# Job Satisfaction of Public Health Employees in Kentucky

Innovation comes from people who take joy in their work.

Edwards Demming

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2003-2004 Change Masters Three Rights and A Wrong

# Job Satisfaction of Public Health Employees in Kentucky

## **Public Health**

- Public Health prevents epidemics and the spread of disease;
- Protects against environmental hazards;
- Prevents injuries;
- Promotes and encourages healthy behaviors;
- Responds to disasters and assists communities in recovery;
- Assures the quality and accessibility of health services.

**NACCHO** 

# **Executive Summary**

There are many definitions of public health set forth by the National Association of City and County Health Officials (NACCHO) Center for Disease Control (CDC), World Health Organization (WHO), American Public Health Association (APHA), Healthy People 2010 and so forth. Yet whatever definition and goals that follow, they all rely on a satisfied workforce to put them into practice. This change master project will create an awareness to the level of job satisfaction among public health employees; and how important a satisfied workforce for the Commonwealth's success in its mission to promote and safeguard the health and wellness of all Kentuckians. This awareness will be created with the promotion and adoption of a job satisfaction survey by local public health directors to use as part of part of their strategic planning and monitoring.

The Kentucky legislature adopted in February 2004, Healthy Kentuckians 2010. This

initiative reflects the nation's health agenda and trends facing public health in the next decade. Healthy Kentuckians recognizes that public health workers, the heart of all successful public health initiatives, need to improve their performance of the essential public health

Public Health workers are the heart of all successful public health initiatives. . .

services through continuing education and training (Healthy Kentuckians 2010). Other measures Kentucky has taken to ensure the health and well being of its citizens include strategies from Bioterrorism Preparedness to Public Education and Prevention Programs.

Not only do the state's initiatives depend on a workforce with a high level of job satisfaction, but also so does the health of the public. Approximately half of the 2 million deaths in the U.S. each year could be prevented. Public health professionals – in their roles as environmental monitors, inspectors, consumer educators and health care providers – significantly reduce the number of preventable deaths. Only 20 percent of the nation's estimated 400,000 to 500,000 public health professionals have the education and training needed to do their jobs most effectively. (HRSA)

The benefits of a satisfied workforce for public health are nothing short of a "win-win" situation. When people are more satisfied in their jobs they have better attendance records, are healthier, feel more valued.

Workers' involved in friendly, relaxed and congenial worker groups with supervisors who listen to them, and show concern about the employee's needs, become more supportive and productive than others, even under less favorable working conditions.

Workers' satisfaction with the social and interpersonal relationships with their peers significantly influences productivity, and workers feel substantial pressures from their peers to conform to the norms of their work group. (Conrad, 1990)

Kentucky has approximately 1,500 public health workers working in independent, district, and single county agencies. Like so many public service working environments, employees are expected to do a lot with less. They are some of the most dedicated and committed professionals who help individuals and families struggling to maintain a reasonable level of productive health. Yet, how often do supervisors and directors look to the needs of their employees as much as they do to the needs of the community or the initiatives imposed on them?

Another dependent on a satisfied public health workforce includes the Kentucky Public Health Leadership Institute. Over the past four years, the institute has brought together selected public health employees with leadership abilities to enhance their skills and start them on the road to becoming Public Health leaders. As part of this program, change master teams introduced many projects that have contributed to improving the quality, either directly or indirectly, of the health of Kentucky citizens. These initiatives also assume the state has a satisfied workforce and therefore will take on their missions.

The Employee Job Satisfaction Survey produced by this change master project will offer local health department directors an avenue to address employee job satisfaction. This tool, divided into three categories; Overall Job Satisfaction, Job Characteristics, and Role Ambiguity will give insight to the issues for directors to build on the strengths of their employees and rectify those factors that contribute to their dissatisfaction.

# Introduction/Background

There will be quality of work life when people take pride in what they do.

Edwards Demming

Organizations of today no longer feel they must provide the three levels of Maslow's hierarchy of human needs; food, shelter, and belonging, according to Bill O'Brien, a former Hanover Insurance CEO (5<sup>th</sup> Discipline, 1994). He goes on by saying that since these essentials are more readily available organizations must therefore address the higher order of needs: self-respect and self-actualization. As public health leaders, this change master team has observed that many of our coworkers lack these two needs. The team wanted to take positive steps that would address the obstacles preventing our colleagues from gaining self-respect and actualization in their work environment.

