COUNCIL ON LINKAGES BETWEEN ACADEMIA AND PUBLIC HEALTH PRACTICE

Background Paper: Core Competencies Workgroup Activities

(Updated Spring 2010)

Overview

In 2007, the Council on Linkages Between Academia and Public Health Practice's (Council's) Core Competencies Workgroup began the process of updating the Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals (Core Competencies). The Core Competencies were originally adopted in 2001. They were revised to ensure that they accurately reflect the skills and characteristics that practitioners at the supervisory/middle management level of their career (Tier 2/MidTier) may desire to have.

After an extensive revision process, in May 2008, the Core Competencies Workgroup presented a final version of the Tier 2 Core Competencies draft to the Council. Upon obtaining approval from the Council, the draft was posted on the Council's feedback website - giving public health professionals across the country an opportunity to provide feedback. Comments were also received at Town Hall Meetings, and through email communications and letters sent to Council staff. Feedback received was addressed during an extensive competency review and revision period that took place between January and March 2009. The Council adopted Tier 2 Core Competencies on June 11, 2009.

Following the adoption of Tier 2 Core Competencies, Tier 1 and Tier 3 Core Competencies were drafted. A joint public comment period for the draft Tier 1 and Tier 3 Core Competencies took place in late 2009. In early 2010, comments and recommended changes were reviewed by staff and Competencies Consultant Kathy Miner, PhD, and the Core Competencies Workgroup. During this refinement process, it was noted that some minor changes to Tier 2 Core Competencies were desirable in order to ensure a logical progression of competencies from Tier 1 to Tier 2 to Tier 3. On May 3, 2010, the Council unanimously adopted Tier 1 and Tier 3 Core Competencies, as well as minor changes to Tier 2 Core Competencies.

Current Activities

Current activities include developing tools to assist public health practitioners with using the Core Competencies.

Core Competencies Users

According to a 2009 report by the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) 60% of State Health Agencies (SHAs) are using the Core Competencies to assess staff competencies, develop training plans, prepare job descriptions et cetera.

At least 22 states/TRAIN affiliates are using the Core Competencies as part of their learning management system. (TRAIN is the learning management system developed by the Public Health Foundation. Currently, it has over 300,000 users nationwide.)

A 2005 study by the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) showed that 72% of local health departments are familiar with the Core Competencies, while 65% of those departments that are aware of the Core Competencies use them.

A 2006 survey conducted by PHF showed that over 90% of public health schools and programs incorporate the Core Competencies into their curricula.

Interviews

The following questions were used in interviews with organizations that 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, and NACCHO's *2005 National Profile of Local Health Departments Study*.

Results of the Council's Research/Literature Review on Core Competencies Users

Preliminary research conducted by PHF suggests that Core Competencies users fall into two 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 the Core Competencies to make competencies for a specific area of public health (i.e., public health nursing competencies, etc.). Examples of Core Competencies users that fall under the second category are listed below:

   - Competencies for Applied Epidemiologists in Governmental Public Health Agencies: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) developed competencies for epidemiologists using the Council on Linkages Core Competencies framework.

   - National Training Initiative for Injury and Violence Prevention: The National Training Initiative for Injury and training developed a list of Core Competencies for public health professionals that work in the injury and violence prevention sector. It used the Council on Linkages Core Competencies set as a starting point to develop its set of discipline-specific competencies!

   - Quad Council Public Health Nurses Competencies: The Quad Council of Public Health Nursing Organizations developed a set of competencies for public health nurses using the Council on Linkages Core Competencies as a starting point.

   - National Office of Public Health Genomics: The National Office of Public Health Genomics developed a set of Genomics Competencies for a number of different public health workers (e.g. public health leaders/administrators, public health professionals in clinical services etc.).

For more information, please contact Pam Saungweme at psaungweme@phf.org or 202-218-4424.