 4, 2015

The mission of the Los Angeles (LA) County Health Agency (“Agency”) is to improve the health and wellness of LA County residents through provision of comprehensive, culturally appropriate services, programs, and policies that promote healthy people living in healthy communities. This will be achieved through the aligned efforts of the Departments of Health Services, Mental Health, and Public Health (“Departments”) and in partnership with our clients and residents, organized labor, academia, faith-based organizations, community providers and agencies, health plans, and other stakeholders.

In pursuing its mission, the Agency will adhere to the following operational framework, abiding by key values of clarity of purpose, transparent decision-making, mutual respect, and open communication.

1. **Agency shall address Board-supported priorities relevant to health and well-being.** The Agency shall work to implement Board-supported strategic priorities related to the health and well-being of LA County residents. The Agency shall guide the strategic, operational and administrative alignment of activities and decisions within and among the three Departments in support of these aims.
2. **Departments shall maintain the full breadth of their mission and scope of activities.** Each Department has a critical mission in supporting the health and well-being of LA County residents; such missions should be maintained and supported in a way that respects each Department as equal partners in achieving the County’s health-related goals. Departments shall continue to establish Department-specific strategic priorities distinct from Agency-level strategic priorities and initiatives and shall lead and participate in a full scope of activities consistent with these priorities. Departments shall continue to enter into external contracts, grant agreements, and operational agreements with health plans, if doing so is not in conflict with Agency priorities or strategies.
3. **Departments shall be supported in fulfilling all legal responsibilities and mandates.** Departments shall be empowered and supported in delivering essential and legally-mandated services and in fulfilling their mandate to administer cross-departmental oversight and auditing processes. The Agency and Departments shall develop protocols to eliminate any conflict of interest that may arise during the course of a Department carrying out its regulatory and auditing responsibilities.
4. **Departments shall maintain independent and direct relationships with the Board of Supervisors.** Each Department should be able to directly and regularly communicate with Board members in private and in public regarding Department-specific issues and concerns related to the Agency.
5. **Department budgets shall remain separate.** The budgets of DHS, DMH, and DPH will remain as separate appropriations within the County and will not be merged within a single Agency budget. Current grant-funded activities will not be redirected. The Agency shall conduct strategic review of Departmental budgets to facilitate appropriate alignment with both Agency and Department-specific Board-supported priorities. Only the Board of Supervisors, and not the Agency Director, has authority to change Department appropriations and expenditures.
6. **Agency shall support Departments in creating effective organizational structures.** The Agency director shall interact with the Department heads with the goal of creating organizational structures that meet the needs of Departmental and Agency mission, vision, and scope of work.
7. **Departments shall maintain spectrum and level of current activities.** Services, budgets, and staffing for Department activities shall not be cut and financing streams shall not be redirected because of a transition to the Agency model. Over time, Department activities, services, and programs may be altered, integrated, and/or realigned between or among the Departments if such moves would demonstrably benefit the populations served by the County and with approval of the Board.

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8. **Agency shall avoid unnecessary bureaucratic processes.** The Agency shall operate in such a way as to ensure strategic alignment of operational and administrative activities within and between Departments in pursuit of Board-supported priorities. Bureaucratic processes that may unnecessarily extend Departmental tasks and operations (e.g., Agency-level signatures required for routine operations such as grant applications, supply chain purchases, and personnel action requests) will not be implemented.
9. **Functions shall shift to being conducted and/or coordinated Agency-wide as a means to enhance integration and/or when doing so is of strategic value to the County.** Agency-wide functions shall be implemented when doing so would produce a clear added value to clients, the Departments, and the County, taking into consideration the operational requirements of achieving specific priorities and administrative inefficiencies and/or redundancies. Successful achievement of Agency priorities may require alignment of core administrative functions (e.g., information technology, service and managed care contracting, purchasing, finance, human resources, etc.); such functions shall be planned, led, and executed to support both Agency and Department priorities.
10. **The Agency shall lead labor-management partnership activities to reduce duplication and enhance the level of County partnership with organized labor.** Department leadership, or specific subject-matter experts, should be active participants in all relevant labor/management meetings and initiatives.
11. **Agency shall utilize a full spectrum of evidence-based services aligned with the health and wellness needs of individuals across the life course.** This shall reflect an appropriate balance of clinical, recovery, and community-based preventive and population health services to optimize health outcomes.
12. **Department's risk management responsibilities shall be maintained separately.** Incidents of potential liability, claims, and lawsuits shall continue to be addressed by the relevant Department. Best practices shall be shared across the Agency and coordinated where appropriate.
13. **Agency shall respect current Department relationships and commitments.** Existing relationships and contracts with external entities shall be respected and maintained. Departments shall continue to maintain and nurture current internal and external partnerships in pursuit of Department-specific and shared Agency goals and efforts.
14. **Departments shall maintain individual mechanisms to engage internal and external stakeholders.** Department-specific mechanisms and forum for engaging County-employed workforce and external stakeholders shall be maintained and supported. The Agency shall establish complementary mechanisms to build transparent and meaningful partnerships with relevant stakeholders.
15. **The roles and responsibilities of Board-appointed Commissions shall remain unchanged.** The creation of the Agency does not alter the roles and responsibilities of existing County Commissions. Each Commission should continue to advise Departments and the Board on issues related to their areas of interest and expertise. Input from Commissions on Agency priorities and activities shall be welcomed.
16. **Agency shall not alter or interfere with the duties and responsibilities of the County Health Officer.** Should a Health Officer Order impact any operations within the Agency, the Agency Director shall assure compliance to protect the health and safety of all residents.
17. **Agency shall support public health emergency response activities and other time-limited, high-priority County preparedness initiatives.** The Agency shall respond to emergencies or crisis-level activities through development and implementation of effective plans, trainings and exercises to assure integrated service delivery and unified communication. Departments shall retain their respective roles, responsibilities, and legal authorities during emergencies.
18. **Agency Director shall administer Department Head performance evaluations.** Department Head performance evaluations shall be drafted by the Agency Director for review and input by the County CEO. The Board of Supervisors shall maintain the ultimate authority over any individual Department Head's final performance evaluation and associated merit pay.