A Logic Model for Evaluating the Academic Health Department

Julie H. Grubaugh, MPH, CHES1; Paul C. Erwin, MD, DrPH2; Clea A. McNeely, DrPH2; Jennifer L. Valentine, MSN, RN3; Mark D. Miller, MS3; Martha L. Buchanan, MD3

Background

Academic Health Departments (AHDs) are collaborative partnerships between academic programs (i.e.-MPH program) and practice settings (i.e.-health department)

What we know
- Case studies tell us how AHDs are developed and describe common activities

What we don't know
- How do you evaluate AHDs?
- Do these relationships matter?

Research Objective

- Describe general theory of change logic model for how AHDs impact public health at the community level
- Identify potential research questions
- Provide specific AHD logic model for our AHD, located in Knoxville, TN

Methods

- Used generalized logic model as a foundation
- Created specific logic model for our AHD
- Developed evaluation tool
  - Identified metrics and frequency of data collection for items on logic model
  - Used iterative, participatory process led by faculty member with evaluation expertise carried out through AHD steering committee
  - Evaluated specific AHD using the evaluation tool

Findings

AHDs may facilitate administrative evidence-based practices recently identified in public health practice, including:
- Workforce development
- Leadership support of evidence-based decision making
- A learning orientation of public health practice staff
- Enhancing organizational relationships

Generalized Logic Model

Example Specific AHD Evaluation

Inputs:
- A shared internship coordinator within the context of a formal, written MOU

Activities:
- Centralization of student and volunteer involvement
- KCHD staff serving as both guest lecturers as well as teaching full courses at the UT/DPH
- Joint practice-based research
- UT/DPH support for workforce development at KCHD

Outputs:
- Estimated value of student contributions (from 12 academic disciplines) at KCHD was $130,549
- Four peer-reviewed publications in the past two years

Outcomes:
- Undergraduates who completed internships at the KCHD have enrolled in the UT/DPH MPH program
- Graduates of the MPH program have been hired into full-time positions at the KCHD
- One of the senior staff at KCHD was recently hired into a full-time faculty position at the UT/DPH
- The increased application of evidence-based public health is discernible through stronger workforce development, leadership, organizational climate and culture, relationships and partnerships, and use of resources

Specific Logic Model

Example Research Q’s

Implications

- Logic models are important tools for designing, implementing, and evaluating the impact of complex initiatives such as the AHD
- Theory-approach logic models are useful for considering the "big picture" and for clarifying underlying assumptions
- A specific logic model for the AHD provides a comprehensive framework for assessing the value and ultimate impact of the AHD
- These logic models become useful starting points for formulating research questions, aimed at ultimately answering the question, does the AHD matter?