

Providing Public Services

What different services does our community have?

Introduction

You can find services in your community. Services are tasks that other people do for you. Some businesses sell services to people. They may offer plumbing and cleaning services. Even chefs in restaurants are providing a service. You have to pay to use these services.

Other services are offered to everyone. These are usually provided by a government. Cities, states, and the United States all have their own governments that provide services.

People can use the services a government provides for free or at a low cost. This is because every person in a community helps to pay for these services.

What are some of the services that governments offer? And how do we pay for them? You'll find out in this lesson.

PROVIDING PUBLIC SER...



Social Studies Vocabulary

first responder

suburb

private service

tax

public service



Civics



Economics

1. Why We Form Communities

Why do people choose to live together? There are many benefits that come with living in a community.

Living in a community provides people with security. Police and firefighters make sure that citizens are always safe.

In communities, there are different rules and laws. Laws promote safety and make sure that people have the rights they deserve. Citizens come together to make laws.

Communities give people a feeling of acceptance. It feels good to know that there are people who care about you. People in communities become friends with their neighbors and coworkers.

Neighbors make sure to look out for each other. If people have problems, they can go to a neighbor for help.

People can usually find jobs in their community. People need jobs so that they can make a living. They work to make money, which they need to purchase important goods and services.

Communities also give people easy access to services. Individuals can provide **private services** for a community. Getting a haircut at a barber shop is an example of a private service. But a community's government also has **public services** for everyone living there. Some examples of public services are providing clean water and electricity.



2. Paying for Public Services

Governments provide public services to communities. However, it costs money to provide these services. How do governments pay for public services?

Public services are paid for with **taxes**. Taxes are money that people and businesses pay to a government. Cities, states, and the United States all have governments. They each collect their own taxes.

There are many different kinds of taxes. One important kind of tax is income tax. This tax is based on how much money someone makes. People who make more money pay more income tax.

Another type of tax is sales tax. Sales tax is a fee that is added when people purchase goods and services. For example, when you buy new clothes, you also have to pay the sales tax.



Property taxes are paid by people who own land. All homeowners have to pay property taxes. People who rent their apartment or home do not need to pay a property tax.

Taxes pay for the public services that communities use every day. Communities and their leaders come together to discuss taxes. They talk about what goods and services they want to be public services. Next, you will learn some of the public services that are available in many communities.



3. Police

All communities need to keep the peace. Providing this service is the job of the police.

Police keep the peace in several ways. They make sure that people obey laws. For example, police give tickets to drivers who don't stop at red lights. Police walk or ride through neighborhoods to make sure people are safe. They arrest people who steal or commit other crimes.

Police also help people in other ways. They direct traffic and give directions to people who are lost.

They help rescue people when floods, earthquakes, and other disasters happen.

Police around the United States are alike in many ways. However, they are also different. Some police ride in police cars. Others ride motorcycles, bicycles, and even horses. Some police officers patrol the highways, while others focus on protecting people and their neighborhoods.

Many police officers are heroes in their communities. In 2012, one officer from West Covina, California, saved a choking baby before catching a bank robbery suspect 30 minutes later! The officer got a 911 call saying a young child was having trouble breathing. He saved the baby before catching up to the suspect in a car chase. The officer was awarded a medal from the police department for his actions.



4. Health Care

Level: A

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In the United States, people can get some kinds of health care as a public service. Taxes help to pay for health care for older people and many poor people. Veterans, or former members of the military, along with children can also have some of their care provided for by public services.

There are public hospitals where people can get care for free or at a low cost. Towns and cities may offer other services, such as free flu shots. If people need emergency care, they can get help at a hospital even if they can't pay for it.



But most health care in the United States is a

private service. This means that individuals and companies, not the government, run doctor offices and hospitals.

Have you ever needed help from a nurse or a doctor? Nurses and doctors are health care workers. Health care workers take care of people who get hurt or sick. They also try to keep people from getting sick in the first place.

