

Chasing Data

Easing the way for public health
researchers and policymakers to
strengthen the public health workforce

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April 21, 2010

By the year 2010, the federal government calls for each community to be served by a “fully trained, culturally competent public health team, representing the optimal mix of professional disciplines.”

...Milestones in Public Health (Pfizer, 2006)

BRIEF HISTORY

- 1988—IOM Report: *The Future of Public Health*
- 2003—IOM Report: *Who Will Keep the Public Healthy?* (eds. Gebbie, Rosenstock, Hernandez)
- 2004—seminal article by Drs. Cioffi, Lichtveld, and Tilson—*A Research Agenda for Public Health Workforce Development*
 - Public health workforce research agenda as a component of the growing field of public health systems research
 - 5 priority areas for public health workforce research
 1. *Predictive relationship*
 2. *Competency development*
 3. *Workforce performance*
 4. *Workforce monitoring*
 5. *Labor market forces*
- 2005—COL/PHF issue brief: *Public Health Systems Research: Summary of Research Needs*

Along came....

Carol Gotway Crawford, PhD

Science Officer (and COE Project Officer)

Office of Workforce and Career Development

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- Reorganization at CDC (2003), created Office of Workforce and Career Development (OWCD), directed by Dr. Stephen Thacker
- Renewed interest in public health workforce development and research
- Convened thought leaders to set new path built upon earlier work
- Developed new PH workforce research agenda
- Funded Centers of Excellence

Eight Research Themes

1. Workforce size and composition
2. Workforce diversity
3. Workforce effectiveness and health impact
7. Recruitment, retention, separation, and retirement
8. Worker pay, promotion, performance, and job satisfaction
9. Demand for the public health workforce
10. Education, training, and credentialing the public health workforce
11. Public health workforce policy

Policy Issues

- How much funding is required to adequately staff our PH system? Where does that priority belong in governmental budgets?
- What knowledge and skills do future PH workers need? How can we ensure they obtain what they need?
- What incentives bring professionals into PH and help us to retain them? What incentives do we need to ensure coverage in underserved areas?
- What is the correct mix of disciplines, and how many of each discipline do we need to adequately deliver the essential services?
- What impact will that model have on health outcomes?

Addressing PH Workforce Issues

Continuing Stakeholder Involvement—recent Workforce Pipeline Survey, Public Health Foundation COL; 2009-2010 ASTHO, NACCHO, & NALBOH surveys; data harmonization

Establishment of PH Workforce Centers of Excellence—University of Kentucky and University of Michigan; funded by CDC through cooperative agreement with Public Health Foundation

COEWRP Deliverables

- Establish national advisory committee
- Compile existing workforce data and literature
- Provide technical assistance to workforce researchers
- Provide venue & support for presentation of results
- Work with PHF to explore ways to “mine” TRAIN data
- Work with public health organizations to develop data about existing public health workforce & to facilitate use of new data in research
- Facilitate participation & leadership by the Centers for Disease Control in efforts to improve & encourage new public health workforce policy

COEWRP Data Activities

- Contacted ASTHO affiliate organizations to determine whether data are existent/available
- Work with NLM project team in CPHSSR to ensure accessibility of information about available data
- Provide technical assistance to researchers, e.g., assist with data use agreements; facilitate communication between researchers with similar interests
- Mining TRAIN data in an effort to derive information that may be useful in characterizing the workforce
- Developing proposal to BLS for COE researcher to obtain access to BLS data for study of how data are collected and reported

Issues

- Restrictions on use
- Lack of comparability of databases
- Discipline-specific information is available—
but not cross-cutting system information
about the PH workforce (e.g., trends, demand,
study of teams)
- How do we put together what's available?

Worth Discussing

- Varying interpretations about which data are confidential & thus not accessible
- Levels of cooperation vary among stakeholders, e.g., accessibility of data collected with federal dollars/ sponsorship varies among agencies—time for a more global approach?
- What are the true concerns about sharing data? Is it possible to overcome some of them? Let's begin by stating them clearly and examining them.
- Are current data protections/restrictions on use appropriate?
- **Are we asking the right questions?**