

Overview The Institute of Medicine has identified three core functions of public health that recognize the importance of timely and accurate information and are central to contemporary public health practice: assessment of population health, policy development, and assurance of the availability of high-quality public health services [1].The chapter begins with a review of the fundamentals of the public policy process and the government, legal, and regulatory framework for public health informatics.Historically, federal funding for public health information systems was both limited and categorical, leading to non-standardized, noninteroperable, disease-specific applications that were difficult for state and local health departments to support and maintain.The purpose of this chapter is to describe the emergence and evolution of public health informatics policy, which began to develop in the mid to late 1990s, accelerated after the terrorist events of 2001, and came into new prominence when the public health objectives in Stage 2 meaningful use rules were released in September 2012.It then describes the policy environment for public health informatics, showing how large-scale public events and public-private collaboration and leadership from professional organizations helped to move the policy process forward by increasing transparency and investments in public health information infrastructure.However, the terrorist events of 2001 led to the largest federal investment in public health infrastructure since World War II [3].Others have noted that an information infrastructure is considered to be central to those functions [2].Over the past two decades, the term public health informatics has been used to describe the intersection of public health and information technology (IT) [4].The chapter closes with a look forward to future policy issues at the national level.