Mtg Materials

COUNCIL ON LINKAGES BETWEEN ACADEMIA AND PUBLIC HEALTH PRACTICE

National Public Health Systems Research Leadership Forum

The National Public Health Systems Research Leadership Forum (Forum) emerged from the growing desire of those in the public health arena to embrace stronger relationships between the academic and practice communities to build the science-base in public health practice and improve health outcomes. Now in its third year, the Forum has been successful in bringing together public health researchers, academicians, practitioners, and communities, to work together collectively to build a public health systems research (PHSR) enterprise, maximize system efficiency, build credibility, strengthen advocacy and improve the effectiveness of applied research.

The first annual Forum held in 2001 confirmed the need to:

- develop a national research agenda and prioritize research needs;
- establish an on-going research section at a national meeting where public health systems researchers can come together to share methods, findings, and questions;
- pilot three to four "Centers of Excellence" in PHSR to develop and translate research into action;
- create a PHSR fellowship program to help "grow" the pool of researchers in this field; and
- reconvene the Forum to discuss ways to ensure major funding organizations in support of strengthening PHSR provide adequate funding for advancing research efforts of this type.

Significant progress in advancing PHSR has been made. Since the first Forum: 1) an annual PHSR Affiliate meeting with partial support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention was established as part of AcademyHealth's annual research meeting; 2) three national research agenda efforts in public health systems research, workforce, and rural health have been initiated; 3) the Forum was convened for a third consecutive year in 2003; and 4) discussions have taken place about the Prevention Research Centers serving as "Centers of Excellence" in PHSR.

A critical next step in this effort was to begin prioritizing research needs. Participants in the third annual Forum:

- learned about the development of national research agendas in public health systems research, workforce, and rural health;
- provided feedback on research priorities;
- ranked the research priorities in the public health systems, workforce, and rural health research agendas and identified research questions that remain to be answered; and
- engaged in discussions with panelists about plans to solicit feedback from the public health community and develop and implement the research agendas.

At the conclusion of the Forum, participants were asked to complete a PHSR agenda worksheet to help rank the research priorities in each identified agenda. The results of this activity are included in this document. This information will be used to help shape the development of each research agenda and prioritize research questions for future action in Centers of Excellence and by public health systems research fellows. For more information about the research agenda efforts, please visit http://www.phf.org/Link/tools.htm#PHSR.

Respondent Demographics

Years in Public Health	Number of Respondents
0-9	10
10-19	10
20-29	18
30+	5

Work Setting	Number of Respondents*
Federal Government	4
State or Local Public Health Agency	9
Academia	28
Non-profit organization	8
Healthcare organization	0
Consultant	4
Other practice organization	4
Other research organization	0

** Note: Some respondents checked multiple work settings*

I Developing the Public Health Systems Research Agenda: CDC Experience

Top Priorities according to Forum Respondents:

Checks Received	Overarching Themes for the Public Health Systems Research Agenda
18	Explore the relationship between performance and health outcomes (and the chain of impacts that leads from improved performance to improved health outcomes).
12	Define and quantify dimensions of public health systems including interorganizational relationships (including the role of the agency within the public health system).
10	Define the characteristics of high-performing local, state, and federal public health agencies.
9	Determine how public health agency structure affects performance.
7	Evaluate the costs to achieve and maintain acceptable / optimal levels of performance. (This activity includes exploring reasonable models to collect agency financial data).
6	Explore the relationship between social determinants of health and system performance.
5	Conceptualize a framework for high-performing public health systems, which includes key elements.
5	Identify, develop, and refine measures of health outcomes that are sensitive to public health systems capacity and performance.
5	Explore what factors and processes facilitate community involvement in using the NPHPSP in system improvement activities (quality improvement).
4	Evaluate how and to what extent a highly performing public health system is indicative of preparedness.
4	Explore the relationship between public health infrastructure / performance and the design, implementation, and impact / outcomes of categorical programs (including the use of evidence-based interventions).
3	Explore models and outcomes of accreditation of public health agencies and/or public health systems as performance improvement methods.
3	Evaluate how shifting policy and financial priorities affect performance of public health systems.
2	Explore the effectiveness (within the agency and the system) of local and state governance structures

