

The PEOPLE, PROCESSES, & PROGRESS OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Public health. It's a term we hear a lot, but especially now, as a new administration has taken office in 2025 and begins to reshape national priorities. Having worked as a Public Health Emergency Planner and Coordinator at both the state and local levels, I've seen firsthand how these transitions can impact on-the-ground efforts. Often, these changes bring shifts in funding, adjustments to established protocols, and sometimes, even a complete re-evaluation of public health strategies. Today, I want to talk about what public health is, why it matters, and why it's crucial to protect it from political whiplash, ensuring that the critical work of keeping communities healthy continues regardless of who's in office. *Before we start the briefing, let's set the ground rules...*

Play PPP Intro

Defining Public Health

Let's start with a simple definition: Public health is the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life, and promoting health through organized community efforts. Think about it: clean water, safe food, vaccinations – these are all hallmarks of effective public health systems. It's about protecting entire populations, not just individuals.

The Impact of Public Health

Public health's impact is often invisible, *precisely* because it's so effective. We don't often think about the thousands of lives saved by vaccines, or the countless illnesses prevented by restaurant inspections. But these interventions have a profound effect on our quality of life. Let's look at a few examples:

- **Handwashing:** Seems simple, right? But handwashing has dramatically reduced the spread of infectious diseases throughout history. From Florence Nightingale's work with clean linens to modern hygiene campaigns, this basic practice has saved countless lives.
- **Vaccines:** Vaccines are a cornerstone of public health. They've eradicated diseases like smallpox and polio, and they continue to protect us from other serious illnesses. While there's been controversy around vaccines, the science is clear: they are safe and effective.
- **Food Safety:** We take it for granted that the food we buy in stores and restaurants is generally safe. But this is thanks to rigorous food safety regulations and inspections, another vital component of public health.

The Human Element

Behind these systems are *dedicated* public health professionals. They're the epidemiologists tracking disease outbreaks, the health inspectors ensuring our food is safe, the community health workers providing vital services to vulnerable populations. These are often unsung heroes, working tirelessly to protect our health. I've seen firsthand the dedication and expertise of these individuals, and their work is essential.

The Danger of Politicization

Unfortunately, public *health* has become increasingly politicized in recent years. This undermines trust in public health institutions and makes it harder to implement effective solutions. When political agendas interfere with scientific evidence, everyone suffers. We need to protect public health from political interference and ensure that decisions are based on science and the best interests of the community.

Conclusion

Public health is a vital public good. *It's* not a partisan issue. It's about protecting the health and well-being of all of us. We need to support our public health systems, trust the expertise of public health professionals, and resist the urge to politicize something as fundamental as our health. By working together, we can build healthier and more resilient communities for everyone.

For more on public health check out the backlog of People, Process, Progress podcasts, and episodes from the KEV Talks, and Between the Slides series of episodes here on the same stream. Follow me on IG and X @pannell5fit. Visit the Pannell Five Fitness Club YouTube channel to get fitness ideas 15s at a time, hear my BJJ after action reviews, and join in the fun of my real, and your virtual cold plunges.

Until next time, take care of your people and support your teams in a share process so you can all make progress together.

Godspeed y'all,

Kevin