2020 Transition Report Ministry of Health

Executive Summary

Ministry of Health

The Ministry is one of the major departments of the Palau National Government created by Constitution and established by law. It is headed by a minister who is appointed by the President with advise and consent of the Senate of the OEK.

The Ministry of Health is one of the biggest ministry of the National Government. It is the principal advisory, regulatory and health service provider for the people of Palau. The Ministry employs over 400 staff and is made up of four bureaus; Bureau of Hospital and Clinical Services, Bureau of Nursing, Bureau of Health Administration and Support Services and the Bureau of Public Health, each performing various duties and responsibilities which are coordinated to providing health care services.

Authority

Two parts of the Constitution of the Republic of Palau address the government's responsibility for health care services. The 23rd Amendment to Article VI requires positive government action to promote "health and social welfare of the citizens through the provision of free or subsidized health care" and the 24th Amendment requires provisions of "free preventive health care for every citizen as prescribed by law."

The Ministry of Health is responsible for implementing action to meet these governmental mandates. According to PNC Title 2, Section 107, "The Ministry of Health shall be responsible for promoting and protecting the public health, providing clinical medical services to the public, operating and managing public medical facilities, and related matters." PNC Title 34 further states that " The Director of the Bureau of Public Health shall, either personally or by his duly authorized representatives, maintain and improve health and sanitary conditions, minimize and control communicable disease, establish standards of medical and dental care and practice, encourage scientific investigation in the field of health, supervise and administer all sanitariums, clinics, dispensaries and such other medical and dental facilities as are or may be established throughout the Republic".

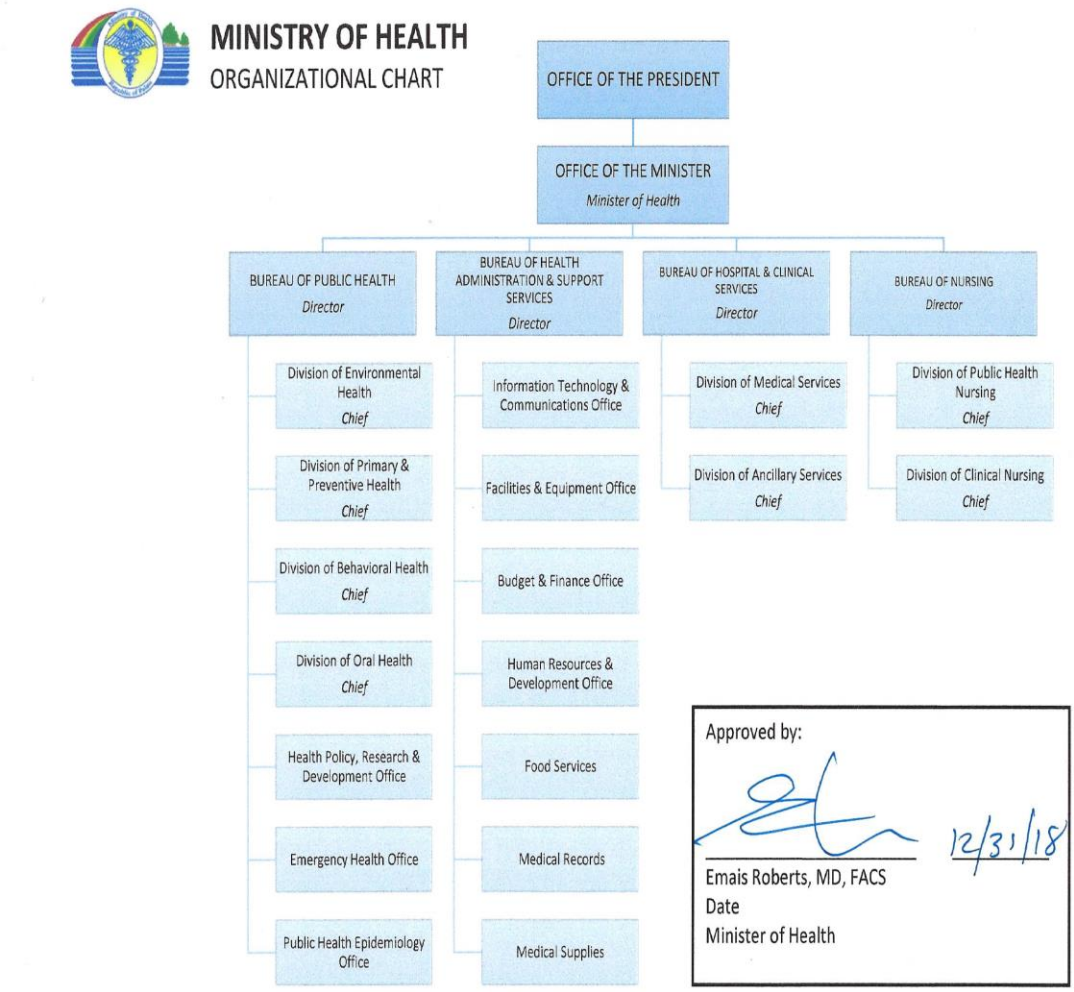
Vision: Healthy People in a Healthful Environment

Mission: "To provide comprehensive, accessible healthcare and preventive services for our patients and community."

This Ministry has a vision of healthy communities with access to comprehensive health care services. We must commit to change, to a greater focus on holistic care, to a strengthening of our systems, and to better integration of services, as well as continue developing respectful and effective partnerships with our staff, patients, community, and other partners so that all of us have the support and care we need for a healthy life.

The transition report provides an overview of the Ministry's priority areas and challenges with recommendations on moving the needle forward.

Organizational Chart



Bureau of Hospital and Clinical Services

The Bureau of Hospital and Clinical Services is responsible for the management and administration of the hospital and the provision of clinical services including all diagnostic and patient treatment services. Its mission is to provide quality healthcare through a strengthened hospital system with evidenced based, flexible and relevant services enhanced by effective partnership and resources. The Bureau is organized into two main divisions, the Division of Medical Services and the Division of Ancillary Services.

