

## **HEALTH AND SENIOR SERVICES IN MISSOURI: A CONTINUING TRADITION**

In 1883 the citizens of Missouri realized that the state could not prosper if the health of its residents were not protected. Epidemics of smallpox, typhoid and cholera severely threatened the health and welfare of Missourians. Concerned physicians led a citizens' campaign to establish a state agency responsible for the promotion of the people's health and the prevention of disease. On March 29, 1883, the Missouri Legislature responded by creating a State Board of Health.

The steady increase in the population and the extended life expectancy of Missourians show that the first State Board of Health successfully fulfilled its mandate to build an effective state public health agency.

When state government was reorganized in 1945, the Board of Health was superseded by the Division of Health of the Department of Public Health and Welfare. In October 1967 the Legislature again created a State Board of Health but within the framework of the Division of Health. Members of the Board of Health are appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the Senate.

State government reorganization in 1974 placed the Division of Health in the Department of Social Services. At that time, the division's environmental engineering and solid waste programs were transferred to the Department of Natural Resources and the Missouri Crippled Children's Service became a part of the Division of Health. After the 83rd General Assembly passed Senate Bill 25 and Gov. John Ashcroft signed the legislation on July 29, 1985, the Department of Health (DOH) was created. That September, the department was officially empowered, charged with supervising and managing all public health functions and programs formerly administered by the Division of Health.

Executive Order 01-02, signed on Jan. 5, 2001, by Gov. Roger Wilson, transferred the Division of Aging to the Department of Health effective Aug. 28, 2001, to become the Department of Health and Senior Services. Combining senior and public health issues into one system has allowed the department to focus more effectively on prevention and quality of life for all Missourians.