

# Minnesota's Public Health Response Account

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

In 2017, Governor Dayton and the Minnesota Legislature worked together to create a public health response account that strengthens Minnesota's state and local infrastructure against urgent new public health threats. The new law provides \$5 million for the account but limits its uses to major infectious disease outbreaks.

### **Why does the state need a dedicated account for public health response?**

Infectious diseases can strike at any time with little warning, and they require a rapid response by public health officials to save lives. In some cases, those response efforts can pose significant costs for state, local or tribal public health organizations, which don't have extra funding for such outbreaks. The response account helps ensure that public health responders will have access to all resources necessary to move fast and protect public health and well-being.



### **What kind of responses are eligible for funding from this account?**

Minnesota Statutes 2017, section [144.4199](#) specifies that the new account is for immediate public health activities required to protect the health and safety of the public due to pandemic influenza or an outbreak of a communicable or infectious disease. Funds can be used only when the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) determines the event requires an immediate public health response and exceeds currently available resources. MDH must notify relevant federal agencies and certify that the event meets at least one of following criteria:

- Requires evacuation of impacted population, relocation of seriously ill or injured people to temporary care facilities, or the provision of replacement essential community services.
- Poses a probability of a large number of deaths, serious injuries or long-term disabilities in the affected population.
- Involves widespread exposure to an infectious agent that poses a significant risk of substantial future harm to a large number of people in the affected area.
- Poses a significant risk of harm to a large number of people or a high rate of morbidity or mortality in the affected population.

## Who can receive funding from the account?

The statute allows only MDH to make requests and expenditures from the account. As part of an approved plan, MDH may reimburse other state agencies, community health boards (including local and tribal governments), health care organizations and health care providers involved in a response.

## What is the process for receiving funding from the account?

MDH must notify legislative leaders, the Governor and Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) of the need to access the account. MMB then files a request to the Legislative Advisory Commission. This commission, made up of certain legislative leaders, can meet at any time to review requests related to the Public Health Response Account. Upon review of each request, the commission may request further information prior to authorizing expenditures.



*Photo: a measles patient (used with permission)*

## What activities can be funded by this account?

Authorized spending can include staffing, information technology, supplies, equipment and services to protect people; training for and coordination with local public health and health care providers; communication with and outreach to affected groups; laboratory testing; purchases of vaccines; antibiotics and other medications; and medical resources related to the public health response. MDH cannot use funds to hire permanent, full-time staff.

## What requests have been made to date?

In July 2017, MDH notified key legislators of a \$613,583 request to the Legislative Advisory Commission for fiscal year 2018 funding from the new account. The funding would be used to support responses to outbreaks of measles, syphilis and multi-drug resistant tuberculosis. MDH received approval in mid-July 2017 to use the public health response account for these outbreaks.

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