Background

Clark County Public Health (CCPH) ensures government accountability and compliance with RCW 42.56 - Public Records Act (PRA) by effectively responding to requests for records.

Separate from PRA requests, CCPH also processes requests for public health data analysis, from residents searching for copies of their own property records, for releases of medical records, and for birth and death certificates.

Common Request Types

• Property-related (Septic, Drinking Water, etc.)

• Outbreak Investigations

• Food Safety & Inspections

With services from disease prevention to emergency response to groundwater protection, CCPH receives a variety of requests. The most common type of request involves property records, such as on-site septic systems.

Metrics

Since November 2017, CCPH has been entering its time and tracking all PRA requests in GovQA in compliance with county and state requirements. Over the past three months, CCPH staff has spent approximately 120 hours to process 68 requests for public records. This is equivalent to one staff member working on PRA activities full time for one week every month. While the time ranged from 5 minutes to 1,110 minutes, the average amount of time to process each of these requests was 90 minutes.

Public Health PRA Spotlight: Outbreak Investigations

In a typical outbreak investigation, a response team includes a team leader, epidemiologist, environmental health specialist, public health nurse, public information officer, and public health emergency staff (if needed). Records include medical records, emails, investigation forms and reports, media, and communications.

Outbreak characteristics:
• *High risk for litigation*
• *Some HIPAA-protected records*
• *Larger number of staff involved*
• *Higher volume of requests during times of peak public/media interest*

Records management practices, such as taxonomy and electronic data management procedures, mitigate much of the risk and assist with meeting PRA timelines.

Tools & Collaboration

CCPH uses tools and seeks collaboration opportunities, like the following, in order to improve accessibility and efficiency.

• Participate in the countywide PRA meetings to network with other Clark County departments and learn about emerging issues.

• Regular communication with Records Management and IT to find ways to organize records and data for easier retrieval.

• Continue our efforts to digitize paper records and to develop procedures to manage electronic records.

• Coordinate an internal workgroup - Records Management Network - as a way to increase staff knowledge and capacity across the department.

• Inform requestors of self-service options, such as RME and Clark County GIS.