Although this change master project evolved through several stages, the team never lost sight of its original focus to create an awareness of job satisfaction among public health employees, and the Commonwealth's need for a satisfied workforce to succeed in its mission to promote and safeguard the health and wellness of all Kentuckians.

As the team's collaboration process began it became evident that they brought different perspectives. One perspective included almost twenty years of public health experience. The value of this contribution included observing coworkers' job satisfaction decline. A second perspective came from a supervisor's viewpoint with a concern at what point did the employees' satisfaction start to dwindle. (i.e. During the probation period? Within the first year? After three years? With a change in leadership? etc.) Another perspective came from a trainer's point of view. If the contributing elements to job satisfaction could be identified, then would a training directory that supplied opportunities to enhance strengths and address weaknesses of the organization. The final perspective came from outside of public health, which was quite valuable in the development process. This offered an opportunity for an observer to provide input from the outside with an objective point of view.

The team's first step in addressing job satisfaction began with investigating the level of job satisfaction of public health workers in Kentucky, which meant developing a job satisfaction survey. This tool became the team's main objective. Its creation added another entirely different learning opportunity for the team members. Developing a survey is not necessarily a difficult task, yet surveying human subjects through an academic process is a different story.

# Methodology

# A goal without a method is nonsense. Edwards Deming

- Develop a survey by researching job satisfaction surveys to modify for the target as public health employees.
- Discovered a validated survey (one already proven) and approval of two Internal Review Boards processes, University of Kentucky and Kentucky
  - Cabinet for Health Services are required before implementation.
- To gain the "buy-in" of stakeholders a team member presented to the Kentucky Directors' Association.
- The team met with their academic advisor who suggested:
  - Refer to <u>The Experience of work: a compendium and review of 249</u> <u>measures and their use</u> (Cook, 1981) as a resource in for the survey.
  - Survey a sample of the public health employee population.
  - Preferred method for implementation would be in person.
  - The KPHLI director will coordinate the analysis through the University of Kentucky
- Topic areas selected from the text includes:
  - Overall job satisfaction

- Job Characteristics
- Role Ambiguity (divided into two sub-categories, Role Overload and Non-Participation)
- Demographic information includes:
  - Type of health department (i.e. independent, district, or single county)
  - Specific job areas
  - Employment Status
  - Amount of time working in public health department
  - Length of time working in public health
- University of Kentucky Internal Review Board Process included submitting an application that reviewed such aspects including:
  - Study design
  - Study Population
  - Subject recruitment Methods
  - Research Procedures
  - Confidentiality of participants
  - Results reported
- The IRB submitted to the Cabinet for Health Services resulted in a number of follow-up inquiries and suggestions such as:
  - What is a Change Master Team?
  - How do they function?
  - Who are the scholars involved with the project?
  - The committee seemed concerned that the reference for survey questions was a 1981 resource and asked if a more updated resource could be found, yet this was the source the academic advisor suggested to the scholars.
  - The committee suggested placing the demographic questions on the front page instead of the last page.
  - They also suggested crediting this KPHLI Change Master project under the sponsorship of the Cabinet for Health Services.

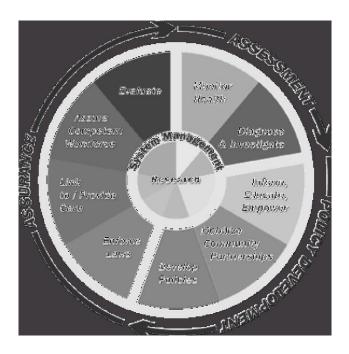
# **Essential Services and Core Functions**

We're still not where we're going but we're still not where we were.

Natasha Josefowitz

French-American writer and lecturer

The 10 Essential Public Health Services and Public Health Core Functions apply to this project. This supports the premise that a learning organization fulfills the basic needs of an employee's awareness and sensibilities, which over time develops into improved skills and capabilities that alters attitudes and belief at the deepest level that results into a learning environment. (5<sup>th</sup> Discipline, p. 17)



#### Conclusion/Results

At the time of this printing, this change master team has only received confirmation of approval through the director of KPHLI from the University of Kentucky that the draft survey instrument is approved. No response has been forthcoming from the Cabinet of Health Services.