1. Division of Medical Services

The Division of Medical Services is responsible for services provided by physicians. These services encompass primary, secondary, and some tertiary care within the area of Internal Medicine, Surgery, Pediatrics, Orthopedics, and tertiary Behavior Health Services. Medical services at the Belau National Hospital also provide emergency care services on a twenty-four-hour basis. All doctors have some responsibilities for using resources; also, lead teams are involved in supervising students, assisting visiting specialists, outreach clinics, and the teaching of visiting interns as well as resident from various medical universities

Inpatient Care

The Division of Medical Services provides appropriate inpatient and outpatient services including examination of patients, diagnosis, surgical, medical, pediatric, obstetrical, gynecological, hemodialysis, hyperbaric chamber, and emergency treatment. The Belau National Hospital (BNH) is organized into four wards; Obstetrics, Surgical, Medical, and Pediatric. The Behavioral Health Ward also offers inpatient treatment, but is managed separately, in coordination with the Behavioral Health outpatient services.

2. Division of Ancillary Services

The Division of Ancillary Services includes the Medical Laboratory, Radiology, Pharmacy, and Rehabilitation Services. These services support the doctors and nursing team by providing essential diagnostic & treatment services to patients at the Belau National Hospital.

Laboratory Department

Laboratory Department is a 24/7 operation and remains open day, night, weekends, and holidays. It provides a wide range of medical testing, the most common being chemistry analysis.

Radiology Department

The Radiology Department operates 24-Hours a Day, seven days per week providing quality imaging services from X-Ray & Computerized tomography (CT) Scanning to Ultrasound & Mammograms. Radiology provides Inpatient and Outpatient Care at the Belau National Hospital as well as services for private clinics throughout the Palau.

The Rehabilitation & Physical Therapy Department

The Physical Therapy department performs physical medicine and rehabilitation that include various treatments to help a person restore function after illness or injury. These therapies include physical therapy, occupational therapy, and homebound patient care

Priorities

To improve delivery of health care to patients requires improving accessibility to a wider range of specialized services on island. This necessitates the hiring of specialized medical providers who can perform a variety of specialized care. The Bureau continues to work with internal and external partners to develop a pipeline of trained medical providers from doctors, radiologist, lab technicians, physical therapist and more to improve the hospital's capacity and capability to provide quality care. The quality of health care delivery will continue to improve with the reliance on best practices and standards that are evidence based and with ongoing monitoring

of service delivery through quality improvement processes. A key challenge now is to ensure funding is available for increasing local capacity for delivering quality medical care in all critical areas.

Bureau/Program Priorities:

1. Develop a wider range of specialist including:
    a. Orthopedic (1),
    b. Pediatrician (1),
    c. Medical Internist (1),
    d. replacement of doctors retiring next year (5 to 7),
    e. Lab Technician (3);
    f. Pharmacist (1) and
    g. Hyperbaric chamber staff (1)
2. Ensure best practices that are evidenced based
3. Improve accessibility of specialized services
4. Improve quality assurance and quality improvements in clinical services
5. Develop a pipeline of local medical providers
6. Ensure availability of medical drugs, supplies, equipment
7. Improve hospital infrastructure
8. Identify new funding to enhance the delivery of hospital and clinical services.

Project List with Critical Dates if any:

1. Tele radiology by 2021
2. Lab accreditation program in 2 years
3. Expand current Medical Internship Program to include additional trainings/initiatives for other medical providers in 2 years.

Immediate, medium, long term challenges:

1. Immediate challenge: Human resource- over reliance on expatriate providers, aging local medical providers, lack of specialized providers.
2. Medium challenge: Aging hospital infrastructure and lack of space to expand critical areas within current hospital facility (i.e., lab, radiology, pharmacy, ER, wards). BNH was built in 1992 as 80-bed hospital.
3. Long term challenge: Relocation of new hospital

Solutions and Recommendations:

1. Immediate recruitment of vacant position. Look for ways to bring in the essential healthcare workers. Develop recruitment and retention plan. Strengthen support for

professional recruitment, training and compensation package in order to maintain the essential pool of qualified health care workers including doctors.

2. Identify funds to build housing for expatriate providers. Improve hospital infrastructure to allow for additional space to improve and expand critical points of care in the hospital facility.
3. Leadership to prioritize relocation of new hospital as high priority.

Bureau of Nursing

Bureau of Nursing (BON) strives to achieve its mission "to serve with diligence and compassion to deliver high quality care and services based on standards of practice that are acceptable to the people of Palau." The Bureau of Nursing is one of two newly-created bureaus under the Ministry of Health that officially split from the Bureau of Hospital and Clinical Services by Executive Order in 2012. Since then, the bureau continued to reorganize its structures and functions to accommodate new changes for improvements. The BON consists of the Division of Public Health Nursing and the Division of Clinical Nursing. Whether the duties are caring for newborn babies in the Obstetric Ward, holding the hand of an ill patient whose family is too far away, or escorting a patient via airplane to and from health centers located on the upper & lower islands of Palau, Taiwan or the Philippines, the nurses at the Ministry of Health (MOH) adopt and carry out their mission which is reflected in their dedication and commitment to safeguarding the health of patients.

1. Division of Public Health Nursing

The Division of Public Health Nursing is comprised of nurses whose work focuses on the prevention of illness, injury, and disability as well as the promotion & maintenance of the health of the population. In order to identify problems that threaten public health and develop effective interventions, nurses also contribute to systems that monitor health status indicators such as environmentally caused illnesses, immunization levels, maternal & infant mortality rates, and communicable disease occurrence. The division is led by a chief who is responsible for overseeing staff performance, duties, and functions of the following public health nursing units: Behavioral Health Unit, Communicable Disease Unit, Community Health Unit ─ Home Health and Geriatric, Family Health Unit, NCD, Cancer, Outpatient Department, and Community Health Centers (CHCs). In addition to patient care, public health nurses provide the following services:

1. Evaluate health trends & risk factors of population groups and help to determine priorities for targeted interventions.

2. Work with communities or specific population groups within the community to develop public policy and targeted health promotion & disease prevention activities.

3. Participate in assessment & evaluation of health care services to ensure that the people are informed of available programs & services and assisted in the utilization of those services.

4. Provide essential input to interdisciplinary programs that monitor, anticipate, and respond to public health problems in population groups.