Top Priorities by Work Setting:

Federal Government	- Define and quantify dimensions of public health systems including interorganizational relationships (including the role of the agency within the public health system). - Explore the relationship between social determinants of health and system performance.
State/Local Public Health Agency	- Determine how public health agency structure affects performance. - Explore the relationship between performance and health outcomes (and the chain of impacts that leads from improved performance to improved health outcomes).
Academia	- Explore the relationship between performance and health outcomes (and the chain of impacts that leads from improved performance to improved health outcomes).
Non-profit organization	- Explore the relationship between performance and health outcomes (and the chain of impacts that leads from improved performance to improved health outcomes).
Healthcare organization	N/A
Consultant	- Explore the relationship between performance and health outcomes (and the chain of impacts that leads from improved performance to improved health outcomes).
Other practice organization	- Determine how public health agency structure affects performance. - Define and quantify dimensions of public health systems including interorganizational relationships (including the role of the agency within the public health system). - Define the characteristics of high-performing local, state, and federal public health agencies.
Other research organization	N/A

II Research Agenda for Public Health Workforce Development

Top Priorities according to Forum Respondents:

Checks Received	Key Gaps in Public Health Science
25	Competency - what methods are most effective? What organizational variables support competency development and application?
21	Relationship of performance indicators (National Public Health Performance Standards - Essential Service #8- assure a competent workforce) and health outcomes controlled for community context.
11	Monitor workforce - size, distribution, qualifications, and tenure.
10	Best indicators for workforce performance (e.g., workforce size, etc.).
9	Labor market forces: recruitment, retention, wage/salary/benefits and personnel system characteristics.

Top Priorities by Work Setting:

Federal Government	- Relationship of performance indicators (National Public Health Performance Standards - Essential Service #8- assure a competent workforce) and health outcomes controlled for community context.
State/Local Public Health Agency	- Competency - what methods are most effective? What organizational variables support competency development and application?
Academia	- Competency - what methods are most effective? What organizational variables support competency development and application?
Non-profit organization	- Labor market forces: recruitment, retention, wage/salary/benefits and personnel system characteristics.
Healthcare organization	N/A
Consultant	- No single research topic was selected by more than one individual.
Other practice organization	- Competency - what methods are most effective? What organizational variables support competency development and application?
Other research organization	N/A

III Rural Public Health Research Agenda

Top Priorities according to Forum Respondents:

Checks Received	Priority Research Questions
15	**Rural Public Health Infrastructure** What is the composition of the current rural public health infrastructure? (i.e., legal authority, structure/governance, functions, perceptions/expectations, and workforce) What is the mix of services and resources that make up a rural public health infrastructure?
14	**Rural Health Disparities** What are the social determinants (including economic and environmental issues) of health disparities in rural populations?
13	**Workforce Development and Competency Enhancement** What are the needs (i.e., workers, competencies) of rural health practice? What are the workforce ratios for rural communities?
12	**Rural Public Health Infrastructure** What are the characteristics of communities that have and sustain a public health infrastructure?
7	**Workforce Development and Competency Enhancement** What are "very good' practices for rural public health workforce development?
4	**Environmental Health Issues** What is the impact of the lack of resources on environmental health in rural areas?
4	**Rural Public Health Preparedness** What components (functions) of preparedness (a) are currently provided and (b) should be provided by rural communities? How are rural communities mobilizing and organizing resources (including people) to provide these functions?
2	**Environmental Health Issues** What are the linkages between exposure and health outcomes?
2	**Rural Public Health Preparedness** How is government organized (i.e., different state-regional-local models) across the U.S. to assure accountability for preparedness in rural areas, and what are the implications of this government organization?
2	**Access to Care/Safety Net Support** What are the prevalences of various models of service delivery in rural areas, and to what extent does each model involve public health agencies, activities and functions?
1	**Access to Care/Safety Net Support** To what extent are various health assessment models (e.g., PATCH, MAPP, APEX) used, who uses/administers them, how are they used, and to what extent are they modified?
1	**Rural Health Disparities** How has technology, such as tele-health, been used or how can it be used to facilitate identification of problems and solutions related to rural health disparities?