A true leader is neither attached to success nor afraid of failure.

He knows that success is not so much the completion
of a specific project as the energy that goes into completing it.

Projects can be destroyed, but never energy itself.

J. Donald Walters

# Special Thanks

To Eula Spears
A leader must have knowledge. A leader must be able to teach.
Edwards Deming

This change master team would like to express their deepest appreciation to Eula Spears for all of her efforts on our behalf. She has encouraged and supported our efforts throughout this project. Many unforeseeable obstacles were placed in the team's path, in which she coached us either around or through them. She is truly a leader.

To Suzie Hamm
Courage happens when people unite.
Anonymous

For the guidance and support from our mentor, Suzie Hamm who took action in our behalf at a critical time when we felt overwhelmed. She ensured that we stayed optimistic and positive by reminding us of our strengths within ourselves.

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# Leadership Development Opportunities

## **Christy Brooks**

The Kentucky Public Health Leadership Institute has given me the opportunity to work with a dynamic team that is passionate about public health professionals' satisfaction in the workplace. It has always been my understanding that productivity is synonymous to job satisfaction. This institute has given me the tools needed to lead, encourage and mentor others on the importance of public health as well as job satisfaction. "Men and women want to do a good job. "If they are provided the proper environment, they will do so", said Bill Hewlett, Founder of Hewlett-Packard. This is not a new concept, but as public health professionals, we are consumed with external issues, which prevent us from addressing internal concerns that affect the very core of Public Health. We must commit ourselves to the 10 Essential Public Health Services in order to have a productive and satisfied workplace starting with the following Essential Services:

- 3) Inform, educate and empower people about health issues
- 5) Develop policies and plan that support individual and community health efforts
- 8) Assure a competent public health care workforce

I have enjoyed my learning experience and fellowship with other participants, mentors and KPHLI staff. Thank you for this growth opportunity and I will let my light shine as a Servant of Public Health. "Anyone wanting to be a leader must first be the servant. If you want to lead you must serve," Jesus Christ.

### **Evette Hudson**

Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.

Helen Keller

My participation in the Kentucky Public Health Leadership Institute has been a lasting experience. I have gained a wealth of knowledge in what Public Health is truly all about. The program has equipped me with skills needed to be an effective leader in most professional settings. During the course of learning about the 10 Essential Functions of Public Health, I have acquired the essential tools and techniques needed towards my future endeavors. I have truly enjoyed the speakers, exercises, group assignments, and the social gathering the afternoons when we had a chance to meet and network with each other. The friendships I developed with my fellow scholars will be treasured a lifetime. To my change master team, I would like to extend my appreciation and thanks for taking on a project that you knew was so dear to me. I look forward to working and continuing towards the team building concepts upon which we have learned. Through out the obstacle course we had to follow, we some how managed to climb over the mountains and march towards our goal and become close friends. Thanks to all of you, and I sincerely hope that we can work together in the future.

#### Eric Hunter

My participation in the Kentucky Public Health Leadership Institute has been a positive experience for me on many different levels. The people I've met within the program, the scholars and mentors, the presenters/teachers, the director and assistants who have each brought a part of the mosaic that is the KPHLI experience. It has allowed me

2003-2004 Change Masters

pause to take an introspective look at myself, a first step to self-improvement. It has opened my eyes to other and/or better methods of improvement I can apply to myself, and my role in my organization. My Change Master group is tremendous. A group of extremely diverse personalities, who were able to meld together, gain focus and proceed onward towards the goal despite frustration and obstacles. And, how could I leave out the abuse, I mean support and assistance of our mentor. I learned a tremendous amount about Public Health and its importance to us all at the local, state, national and international levels. Coming from Fire and Emergency Medical Services, I have a clearer understanding of the role EMS can and needs to play in contributing to Public Health. I feel fortunate to have been able to participate in KPHLI and I thank all who have made my experience such a positive one.