5. Provide health education, care management, and primary care to individuals & families who are members of vulnerable population and high-risk groups

2. Division of Clinical Nursing

The Division of Clinical Nursing includes all nurses who give care at the Belau National Hospital. The Chief of the division assists with the day-to-day operations, staff performance, duties and functions of all hospital and clinical nursing unit in Medical Ward/Pediatric Ward, Surgical Ward, Obstetric Ward, Operating Room, Behavioral Health, Emergency Room, and the Hemodialysis Unit. Clinical nurses also perform the following task:

1. Assuring quality of care by adhering to therapeutic standards, measuring health outcomes against patient care goals & standards, and making or recommending necessary adjustments.

2. Following the hospital and nursing division's philosophies as well as standards of care, as well as the Nurse Practice Act and the Ministry of Health governing regulations

3. Protecting patients and staff by adhering to infection control policies & protocols, medication administration & storage procedures, and controlled substance regulations.

4. Promoting patient independence by establishing patient care goals, educating patients & family members about patient condition & medication, and self-care skills

5. Maintaining a safe and clean working environment by complying with procedures, rules & regulations

6. Resolving patient problems and needs by utilizing multi-disciplinary team strategies

7. Documenting patient care services by charting in Patient & Medical Records Department following nursing policy and procedures for documentation.

Priorities

In their dedication and commitment to safeguard the health of patients, the Bureau of Nursing is focusing on improvements on four priority areas:

1. Recruitment, Hiring, and Retention- Strengthen support for professional recruitment, retention and compensation package in order to maintain the essential pool of qualified nurses.
2. Building staff capacity- build internal capacity of existing nurses through continuous trainings and education
3. Quality Care System- improve patient outcome by creating a culture of quality improvement in nursing.
4. Reinforcement of evidence base and best practice in nursing- improve clinical guidelines and implement processes to improve patient outcome.
5. Secure funding to support delivery of quality nursing care.

Immediate, medium, long-term challenges

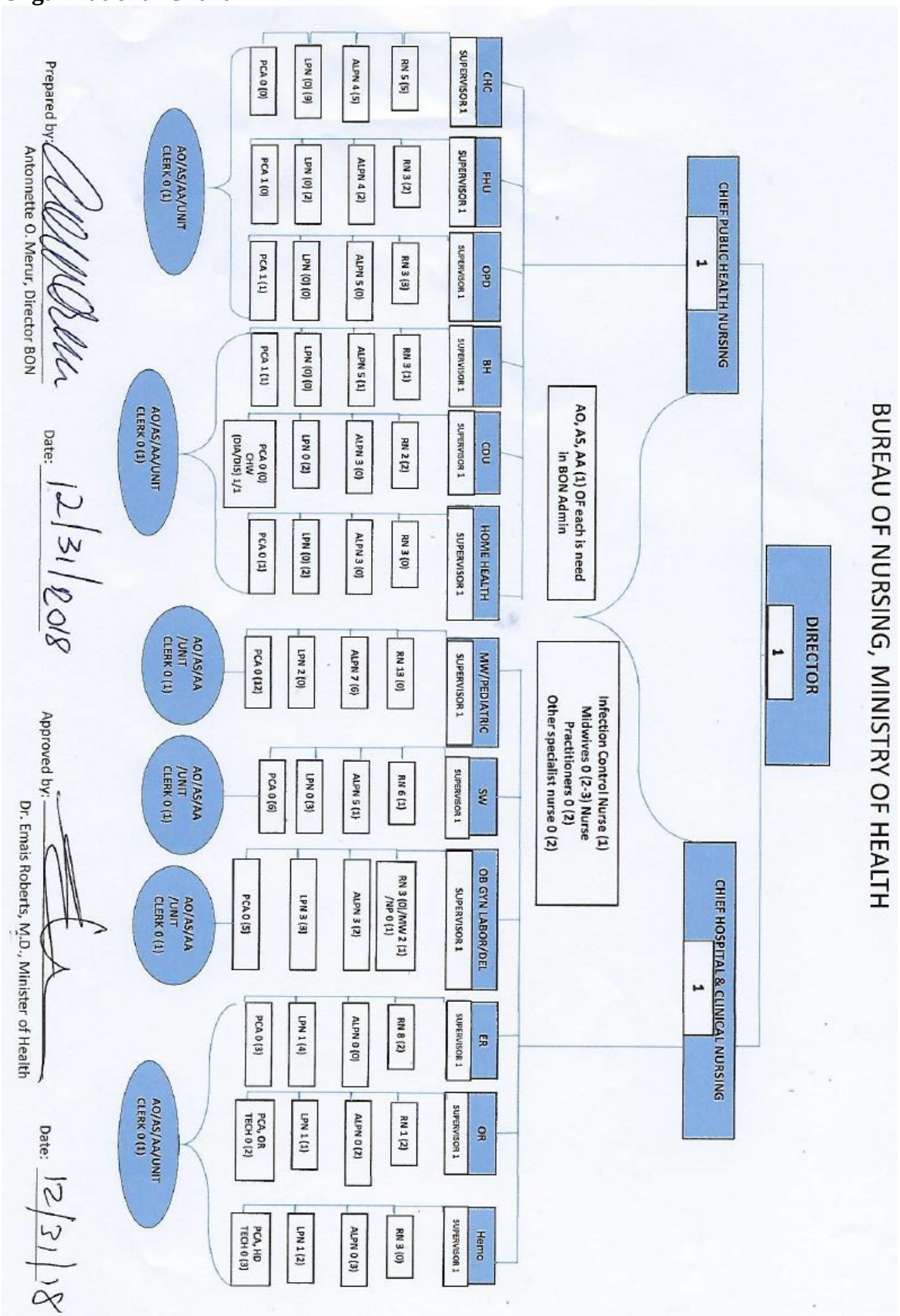
One of the main challenges to the Bureau of Nursing is the recruitment and retention of skilled nurses to achieve the optimal number of skilled nurses for all services provided. Current nursing workforce consist of 105 nurses (inclusive of the director, two chief nurses, trainers, infection control, RNs LPNs), 8 patient care assistants, one operating room technician, and one administrative assistant.

Solutions and recommendations

Work with Human Resource Department at MOH to develop strategies to appeal to skilled nursing workers and address barriers to hiring to improve recruitment and retention rates.

