

New Directions for Public Health Workforce Research

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The current public health workforce is inadequate to meet the health needs of the U.S. and global population—and worsening worker shortages will reach crisis proportions in the coming years. Fewer workers, drawing on diminished resources to meet the needs of more people, mean Americans are likely to be at grave risk unless measures are taken immediately to rebuild the workforce. ASPH Policy Brief, December 2008

BACKGROUND and MISSION

A dearth of organized, interdisciplinary research about the characteristics and functions of the nation's public health workforce hampers our ability to develop cohesive policy and to fully understand the effect of that workforce on the public health system and population health. To address these issues, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), through its cooperative agreement with the Public Health Foundation, funded the Center of Excellence in Public Health Workforce Research and Policy (COEWRP) at the University of Kentucky College of Public Health in October 2008.

COEWRP's mission is to initiate and coordinate strategic efforts to improve the public health workforce through research. Primary activities of the Center are focused on identifying and cataloguing resources, participating in scholarly activities concerning workforce research (e.g., data harmonization), and providing a venue and support for presentation and discussion of research activities and results.

To achieve **Essential Public Health Service #8**—Assure a competent public and personal health care workforce—new directions in workforce analysis are required. CDC Office of Workforce and Career Development Science Officer Carol Gotway Crawford has suggested eight broad research themes (*Public Health Workforce Research and Future Directions, 2009*):

- Workforce size and composition
- Workforce diversity
- Workforce effectiveness and health impact
- Recruitment, retention, separation, and retirement
- Worker pay, promotion, performance, and job satisfaction
- Demand for the public health workforce
- Education, training, and credentialing the public health workforce
- Public health workforce policy

YEAR 1 HIGHLIGHTS

- Established National Advisory Committee
- Convened expert panel on public health workforce research at the UK Keeneland Conference (<http://www.keenelandconference.org>)
- Ongoing posting of information about relevant databases on NLM website (http://www.cfm.nlm.nih.gov/hsrr_search/index.cfm)
- Providing technical assistance to public health workforce researchers
- Coordinating efforts with the Data Harmonization Workgroup, the Public Health Foundation (PHF)/Council on Linkages Pipeline Workgroup, and the UK Center for Public Health Systems and Services Research (CPHSSR)
- Developing a resource library of relevant articles, reports, and web resources
- Exploring utilization of TRAIN data elements as a resource for future research
- Leveraging activities with sector partners such as HRSA, PHF, CPHSSR
- Facilitating CDC's participation and leadership in efforts to improve and encourage new public health workforce policy
- Establishing coordinated, collaborative activity plan with new Center of Excellence in Workforce Capacity (COEWC) at the University of Michigan which will focus on identifying and assessing measures of public health capacity and further development of analytic, quantifiable conceptual models of workforce.



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