

Background Information on Workforce Capacity

The public health workforce consists of those professionals working in a variety of settings including, governmental health agencies (at the federal, state, and local levels), community-based organizations, educational institutions, personal health services industry, and public sector organizations such as EMS, police, and fire agencies. This network of professionals works to ensure the public's health is safe from emerging diseases and other health threats.

Current estimates place the public health workforce at approximately 448,254 persons (in salaried positions). That is approximately one public health worker for every 635 persons, supplemented by at least 2,864,825 volunteers. These statistics come from a document entitled *The Public Health Workforce: Enumeration 2000*, which was prepared by the Center for Health Policy, Columbia University School of Nursing, for the Health Resources and Services Administration. Several recent surveys suggest that a large proportion of the public health workforce is at or approaching retirement age, which may result in worker shortages.

Strengthening Workforce Capacity Depends on Our Ability to:

- Educate and train our current and future public health workforce
- Measure and manage workforce performance
- Assess health agency workforce development needs
- Assure public health leadership development and activities
- Assure adequate numbers of public health workers for the future
- Increase funding for the development of education and training

To learn more about what is currently being done to strengthen the public health workforce and to improve worker recruitment and retention, visit the "Workforce Capacity" section on the Public Health Infrastructure Resource Center website.

Visit <http://www.phf.org/infrastructure>



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