The School of Community Health Sciences is dedicated to improving the health and quality of life of people in our communities, eliminating health disparities, and advancing the science of population health. Our field is a combination of many sciences: biology, social and behavior health, preventive medicine, health care access and quality, and newer sciences of environmental health, epidemiology, and biostatistics. We are committed to safeguarding people’s health, especially those most vulnerable – children, the elderly, economically disadvantaged, and marginalized populations.

**Points of Pride**

- The Environmental and Occupational Health Laboratory tracks people in Nevada identified with elevated blood levels of lead, a metal that is particularly toxic to children. Researchers and students examine the person’s home environment for sources of lead such as paint, toys, imported candy, ethnic remedies, cooking utensils, and artificial turf. Samples are analyzed on site and in the laboratory. Once the source of the lead is identified, it is removed from the home with the help of community partners.

- The School of Community Health Sciences includes the state’s only cancer epidemiologist whose research includes the first-ever comprehensive report on cancer in Nevada.

- Each year the Nevada Institute for Children’s Research and Policy administers the Kindergarten Health Survey to state school districts to assess the status of children starting school. Recent trends indicate that more than 30 percent of children in Nevada kindergartens are not at a healthy weight. UNLV researchers are developing strategies to help families keep their children at a healthy weight.

- The Department of Health Care Administration and Policy is the only one of its kind in the Intermountain West. Its mission is to improve access to quality health care for all Nevadans.

- The founding dean of the School of Community Health Sciences was once a member of the “medical FBI” at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Mary Guinan was one of the first researchers to investigate a startling new illness, later identified as AIDS. She also worked on eradicating smallpox in India, studying cancer clusters in rural Nevada, and investigating one of the largest hepatitis C outbreaks ever recorded in the United States, which was tracked to a clinic in Las Vegas.

- The Emerging Diseases Laboratory uses state-of-the-art instrumentation to identify and track microorganisms, including methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), which can cause severe infections in both health care facilities and the community. Students conduct hands-on research under the supervision of two experienced microbiologists.
UNLV researchers are monitoring the population of quagga mussels, an invasive species that threatens to clog water pipelines in Lake Mead. They are looking for ways to stop the spread of the mussels and protect Las Vegas's main water supply.

Shawn Gerstenberger is one of few doctors in Southern Nevada who still makes house calls. In his case, the house — not its owner — is the patient. The UNLV professor heads the Nevada Healthy Homes Partnership, a collaboration between the university and more than a dozen community partners who work to identify and eliminate health hazards in the homes of Nevada residents.

**Community**

- The Nevada Institute for Children's Research and Policy partners with local police and community organizations to educate the public on the prevention of child abuse.

- Community Health Sciences graduates trained in epidemiology and biostatistics now have careers as “disease detectives,” who help prevent and control the spread of diseases in the community.

- The Environmental and Occupational Health Laboratory has been testing mercury levels in fish caught locally and in canned tuna. Fish from Lake Mead contain much lower mercury levels than those found in the tuna. UNLV studies show that among the different types of canned tuna, light chunk varieties have, on average, the lowest mercury levels.

- The American Indian Research and Education Center is attracting high school and college American Indian/Alaska Native students into health professions by exploring research careers in the biomedical, behavioral, clinical, and social sciences through a summer institute. The center also conducts research in the prevention and control of Type 2 diabetes, which disproportionately affects Native populations.

- The Center for Health Disparities Research at UNLV is leading a community-wide effort with local African-American, faith-based organizations and other groups to combat rising teen pregnancy rates in Southern Nevada as part of a five-year, $2.8 million grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

**Alumni**

Our alumni are making a difference in improving health status and preventing disease and injury, both locally and around the world. Our graduates are health educators, hospital care administrators, epidemiologists, “disease detectives,” health district managers, college professors, health data analysts, environmental health specialists, biostatisticians, laboratory researchers, and leaders in nonprofit organizations working hard to improve both health and access to quality health care.