

ENUMERATION SURVEY OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH WORKFORCE IN IOWA

Authors, Name of Agency and Academic Institution Involved:

Christopher G. Atchison, MPA, Associate Dean for Public Health Practice and Professor (Clinical), The University of Iowa College of Public Health

Tanya Uden-Holman, PhD, Associate Dean for Education and Student Affairs and Associate Professor (Clinical), The University of Iowa College of Public Health

Frances Sadden, RN, BSN, MA, President, Iowa Association of Local Public Health Agencies (IALPHA) and Director, Siouxland District Health Department

Laurie Walkner, BSN, MA, Grants Coordinator, Institute for Public Health Practice, The University of Iowa College of Public Health

L. Graham Dameron, MPH, REHS, I-ALPHA Public Health Consultant

Vijaya Kancherla, MS, CHES, Graduate Research Assistant, Institute for Public Health Practice, The University of Iowa College of Public Health

Description of the Project, Development, Outcomes:

In order to enhance the public health workforce in Iowa, the Institute for Public Health Practice entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with a statewide public health practice-based, nonprofit organization, the Iowa Association of Local Public Health Agencies (I-ALPHA). I-ALPHA represents more than 50 local public health agencies responsible for the provision of public health services in their respective counties and cities. I-ALPHA has contracted with a Public Health Consultant to implement the activities identified in the MOU, including public health workforce development.

One of the current collaborative projects of I-ALPHA and the Institute for Public Health Practice is enumerating the public health workforce in Iowa. In the report *The Public Health Workforce – Enumeration 2000*, Dr. Earl Fox, the former Administrator of HRSA stated: “By tracking the current workforce, we improve our chances to identify and fill the gaps in local, state, and national public health.” The report was prepared by Kristine Gebbie, DrPH, RN at the Center for Health Policy, Columbia University School of Nursing. Although information on Iowa was included in this 2000 report, I-ALPHA and the Institute felt it was important to update it.

The survey was e-mailed to 101 principal city and county local public health agencies in Iowa and 89 agencies have responded. The survey provides three critical pieces of information including: 1) the number of full-time equivalent employees (FTE), 2) the number of employees and FTE, by occupational title, and 3) other agencies providing a portion or all of the public health services in their jurisdiction. IPHP staff are in the process of analyzing the survey results.

Successes, Difficulties, and “The Unexpected”

Agencies were asked to respond to the e-mailed survey within two weeks. After the initial two-week period, more than 50% of the agencies had responded to the survey. Additional efforts have produced a response rate of 88%. Efforts are continuing with the goal of 100% participation.

Although respondents were given an initial list of fifteen occupational titles they also had the opportunity to add categories. Respondents wrote in more occupational titles than we anticipated. The survey has provided more than 96 “other” public health occupational titles. To aid in data analysis and synthesis, the “other” occupational titles are being consolidated into more general categories.

Benefits to the Agency and the Community Served by the Agency

Because one of I-ALPHA’s strategic directions is Public Health Workforce Development, the results of the survey will provide cumulative data that would have been difficult to collect

individually. I-ALPHA and local public health agencies can use this data to determine Iowa's public health workforce needs, i.e. the recruitment, retention and training needs of our employees, the future curriculum for the University to teach the ten public health services, the competencies of our workforce, the eventual credentialing of our employees and the accreditation of our agencies.

Contact: L. Graham Dameron, MPH, Rehs
Public Health Consultant
Iowa Association of Local Public Health Agencies
5203 Westlawn
University Of Iowa
Iowa City, IA. 52242-1100
Phone: 319-335-9640
Fax: 319-335-8341
E-mail: Gdameron@mail.public-health.uiowa.edu