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Local Health Departments

June 10, 2014



A collaborative study including Dr. Gulzar Shah, associate dean of research, at the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health examines local health departments and their resiliency to the 2008 recession. The 2008 recession had a significant impact on local health departments (LHDs), with more than half of such agencies experiencing job losses and program cuts. The purpose of the study was to identify potential modifiable factors that can protect LHDs from job losses and budget cuts during future economic crises.

This retrospective cohort study used data from 2005 and 2010 surveys of LHDs. The outcome of interest was financial resiliency for maintaining budgets during the recession and was based on the ratio of observed to predicted expenditures (O/E) per capita for 2010. Logistic regression was used to model the resiliency of the LHD with independent variables grouped around domains of organization, revenues, and services, with stratification by size of the LHD jurisdiction. Data were analyzed in 2013. The researchers concluded that funding streams and service mix may be modifiable characteristics, suggesting possible means for LHDs to weather future economic stress; however, these characteristics may be unique to the size of the population served.

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