- Provide affordable housing options for nursing staff who need it.
- Work with public health programs to cost-share salary of nurses who provide services at public health clinics.
- Create attractive compensation package to retain and recruit nurses.
- Develop a quality assurance and improvement plan for effective monitoring and improvement of services being provided.
- Secure funds to support cohort of Health Assistant Training for nurses. This is an important pipeline for the nursing workforce.
- Increase number of nurses in both clinical and public health nursing.

Organizational Chart



Bureau of Health and Administration Support Services

The mission of the Bureau of Health and Administration Support Services is to coordinate and ensure provision and management of general administrative services in an efficient, effective and fiscally to support day to day operations of the Ministry of Health.

The Bureau of Health Administration & Support Services (BHASS) was endorsed by the President of the Republic of Palau on September 21, 2015 pursuant to the Executive Order No. 381. Shortly after, the bureau was officially established. The units within this area provide a variety of support & administrative services for all programs of the Ministry of Health.

The bureau oversees the Human Resource Department, Information and Communication Technology Center, Facilities, Transportation and Equipment Department, Budget and Finance, Security Department, Supply Department, Food Service Department, Medical Records Department, International Health Unit, Medical Referral Program Unit, Bio-med Unit, and Administration Office. BHASS is supported by the Administration Office staff members who maintain daily operations. The Administration Office facilitates communication, disseminates information, supports the work of colleagues, and assures that patients & families are directed to the services needed.

Facilities Maintenance & Equipment Department

The Facilities Maintenance & Equipment Department serves to maintain and improve the Ministry of Health Facilities to meet all building codes and security & safety of users. It is responsible for the development of operational and long-range planning for the overall infrastructure of the Belau National Hospital. The department includes the Laundry Unit, Housekeeping Unit, Equipment Unit, Plumbing Unit, Landscaping Unit, and Carpentry Unit. Facilities Maintenance & Equipment Department is composed of hardworking individuals who perform an array of duties.

Revenue & Collections Department

The Revenue & Collections Department is responsible for all the billing & collections for medical services. Currently there are seven (7) employees providing twenty-four-hour service, seven days a week

Medical Records Department

The Medical Records Department is responsible for handling the security and maintenance of all electronic & paper-based medical records of each patient. It maintains and preserves patient medical records in order to ensure that the patient's right to privacy & confidentiality of information is fulfilled. The major functions of the Medical Records Department include admission & discharge procedures, completion of monthly & annual statistics, coding diseases of patients, filing medical records, maintenance of death & birth registries, and keeping track of communicable diseases according to government regulations

Food Service Department

The Food Service Department is responsible for providing nutritious & tasty meals that fall within specified dietary guidelines for patients & clients. The department also oversees the

daily operations of the Cafeteria which serves meals to employees & visitors of the Belau National Hospital. The Cafeteria operates every day from 5:00AM to 8:00PM, serving three (3) meals a day for patients under observation.

Security Unit
The Security Unit is responsible for protecting people, property, information, and reputation. The goal of the unit is to ensure the safety of workers, patients, and users of the hospital facilities. It also serves for main order, assists in emergency situations, and provide a threat-free environment

Finance & Budget Department
The Finance & Budget Department is responsible for maintaining the general budget for the Ministry of Health. This includes processing all purchase orders & payments, facilitating the day-to-day management of funds, and overseeing the payroll unit. The Finance & Budget Staff Members also provide technical support for federally funded grants. The department also works closely with individual units, division, and bureaus to support budget management.

Information, Communication & Technology Unit
The Information, Communication & Technology Unit (ICT Unit) supports the work of all the bureaus and offices of the Ministry of Health (MOH) by providing technical & communication support as well as expertise. The key role of the ICT Unit is to manage and maintain the ministry's Integrated Information System which securely captures, stores, and transmits information & data related to patients. In addition, the ICT Unit is also responsible for maintaining all computing & electronic transmission hardware and all software. This includes servers, individual workstations, telephones, printers, security cameras, internet systems, and more.

Medical Referral Program
MRP manages the process for referring patients who require medical treatment off-island. Its staff assists with patient medical coordination with the following four (4) sites: Taipei, Republic of China─Taiwan; Manila, Philippines; Honolulu, Hawaii

HUMAN RESOURCES
The purpose of the Human Resources & Development is to assist the Ministry to attract, recruit, develop, and retain a qualified and motivated work force in order to provide effective health care services for the people in Palau

Biomed Unit
Biomedical Services is responsible for maintaining all medical equipment within the Ministry. Its primary role is to provide preventive maintenance and address equipment issues in the hospital.

Supply Department
The Supply Department is responsible for procurement and purchasing of all medical supplies, drugs, equipment other non-medical essentials.

International Health Unit
Oversees and coordinate all international and bilateral projects through the Ministry. Its main role is to facilitate and coordinate communication between the Ministry and outside partners.

Administrative Office
Provides administrative support to the hospital administration.

Priorities

The Bureau of Health Administration and Support Services provides support to all the bureaus at the Ministry of Health. In fulfilling its mission, the Bureau focuses on improvement in areas of staff capacity, infrastructure improvements, equipment capacity, data and reporting, referral, finance, billing and collection.

1. Adequate and trained personnel
2. Hospital facility improvements
3. Hospital Major Medical Equipment
4. Hospital Expansion or Relocation
5. Electronic Medical Record & Electronic Inventory system
6. CCTV System expansion
7. Medical Referral Housing for Taiwan and Honolulu

Project List with Critical Dates/budget

1. UNOPS project to improve 3 CHC sites (NCHC, WCHC, SCHC) – May 13, 2021 ($1.5mil)
2. Hazardous waste Management Unit Facility (DOI funds - $7,000)
3. Improvements to Laundry Unit (DOI funds)
4. Relocation and transition of the Mortuary (December 2020)
5. Micro-biology Laboratory (ASAP – ADB Funds)
6. Taiwan Grant mobile facilities specific for Covid (Taiwan Grant – December)
7. ACS roofing (Kalau Gym) – Taiwan Funds - $75,000
8. Medical Air installation to all the wards (no funds, limited supplies)
9. Main Chiller – (no funds, no expert, need assessment – but very critical to hospital)