There are also many other jobs in healthcare. Scientists help create medicines to treat the sick. Engineers make equipment for hospitals that doctors need to care for their patients.



5. Public Schools

Do you go to a public school? If so, then you are getting a public service.

Money from taxes pays for public schools. The whole community pays these taxes, not just the families of students.

Public schools do a very important job for the community. Schools teach students many useful skills, such as how to read, write, and do math. Students will need these skills to get good jobs and to be helpful members of the community.

In the United States, you can go to public schools from kindergarten through high school. After high school, you might choose to go to a public college. You would have to pay part of the cost, and taxes would help pay the rest.

You can also go to a private school or college. These schools don't get money from taxes. Instead, they charge students and their families for their services.

Until about 1850, most schools in the United States were private schools. If students didn't have enough money, they didn't go to school. In most places, only boys went to school.

Many things have changed since then. Today, people agree that everyone needs a good education. This agreement is why the government provides schools as a public service.



6. Firefighting

Firefighting is an important service. Putting out fires takes a lot of skills, training, and courage. Firefighters around the world often risk their lives to do their job.

Many places still use volunteers to fight fires. But towns and cities may hire trained firefighters as a public service. They also buy equipment for fighting fires.

Firefighters try to keep fires from starting in the first place. They teach people what to do to prevent fires and to make sure that people obey fire safety laws.



Firefighters help communities in other ways, too. They help take care of people who are hurt in accidents. They also help people after disasters such as floods and earthquakes.

On September 11, 2001, terrorists crashed two planes into the World Trade Center in New York City. The New York Fire Department, which is a public service, sent firefighters to the World Trade Center. These firefighters were **first responders**. Many of them lost their lives trying to save people from the wreckage. Their acts of courage are still remembered today.



7. Public Transportation

In towns and cities around the United States, people need to get from place to place. Governments often try to help by offering public transportation.

Many cities have public buses. Some cities also have streetcars, which are small trains that use city streets. Larger cities often have subways. Subways are trains that run under the ground. Some places have trains and buses that run between cities and the **suburbs**. Suburbs are communities that grow up on the edges of cities.

In most places, you must pay to use public

transportation. But the cost is usually low so that most people can afford it.

Public transportation helps people get around without using cars. Most car engines make the air dirty. When there are fewer cars on the street, the air is cleaner.

Many cities are making it easier for people to use bicycles instead of driving cars. In some cities, you can even rent a bicycle for a low cost. Some people ride bikes to get to public buses and trains. Then they park and lock the bikes, or even bring them along for the ride.





8. Public Parks

Have you ever played in a public park? If you have, then you have used a popular public service.

Why do governments spend tax money on parks? Parks bring us many benefits. They add beauty and a touch of nature to our cities and towns. Parks also give us space for all kinds of activities.

Imagine spending a sunny Saturday afternoon in a large city park. You see families having picnics and people walking their dogs. Skaters scoot along the park's paths. You see a softball game and a soccer match. You pass a band playing on an outdoor stage while people dance. In a playground area, parents talk while their children play on the swings

and slides. On a pretty lake, people are rowing boats. Where else in a city can people do so many fun and healthy things?

Parks are useful for another reason. They bring people together and help create good feelings in a community. Some parks even have community gardens. There, neighbors can work side by side growing flowers, herbs, fruits, and vegetables.





Lesson Summary

There are many reasons why people live in communities. One of them is that communities offer public services. Governments raise money for these services by collecting taxes. Cities, states, and the United States all have their own taxes.

Police and firefighters keep people safe. Health care services help people who are sick or hurt. Public schools teach students skills they need to get good jobs in the future. Public transportation helps people get from place to place without using cars. Parks give people places to play and to enjoy nature. What are the public services where you live?



History



Civics



READ & DO

Benjamin Franklin, Public Servant

Today, we count on many public services, but, long ago, towns and cities had few services. What famous American helped to start some needed