

## **Indiana's Mid-America Public Health Training Center (IN MAPHTC): An Academic and Practice Partnership Success**

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In 1997, partners working on a new Master's of Public Health Program at Indiana University School of Medicine (IUSM) in Indianapolis recognized the need for integrated, interdisciplinary continuing education for public health professionals. The Indiana University/Indiana State Department of Health (IU/ISDH) Center for Public Health Leadership and Education was established as a result of this collaborative, data driven process to assess and train Indiana's Local Health Departments (LHDs).

These early partnerships paved the way for the academic and practice collaborations that exist today. The current 32 member IN MAPHTC Advisory Board consists of representatives from public health, emergency management, academia, and practice. The MAPHTC partners include ISDH, IUSM Department of Public Health, Indiana Primary Health Care Association, Indiana Public Health Association, Indiana Rural Health Association, West Central Indiana AHEC and representatives from five LHDs around the state. In September 2001, another partnership was formed with the University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health's (UIC SPH) Mid-America Public Health Training Center. Our relationship with UIC SPH places us in the distinct position of providing Indiana public health professionals with access to distance education from nationally recognized UIC SPH faculty. This year, our efforts are enhanced with a contract award from ISDH applying Bioterrorism Preparedness Focus Area G funds. This funding will enable us to complete in-depth needs assessment and implement distance learning training.

Our use of the collaborative model has provided IN MAPHTC a unique opportunity to partner with a variety of agencies. As an example, we instituted a new education initiative with the Indiana Continuing Legal Education Foundation to develop and offer training in law and public health issues. Through our assessments, we became aware of the need in Indiana for stronger partnerships between county attorneys and LHDs, especially in this time of preparing for bioterrorism events. The first session in our proposed series of legal public health workshops was held in April 2003. Our evaluation results were positive and attendees listed a number of potential training topics.

Since the inception of our continuing education programming, IN MAPHTC has offered 18 on-site courses and one multi-site interactive videoconference. Our collaborative efforts continue to expand as we look at establishing partnerships for education and training with the Indiana Higher Education Telecommunications System, the Purdue University Cooperative Extension Offices, and the IU POLIS Center's GIS Training. These unexpected partnerships resulted from the MAPHTC Advisory Board's commitment and tenacity.

While we have made great strides in offering training through our collaborative partnerships, there are still issues that we need to address. A major barrier to reaching more LHD staff and other public health professionals is our lack of a robust distance learning system and available technology in the LHDs. ISDH is currently installing state-of-the-art technology in the LHDs which will facilitate the development of our distance learning programming. There is also a need to vigorously develop and expand a promotion campaign for continuing public

health education among practitioners. We also need to create an expectation that continuing education is a requirement for competent public health performance.

The IN MAPHTC initiatives developed are based on local, community needs. Our goal is to offer practical, applicable, case-based training to the Indiana public health workforce. IN MAPHTC is now recognized among many groups as the focus point for announcing all public health continuing education offerings and the organization that can provide the leadership to identify what depth of education is needed. Eventually, as more of the public health workforce participates in education and training, IN MAPHTC services will continue to increase and the citizens of Indiana will be the ultimate beneficiaries.

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