Existing major agreement and ongoing or outstanding major negotiations with foreign government, or other internal or external, nonprofit org. (note: identify partners with agreement)

1. UNOPS – India – CHC improvements
2. Australia – Data wear-house and Inventory System
3. US – DOI – Funds to support minor facility improvements
4. Taiwan Hospital – Shing Kong representative working with MOH provide admin support for medical specialists

Immediate, medium, long term challenges:

1. Lack of adequate and minimum personnel needed in Biomed, Electrician, Maintenance- As the hospital ages, as technology advances, and culture changes, there is a critical need for employees with skills ranging from roof/wall repair,

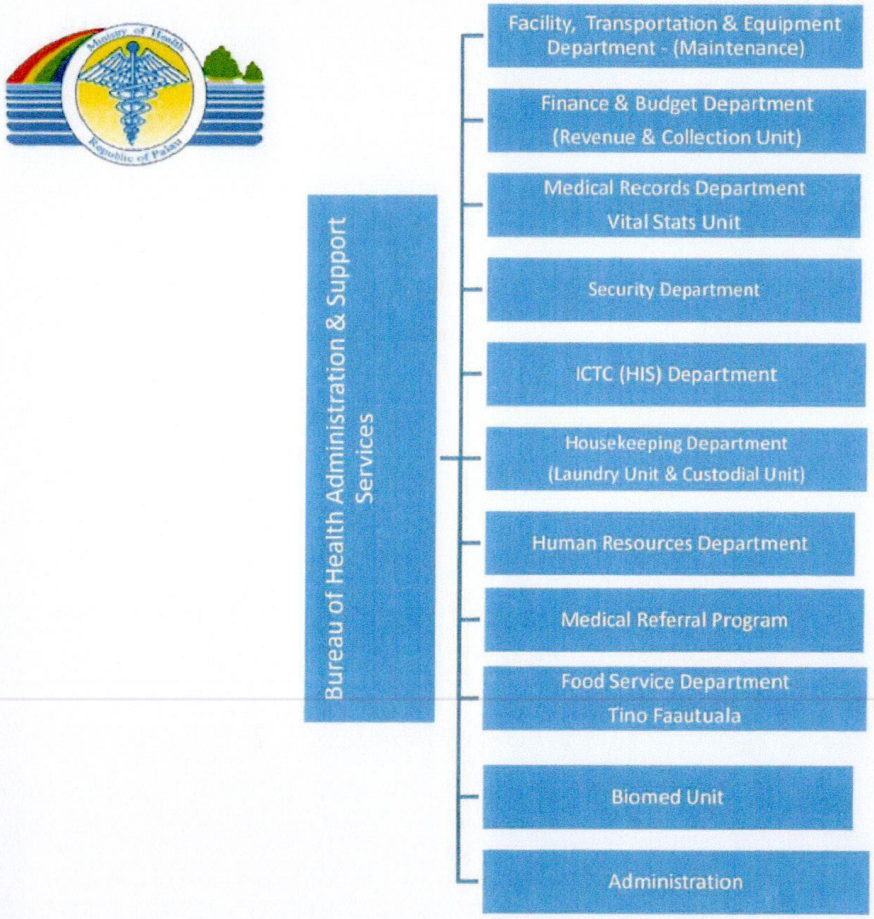
plumbing & equipment engineering to employees who have the technological skills for medical billings and maintenance of cyber security of patients' records.

2. Lack of adequate tools and supplies in departments- Lack of proper tools, gear, and supplies have caused limitations in the ability for the Bureau of Health Administration & Support Services (BHASS) to provide the level of service that is expected by patients & employees. The list of needs includes supplies for some departments in order to continue day-to-day operations, the need for small & large tools for efficiency when repairing ministry equipment, and the need for appropriate gear & uniforms
3. A Need to Recruit & Retrain Staff Members BHASS has been hindered in the last year by employee turnover as well as a general lack of staffing to support needed capacity. Some employees work additional shifts in order to accommodate needs.
4. Space & Facility Needs**.** The Medical Records Department has outgrown the space for its archived records. There are additional needs for storage as well as personnel space. A number of repairs and renovations will also benefit the Ministry of Health.

Proposed Solutions

1. Provide Professional Development, Training & Skill-Building. Technology continues to advance and patient & family expectations continue to change. Whether it's Food Services, the Equipment Unit, or the ICT Unit, BHASS Staff Members need ongoing, relevant professional development in order to adapt to these changes and remain relevant.
2. Secure funds to support the bureau in building capacity and improving access to care.
3. Belau National Hospital Space in Need of Repair. While a new hospital may not be plausible at present time, action must be taken in order to renovate as well as make the necessary repairs to improve the Belau National Hospital Facilities. Spaces must be re-imagined in order to fulfill capacity accessibility, and functionality needs.

Bureau of Health Administration & Support Services (BHA&SS)
OPERATIONAL CHART



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Bureau of Public Health

The mission of the Bureau of Public Health is "to ensure that all members of the community have access to resources, education, knowledge and services necessary to enable them to build skills and opportunities to reach the highest possible level of health". The Bureau of Public Health is charged with the authority to enforce laws that protect the public's health and is accountable to the community for providing primary, preventive & promotive services. It operates various health clinics including the Community Health Centers (CHCs) located in the outlying states of Palau and the Outpatient Department (OPD) Clinic at the Belau National Hospital.
The bureau is organized into divisions, sections, programs, and offices. The bureau's four (4) divisions address environmental, preventive, behavioral, and oral health. Additionally, several cross-cutting programs support the Bureau of Public Health including the Public Health Data & Medical Information Unit, the Epidemiology Unit, the Hospital & Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response, and the Health Planning, Research and Development.

The Bureau of Public Health includes four major divisions, which provide services across multiple areas of health. There are also four cross-cutting programs that provide support to the divisions and Bureau overall.

1. Division of Behavioral Health

The mission of the Division of Behavioral Health (DBH) is to provide culturally appropriate mental health care, addiction treatment and rehabilitation services, promote good mental health, and prevent substance use and abuse in Palau so that individuals may participate fully in their communities. The vision of the DBH is "helping people to help themselves".

