



Reframing Government's Role in Health

Key Takeaways

Two Big Questions and Tensions Inform How the Public Thinks About Government and Health

- 1 Can government be trusted?**
People want government to help them.... but worry that government can't be trusted.
- 2 What is government's role in creating health?**
People want government to protect them...but worry that government will try to control them.

Three Reframing Strategies to Advance Governmental Public Health

- 1 Position government as an institution that can help rebalance systems when it is accountable to the public it serves.**
Why: Anti-corporate skepticism creates a pathway into support for government action.
- 2 Acknowledge past harms.**
Why: Trust is shaped by history and how we show up in relationship now.
- 3 Talk about government as a local creator of the conditions that keep communities healthy.**
Why: People are more comfortable with government when they experience it as a local protector than as a distant controller.

Quick Tips to Activate Public Thinking That Advances Governmental Public Health

FOCUS ON...

- Leading with shared values and community well-being
- Depicting public health as practical, local, and ongoing
- Concrete examples of government creating, protecting, or restoring fair, healthy conditions
- Systems, conditions, and everyday experiences

STEER CLEAR OF...

- **Leading with the program, agency, or initiative**
“Our department’s drinking water program...”
- **Exclusively telling stories of government public health in moments of crisis**
“Public health shows up when something goes wrong...”
- **Lead with government authority, mandates, or enforcement**
“New regulations require...”
- **Technical language, excessive data, long lists, or institutional processes**
“Phase II of our strategic plan includes...”