



Background Paper for Core Competencies Workgroup

Overview

In light of changes in the public health field stemming from new technologies, the events of September 11, 2001, and a changing workforce, this workgroup is working to update and refine the Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals which were originally adopted in April 2001. During telephone conferences, members have been reviewing changes made based upon input gathered from organizations that have used the competencies, as well as suggesting additional changes based on experiences within their own organizations. Staff at the Public Health Foundation (PHF) serve to support the workgroup in this endeavor by coordinating meetings, conducting a literature review, and providing other assistance as needed. The workgroup will present a draft version of the Core Competencies to the full Council by May 2008. The current version of the Core Competencies can be found at www.trainingfinder.org/competencies/list_nolevels.htm.

Background

Since the adoption of the Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals in April 2001, the field of public health has seen many changes. Additionally, according to a 2005 survey by the National Association of County and City Health Officials, 72% of local health departments are familiar with the Core Competencies and 65% of those departments that are aware of the Competencies are using them in some way.¹ Further, 91% of schools and programs in public health that responded to a survey conducted by PHF in 2006 said that they incorporate the Core Competencies into their curricula.² In light of the changes in the public health field, as well as the now widespread use of the Core Competencies, this workgroup is working to update the competencies, based upon recommendations from Council on Linkages members, comments collected by PHF since 2001 from Core Competencies users, and available data compiled through a literature review and interviews with users of the Core Competencies.

Research/Literature Review

Based on preliminary research, users of the Core Competencies seem to fall into two basic groups: 1) organizations that use the Competencies in the way they were originally designed (i.e., to create job descriptions, perform assessments, etc.) and 2) organizations that have taken and adapted Core Competencies to make competencies for a specific area of public health (i.e., public health nursing competencies, etc.). Please note that the Core Competencies uses that fall under the first category need to be researched through interviews with users.

Below is a listing of examples of Core Competencies usage that fall under the second category:

National Training Initiative for Injury and Violence Prevention – www.injured.org

- compares and relates Council on Linkages Core Competencies to those having to do with injury and violence prevention

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - www.cdc.gov/od/owcd/cdd/aec/

- competencies for epidemiologists “developed within the framework” of the Council on Linkages Core Competencies by CSTE and CDC

National Office of Public Health Genomics – www.cdc.gov/genomics/training/competencies/comps.htm

- a set of genomics competencies for a number of different public health workers

QUAD Council Public Health Nurses Competencies –

www.astdn.org/publication_quad_council_phn_competencies.htm

- listing of competencies for public health nurses

¹ *The Local Health Department Workforce: Findings from the 2005 National Profile of Local Health Departments Study*, National Association of County and City Health Officials. January 2007. The full report is available at: www.naccho.org/pubs/product1.cfm?Product_ID=15

² *Report on Healthy People 2010 Objective 23-9 for Midcourse Review*, Public Health Foundation. May/June 2006. www.phf.org/Reports/HP2010-23-9-midcourse.pdf

Interviews

The following questions were used in interviews with organizations which use the Core Competencies:

- 1) How long have you been using the Core Competencies?
- 2) How have you used them (i.e., assessment, policy development, etc.)?
- 3) Overall, have you found them helpful/useful?
- 4) In which areas have they been most useful?
- 5) In which areas have they been least useful?
- 6) Have they been more or less useful for a specific group of professionals (e.g., nurses, epidemiologists)?
- 7) What suggestions do you have for revising them?

A list of organizations to interview was compiled from www.train.org, as well as from NACCHO's *2005 National Profile of Local Health Departments Study*.

Updates

The updates of the Core Competencies should relate to a number of factors. First, as briefly discussed above, the updates should reflect new developments in the field. These developments relate to the events of September 11, 2001 and the funding shifts which followed, along with new technologies, and new needs of the field. Second, it is anticipated that the updated Core Competencies will include a standardizing of the language used for each of the competencies. Finally, the updated Core Competencies may include improved abilities for measurability.

Conclusions

By May 2008 the Core Competencies Workgroup will present a draft of the updated Competencies to the full Council on Linkages. Additionally, plans for a public review (e.g., online comments, public forums, organizational meetings) are in progress. However, the ability to seek public comments may be limited by funding after May 2008.

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