Behavioral Health Promotion Unit

Provision of health promotion strategies aimed at promoting protective factors that enable individual family and community mental wellbeing and resiliency. Additionally, Unit aims to scale up the number of certified/licensed addiction and mental health service providers in the community to enable SBIRT (Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment).

The Prevention Unit

Provision of prevention program enables key evidenced based strategies and activities that impact the onset of Alcohol, Tobacco, and other Drug use/misuse; reduce access to tobacco & alcohol and change social norms, preventing addictive disorders, violence & injuries prevention, as well as promote overall health and wellness in the community.

Social Health Unit

Social Health Unit provides overall social services to the clients of the Ministry of Health ranging from inpatient wards clientele to outpatient community based and home bound elderly clients. The Unit is supported and great part by sister programs for human resources. Furthermore, the Unit collaborates with numerous FBO's and NGO's to leverage essential resources to meet the needs of vulnerable populations.

Spiritual Health Unit

Spiritual Health Unit collaborate, cooperate and coordinate with all faith based organizations to supplement the current medical and health services in MOH to enable holistic healing for all people of Palau.

Mental Health Unit
Provision of psychiatric services including psychiatric nurse, psychotherapy, psychotropic medications, individual family and marriage therapies, early psychosis assessment and coordinated specialty care, court order evaluations, addiction psychiatry, opioid use disorder management, and related mental service needs.

Community Guidance Center
Provision of outpatient addiction and drug treatment services including; individual and group therapy, matrix program, motivational interviewing, psychiatric addiction, and support groups.

Recovery Unit
The purpose of the program is to offer clients skill-building opportunities that are rehabilitative in nature. Through work-ordered structured day, clients participate in activities promoting greater independence and increasing feeling of self-worth, such as psychosocial education, vocational training and skill building in employment settings. Principles of the Program through evidence-based program strategy: All people have potential that can be developed; People have a right to self-determination; Each person's needs are different.

Priorities
- Rights based approach priority to provision of behavioral health services
- Access to effective and evidenced based treatment, programs, and services
- Reduce risk factors contributing to mental and physical health such as substance abuse and suicide
- Increase protective factors to promote mentally resilient individuals, loving and caring families, and enabling supportive communities
- Public Health risk management of disasters through provision of psychosocial supports

Immediate, medium and long-term challenges
- Rolling federal funds pose a threat to sustain programs
- Real-estate rentals ever increasing
- Limited Local Funds

Solutions and recommendations
- Dedicated local funding to support all services
- Centralized space or building for all services

2. Division of Environmental Health

Environmental Health Administration Program – Function is to navigate the Division in achieving its mission "to help protect the health of residents of Palau through providing

Leadership in empowering communities to create, build and maintain settings that are health promoting."

Community Health Program – Function is to ensure improvement of and overall health and safety of residents in the Republic by addressing household and community-level environmental health issues, identifying and controlling pollution and hazards, increasing health education and promotion activities and facilitating community-based projects for health promoting environments.

Consumer Safety Program – Function is to assist consumers in protecting their health and safety by reducing risks and hazards in consumer products/service establishments and to reduce incidence and prevalence of food-borne diseases and outbreaks in Palau.

Vector Control and Health Quarantine Program – Function is to reduce incidence and prevalence of vector-borne diseases in Palau and to ensure the international health regulations are enforced at all borders to reduce introduction of emerging and re-emerging diseases into Palau.

Emerging Issues – Function is to adequately respond to new and re-emerging environmental health issues, disease outbreaks, as well as special case investigations, including emergencies & disasters in coordination with the Bureau of Public Health's programs and other relevant agencies.

Environmental Health Information System – Function is to manage environmental health data in relation to the overall Health Information System in order to improve data-driven decision making that will prioritize services and develop evidence-based programs.

Priorities

- Structure: DEH building is aging and deteriorating. Immediate renovation is needed to ensure safe working environment for staff as well as the security of equipment. As such, replacing leak roof, interior & exterior walling is a priority at this time for the above purpose.
- DEH Food Lab needs immediate renovation and repair and to get it back to operation.
- Equipment (vehicle): Need 1 more vehicle (preference – Pick-up & 4-wheel drive)
- Hiring 4 new staff in 2021: DEH is currently have 12 staff, 3 of whom are nearing retirement
- Enhancing staff professional growth through relevant training opportunities
- Work on DEH Regulation - 3rd Edition
- Budget increase for promotion, staff hiring, overtime & differential

Immediate, medium and long-term challenges

- DEH building renovation *(Immediate)*
- Current lease extension for DEH office building approved for 5 years from this year 2020. Future extension is uncertain. (*Long-term*)
- Work delays due to availability of safe/functional vehicles (*Medium-term)*
- Staff shortage (*Medium-term)*
- DEH Regulation (*Long-term)*

Solutions and recommendations

- New building for Bureau of Public Health and its Divisions and programs
- Replace old DEH vehicle with new pick-up truck (preference 4x4)
- Hire/Contract Legal advisor to assist with DEH Regulation
- Increase budget to support division's plan and mission

3. Division of Primary and Preventive Health Services

To improve the health of the community, prevent illness, unnecessary deaths, decrease the cost of healthcare provisions in the Republic of Palau by providing the highest standards of affordable, accessible and comprehensive primary and preventive services and by empowering individuals, families and communities to make informed decisions about their health.

Communicable Disease Unit (CDU)

The Communicable Disease Unit is responsible for the prevention, control, and elimination of infectious diseases such as tuberculosis (TB), Hansen's disease, viral hepatitis, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV/AIDS.

Community Health Centers (CHC)

The Community Health Centers aim to improve the health status of patients in the Republic of Palau by assuring affordable delivery of quality health care services. The health centers also provide equitable access to health care services as well as secure effective & productive health care service providers.

Non-Communicable Disease Unit (NCD)

The Non-Communicable Disease Unit (NCD Unit) serves to promote and support health lifestyle initiatives to reduce the risks of non-communicable diseases. The NCD Unit facilitates the collaboration with Ministry of Health Programs and community partners in order to raise awareness as well as education about non-communicable diseases and their risk factors. It also works to promote, support, and coordinate the development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of health promotion efforts.

The NCD Unit also coordinates and supports NCD-related primary health services including health screening, referrals, and follow-up diagnostic works. The unit coordinates training and capacity-building. It works collaboratively with local, regional, and international partners on NCD prevention and control efforts.

