

KPHA Policy Paper 2008 Public Health Workforce Development

The Kentucky Public Health Association (KPHA) supports coordinated efforts between state and local health departments and Schools and Programs of Public Health to develop a Comprehensive Workforce Development Plan. KPHA further supports targeting of adequate resources to implement a statewide plan.

The public health system must be prepared at all times to protect the population against health threats and rapidly react to crisis. It is essential that an adequate supply of well-prepared public health professionals is available to staff an effective public health system in Kentucky. A prepared Public Health workforce will need to be competent through knowledge and skills acquired by education, training and experience. Qualified public health workers should be encouraged to take national certification exams.

A study by the New York Center for Health Workforce Studies at the SUNY School of Public Health focused on workers in State and local governmental public health agencies, particularly public health physicians, dentists and nurses, as well as other workers with formal public health training. The study also examined the role that schools of public health play in assisting these public health agencies to recruit, retain or provide continuing education to their workforce.¹ Significant findings include:

- Greater need for training in core public health concepts for staff without formal public health training.
- Lack of access to advanced education, including baccalaureate nursing and graduate studies, particularly in rural areas.
- Greater need for collaborations between schools of public health and public health agencies.

Elements of a Comprehensive Workforce Development Plan would include:

- A. Training in core public health concepts to be completed by all Public Health workers within their first year of work.
- B. Non-degree graduate and undergraduate Certificate program for persons wishing to advance their knowledge without necessarily obtaining a degree.
- C. A Public Health oriented academic ladder beginning at the undergraduate level that offers continuity through the Doctoral level.
- D. Increased effort to recruit and retain qualified students and employees.
- E. Adequate funding for a better educated, trained and prepared workforce.

¹HRSA Bureau of Health Professions Public Health Workforce Study Executive Summary, January 2005