Top Priorities by Work Setting:

Federal Government	Rural Public Health Infrastructure (both priorities equally)
State/Local Public Health Agency	- Rural Public Health Infrastructure: What is the composition of the current rural public health infrastructure? (i.e., legal authority, structure/governance, functions, perceptions/expectations, and workforce) What is the mix of services and resources that make up a rural public health infrastructure? - Workforce Development and Competency Enhancement: What are the needs (i.e., workers, competencies) of rural health practice? What are the workforce ratios for rural communities?
Academia	- Rural Public Health Disparities: What are the social determinants (including economic and environmental issues) of health disparities in rural populations? - Workforce Development and Competency Enhancement: What are the needs (i.e., workers, competencies) of rural health practice? What are the workforce ratios for rural communities?
Non-profit organization	- Rural Public Health Disparities: What are the social determinants (including economic and environmental issues) of health disparities in rural populations? - Workforce Development and Competency Enhancement: What are the needs (i.e., workers, competencies) of rural health practice? What are the workforce ratios for rural communities?
Healthcare organization	N/A
Consultant	- No single research topic was selected by more than one individual.
Other practice organization	- No single research topic was selected by more than one individual.

IV Gaps in the Research Areas Listed Above: What is missing?

Respondent Comments

Workforce

- Analysis of critical workforce issues in nursing; incorporation of public health nursing enumeration into research contexts; examination of the way public health nursing differs from other public health professions
- Measuring communication competency as a core competency
- The relationship between the need for workforce competencies and organizational competencies
- Competencies to carry out evidence-based prevention agendas
- Identify a mix of professions needed in every local public health jurisdiction and help recruit these experts
- Issues related to variances in structure and relationships between federal, state, and local systems. Variance in public health workforces from state to state should also be documented.
- The proportion of the public health workforce not in governmental agencies and their reasons behind their choice to work in these agencies; workforce projections assuming a more limited role of governmental public health agencies, as outlined in the recent Institute of Medicine report; a more specified examination of the different roles
- Enumeration and profiling of the public health workforce, with definitions that allow for easy tallying

Infrastructure

- Connections between public health infrastructure and the local health services delivery system and performance and health outcomes
- Questions relating to governance and political control
- Research on economically and logistically managing surge demand (e.g. demands associated with pandemic flu or terrorist events)
- Systems planning and leadership management
- Research on integration of systems, and the translation/implementation strategies for research results
- Correlate the size of various public health systems; flexibility and capacity to identify new and emerging threats
- Explore public health by population group and the systems that serve these groups; primary care focus vs. population health focus
- Special attention to cross-cutting priorities (e.g. communications research); take a trans-disciplinary approach to research

- Perception of the public health "brand;" proper framing of what, precisely, public health is and does
- More direct modeling of what we currently know as a means of identifying and addressing gaps
- The relationship between terrorism preparedness and public health systems research
- An update to the preexisting documents supporting public health systems research
- The impact of changing demographics on public health systems research (e.g. aging, urbanization, etc.)
- Elimination of overlap and redundancy in the research agendas

Finance

- Categorical funding for contracts and outsourcing
- A public health financing database
- More stable and comprehensive public health financing recommendations
- More funding for competencies and accreditation

Performance Improvement

- Implementation of technology, information data standards, and information management on workforce performance
- The use of methodologies that capture the nonlinear examples of performance improvement across critical multi-sectional components
- Examination of high-performing systems

Education

- Ensuring the involvement of public health graduate programs in research
- Examination of continuous training and barriers to integrating a system of on-the-job learning
- Integration of public health systems research into curricula in schools of public health
- Inclusion and emphasis on MPH programs outside of schools of public health, where the majority of public health professionals received their MPH degrees

Rural Communities

- How best to fund initiatives where there are limited resources (problems with categorical funding and its lack of flexibility)
- Including grocery stores and food distribution centers as part of public health infrastructure in rural areas
- Consideration of retirement's effect on the system in the workforce research agenda
- Research about the role of the state public health departments in filling gaps in local public health services in rural areas; the relationship of state and local public health governance and its affect on local public health performance
- Attention to economies of scale and the need for local health departments to merge