Family Health Unit (FHU)

The mission of the Family Health Unit is to improve the health of families by providing quality and comprehensive public health and medical services. The focus of the unit is to ensure that children, families, and communities are provided with comprehensive and coordinated healthcare that is accessible.

The Unit has six (6) major sections with programs covering a broad array of service areas that include pre-natal & post-natal services, infant services (universal newborn hearing screening and genetic screening & intervention), wellness services for children, adolescent health services, and gender & reproductive health services.

Immunization Unit
The purpose of the Immunization Program is to support efforts to plan, develop, and maintain a public health infrastructure to assure high immunization coverage levels and low incidence of vaccine preventable diseases. As part of this effort, the Section 317 Program is to increase access to vaccines for eligible children by supplying pediatric vaccines to Palau.

Home Health and Geriatric Unit
The Home Health Unit provides services to anyone who is bedridden or homebound due to illness or injury. The program also aims to improve the overall quality of life through palliative care to ensure comfort and death with dignity.

Briefing on priorities for all primary and preventive health programs and services

- Improve public messaging and education (for all programs)
- Lifestyle change and self-management programs
- Policy and environmental change to protect public health (for all programs)
- Improve efficiencies of resources through the integration of screening and treatment diseases (for all programs)
- Implementation of evidence based strategies to improve health outcomes (all programs)
- Improve immunization coverage, particularly in HPV, Measles 1 coverage at 95%
- Reduce health disparities and adverse outcomes among residents of Palau and the region
- Improve health systems infrastructure and service delivery (for all programs and services)
- Improving women and maternal health outcomes, perinatal/infant health, child and adolescent health
- Improve systems of care for children with special needs
- Reduce incidence and prevalence of disease
- Reduce premature deaths, particularly due to NCDs
- Address gaps in human resource and development
- Address gaps in funding and support (grant restrictions); program sustainability
- Expansion or improvement of external partnerships

Agreements/contracts

- Small contracts with community groups to implement wellness activities (NCD programs)
- Contract with BMC to facilitate mammography and other breast cancer related readings and diagnosis (Cancer Program)
- Contract with University of Hawaii to facilitate technical assistance and training in cancer prevention, diagnosis, treatment, survivorship and palliative care (Cancer Program)
- Immunization Information System Registry contract with Envision Technology Partners

Immediate, medium, and long-term challenges, solutions and recommendations

- The pandemic has suspended or delayed other essential programs and services – find innovative ways to implement activities

- Enforcement of school entry immunization requirements
- Mandating HPV vaccine to all 9-13 years old females
- Workforce capacity and development
- Specialized services not available in Palau (i.e., audiologist, speech therapist, dietary specialist)
- Program sustainability
- Community resources (to maintain health/wellness after diagnosis and treatment)

4. Division of Oral Health

The Division of Oral Health believes that good oral health is an important part of a person's overall health. The Division provides oral health services to the people of Palau both through clinical-based dentistry in the hospital and through community outreach programs which serve the general public and school-based programs (including public and private schools). Community-based programs are aimed at providing oral health care, prevention education and promotion of services.

Clinically-Based Dental Care

- Belau National Hospital Dental Clinic

Community-Based Dentistry: Outreach Programs

- Elementary and Head Start School Dental Program
- Early Childhood Caries Prevention Program (Maternal Child Healthcare)
- Community Health Center Dental Program (Service to Outlying Islands)

Priorities

To sustain continuity of dental care services to clinically-based and community based services.

Immediate, Medium-, and Long-term Challenges

- Replenish dental and medical supplies in a timely manner.
- Improve procurement process and procedure so needs may procure right away.
- Improve recruitment and hiring system.
- Improve IT technical support for oral health i.e. automates data collection for field clinics such schools, community health centers and other community job site. Another important aspect of information system is for right away use of data to help manage clinics better and to improve services delivery.
- Pure, distilled water is critical for patient care and use of machines at clinic.
- Need more space for patient charts, store dental machines and supplies for field work.
- Limited use of vehicles to use for field work.
- Full time dentist assign to work at dental clinic. At times there's only one dentist available at clinic.
- 85% of dental workers are older and 95% are Palauan.
- Limited space to use for patient care at BNH dental clinic.
- Continuity of community based services.
- Inability to provide on- site dental treatments that requiring use of machines and materials for

community health centers in Babeldaob and outlying states.
- Need newer and bigger hospital

Solutions and recommendations

- Automate systems for ordering and procuring needs. Come up with other means of ordering dental supplies directly to manufacturer instead through a supplier. For example, Henry Schein that requires online account similar to Amazon.
- Automate system and do away with manual process in collecting data.
- Need reliable source of distilled water at dental clinic to ensure patient safety and to protect
  dental expensive equipment.
- Buy two prefab containers and install close to dental clinic. This will require foundation and electrical work and 2 air conditioning units.
- Buy one more van with a lift.
- Recruit and hire full time dentist to reduce waiting time for delivery of dental treatments at clinic.
  Hire younger Palauan to start in house training with older ones.
- Rearrange building facility to increase dental delivery services or build extension of dental clinic.
- Earmark Tax policy to fund services and start charging patients.
- Equip community health centers with dental equipment and supplies.
- New and bigger hospital with all needs to increase right away access for medical care.

5. Cross-Cutting Programs

Public Health Administrative Support Office

The Public Health Administration plays a critical role for the Bureau of Public Health. The office provides & manages administrative support as well as coordinates activities and programs within the bureau, specifically for the Director of Public Health. The Public Health Administration assists employees and serves as a liaison between them and the director. The office is key in disseminating information to stakeholders.

Public Health Epidemiology Office

The Public Health Epidemiology Office is responsible for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data that provide information on a variety of conditions of public health importance and on the health status of the population.

Health Policy, Research & Development (HPRD) Office

The mission of the Health Policy, Research and Development Office is to guide the Ministry and Nation in directing the nation so that Palau can attain the MOH Vision of "Healthy Palau in Healthful Environment".

Palau Institutional Review Board (PIRB)

The PIRB aims to ensure that research and health ethics are abided by and that safety and privacy is maintained in all human subject research conducted in the Republic of Palau.

