

**Council on Linkages Between Academia and Public Health Practice
January 25, 2005 Meeting Summary**

In response to recent studies indicating a large proportion of the public health workforce is at or nearing retirement age, the Council on Linkages Between Academia and Public Health Practice (Council) is working to advance strategies to identify and close gaps in worker recruitment and retention efforts. In order to help inform the national dialogue on the emerging worker shortage, the Council convened a forum on January 25, 2005 to discuss research on effective strategies to recruit and retain workers in public health and other fields. The goal of the forum was twofold:

- 1) to provide Council member organizations with an introduction to the evidence available and not yet available to assist them as they develop recruitment and retention strategies; and
- 2) to identify ways the Council can facilitate member organizations' and partners' efforts to advance national public health recruitment and retention initiatives.

To help strengthen national partnerships around this issue, Kathy Vincent, the chair of the Public Health Workforce Development Collaborative (Collaborative), spoke about the work of the Collaborative and the ways the Collaborative and the Council can work together to address worker shortages.

Council members heard presentations on recruitment and retention efforts in several fields from experts from the National Governors Association, the National Education Association, the Association of American Medical Colleges, and the SUNY Albany School of Public Health, Center for Health Workforce Studies. The speakers addressed the conditions that contribute to worker shortages and gave specific examples of programs that have attracted new employees and improved working conditions. Drawing from the information presented at the forum <<http://www.phf.org/Link/tools.htm#Recruitment>> and additional research materials provided to session participants <<http://www.phf.org/Link/RRresearch.pdf>>, Council members discussed strategies to enhance public health worker recruitment and retention, including:

- Strengthening the career ladder for individuals already in public health and career paths for individuals from other fields or from the for-profit sector;
- Advocating greater funds to make salaries more competitive;
- Raising public awareness about public health and career opportunities;
- Engaging retired public health workers in teaching and advising roles; and
- Examining the perception of students and potential employees of working in a government setting.

Members also suggested focusing on workforce issues at three stages: recruiting new workers, retaining current workers, and helping increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the workforce. In the course of the forum, Council members proposed several issues that should be

studied to inform decisions about which recruitment and retention strategies to implement. Among the research questions posed:

- What would be the costs, benefits, and unanticipated consequences of programs to accredit health departments and credential public health workers;
- How do salaries of public health workers influence performance and community health outcomes;
- Where do individuals work after graduating from schools of public health and what affects those decisions; and
- What is the public perception of public health and how does this impact worker recruitment and retention?

Several action items emerged from the meeting. Council staff will compile and disseminate the list of research questions generated during the meeting in the hope that they will be incorporated in public health systems research agendas. Additionally, a list of potential strategies—with links to relevant research or example programs, when available—will be distributed to Council member organizations. This is designed to serve as a starting point for member organizations as they plan strategies to strengthen worker recruitment and retention efforts and as a foundation for future national meetings on the subject. These strategies should be incorporated into a continually growing clearinghouse of strategies and resources for the benefit of the entire field.