Emergency Health Office

The Emergency Health Program is responsible for coordinating emergency preparedness activities including extensive planning, social marketing/public awareness campaigns, exercises and drills, education and training, and partnerships with key stakeholders. It

collaborates with key partners/stakeholders to ensure an effective and coordinated response to any public health threat. The Emergency Health Program consists of the Public Health Emergency Preparedness Program (PHEP), Hospital Preparedness Program (HPP), and Emergency Medical Services for Children (EMSC) Program. All three are 100% fully funded by US federal grants/cooperative agreements.

Overall Bureau of Public Health Priorities:

In fulfilling its legislative mandates, the Bureau of Public Health focuses on improvements in access to primary and preventive health services, staff development capacity, improvements in data collection and reporting, quality improvement across the bureau, research, accreditation and sustainable health financing post compact years.

***Immediate, medium, and long-term challenges*:**

1. **Bureau Services are Fragmented Throughout Palau.** Because the Bureau of Public Health lacks a permanent facility, there has been fragmentation and a number of division/unit relocations over the years. The result has been inefficiency, extra driving (to & from meetings), and missed opportunities to collaborate. More importantly, it has caused confusion and frustration among individuals and patients attempting to access services

2. **Limited Local Funding to Support Reclassification of Key Posts.** Because of the lack in local funding sources, the Bureau of Public Health cannot support key posts, hire new staff, or fund services. More than 70% of the Public Health workforce are federally funded. Over reliance on federal funds is not sustainable from an organization perspective.

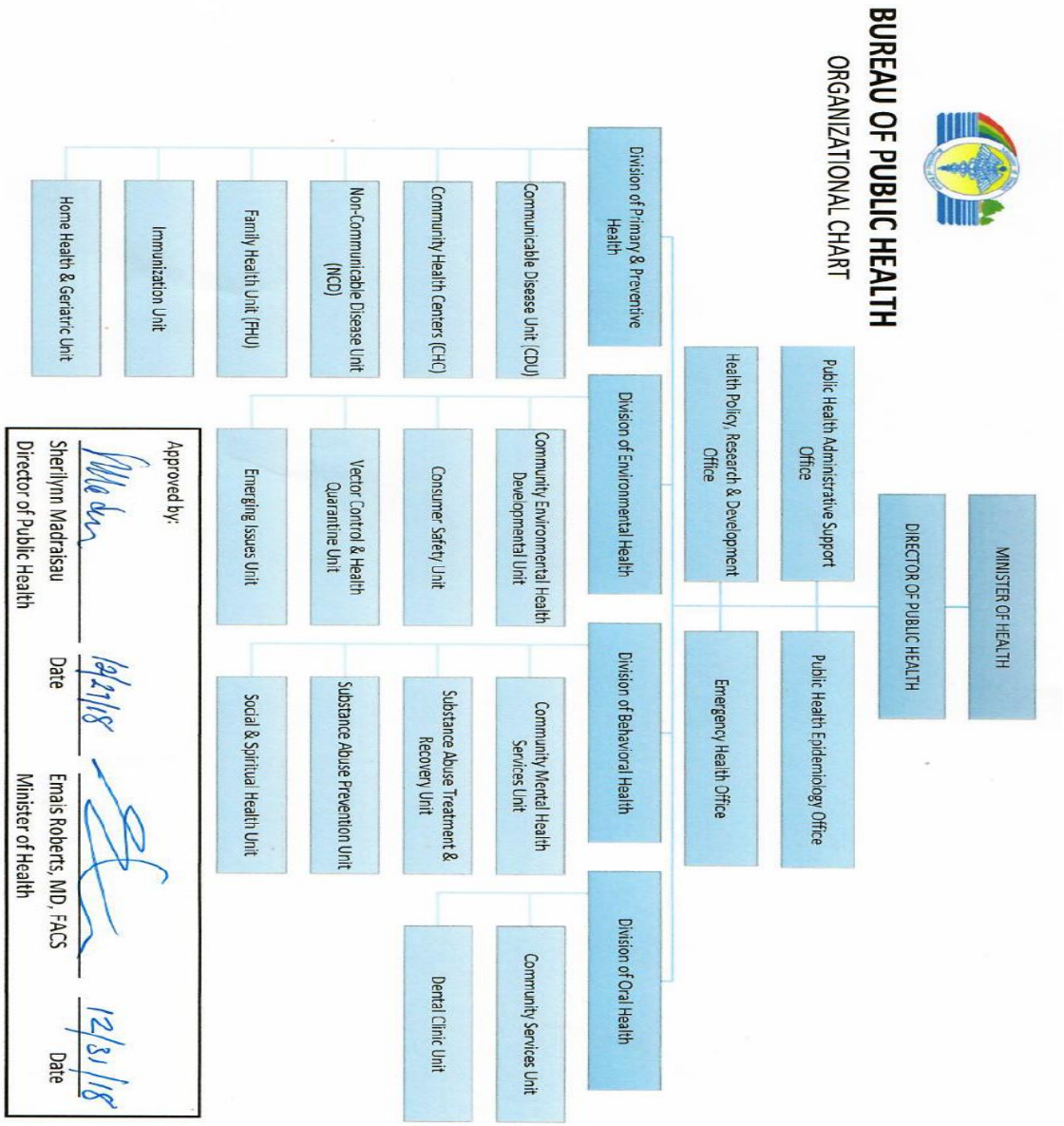
3. **Lack of Linkages Between Databases.** This poses challenges in data collection and reporting.

4. **Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement (QA/QI).** The Bureau of Public health would like to make gains in this area to improve its services.

5. **Limitations & Restrictions to Federal Grants.** Being highly dependent on federal grants, the Bureau of Public health is often limited on how it spends its funds. There is insufficient local funding that would allow more flexibility.

6. **Limited provisions of primary and preventive health services in the community health centers due to limited resources.**

Solutions and Recommendations:

1. Secure fund to build a central public health building
2. Strengthen capacity of the public health workforce through professional trainings and educational opportunities.
3. Increase local budget to support salary of key permanent positions in Public Health
4. Expand and improve access to services in the community health centers.

5. Secure funds for an electronic health record system to manage and maintain public health data to improve reporting.