### Darlene Walls

The key experience I take with me from KPHLI is a dedication and commitment to public health. This opportunity allowed me to become more knowledgeable about public health, not just in Kentucky but nationally as well. As for the learning experience from the readings, assignments, and Summits, I found them invigorating and energizing. Throughout the process, I kept strategizing how to work the principles and concepts into training and/or into our work environment. KPHLI has provided me with a confidence that I can make a difference. Our change master team proved their leadership qualities by overcoming the obstacles we faced through our project. This team defines leadership by leaving egos at home, accepting the importance of the responsibility set before them, and a willingness to adapt but stay true to our focus. I could not have asked for a better team of professionals whom I hope to continue our friendship for years to come. The interaction with my classmates taught me as much about public health as the classroom setting. If these individuals are destined to be the future public health leaders of Kentucky, then our Commonwealth is truly in safe hands. For they are progressive thinkers, willing to take on the role in order to improve the quality of health for their friends, neighbors, family members, but most importantly strangers who need them the most. Katherine Graham, American publisher said, "To love what you do and feel that it matters—how could anything be more fun." Without a doubt, the KPHLI class of 2004 are public health leaders who love what they do.

# **Appendix 1**

### KENTUCKY LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT

# **EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION SURVEY**

Dear Public Health Employee,

This survey is designed to identify the level of employee satisfaction. We invite you to participate and make your views known by taking the time to complete this survey. Information obtained from this survey will not identify any specific health department or employee, but to determine factors that contribute to the public health employee's job satisfaction. Results will be reported in summary form only to the Kentucky Public Health Leadership Institute in hopes that local health department directors will adopt this survey tool as a means to evaluate their employees' job satisfaction.

Please indicate the most appropriate response..

Please indicate if each statement is true or untrue in your

current job or position.	True	Untrue	Know
People where I work are friendly			
My job is very boring			
I get a feeling of achieving something worthwhile in my job			
I only do my job because I need the money			
My boss is always ready to discuss people's problems			
My boss takes the work I do too much for granted			
I wish I had more security in my job			
There is a happy atmosphere in the place I work			
I really dislike my job			
My boss is fair to everyone			
11. Where I work, management asks workers first about			
changing anything that affects them			
I am unhappy with my working conditions			
Please indicate the amount if each of the following	Very	Moderate	Very
characteristics your job provides.	Little	Amount	Much
13. How much variety is there in your job?	Little	Amount	Much
	Little	Amount	Much
<ul><li>13. How much variety is there in your job?</li><li>14. How much are you left on your own to do your own work?</li><li>15. How often do you see projects or jobs through to</li></ul>	Little	Amount	Much
<ul><li>13. How much variety is there in your job?</li><li>14. How much are you left on your own to do your own work?</li><li>15. How often do you see projects or jobs through to completion?</li></ul>	Little	Amount	Much
<ul><li>13. How much variety is there in your job?</li><li>14. How much are you left on your own to do your own work?</li><li>15. How often do you see projects or jobs through to completion?</li><li>16. To what extent do you find out how well you are doing on the</li></ul>	Little	Amount	Much
<ul><li>13. How much variety is there in your job?</li><li>14. How much are you left on your own to do your own work?</li><li>15. How often do you see projects or jobs through to completion?</li><li>16. To what extent do you find out how well you are doing on the job as you are working?</li></ul>	Little	Amount	Much
<ul> <li>13. How much variety is there in your job?</li> <li>14. How much are you left on your own to do your own work?</li> <li>15. How often do you see projects or jobs through to completion?</li> <li>16. To what extent do you find out how well you are doing on the job as you are working?</li> <li>17. How much opportunity is there to meet individuals whom</li> </ul>	Little	Amount	Much
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<ul> <li>13. How much variety is there in your job?</li> <li>14. How much are you left on your own to do your own work?</li> <li>15. How often do you see projects or jobs through to completion?</li> <li>16. To what extent do you find out how well you are doing on the job as you are working?</li> <li>17. How much opportunity is there to meet individuals whom you would like to develop friendships with?</li> <li>18. How much of your job depends upon your ability work with others?  How repetitious are your duties?</li> <li>20. To what extent are you able to act independently of your</li> </ul>		Amount	Much
<ul> <li>13. How much variety is there in your job?</li> <li>14. How much are you left on your own to do your own work?</li> <li>15. How often do you see projects or jobs through to completion?</li> <li>16. To what extent do you find out how well you are doing on the job as you are working?</li> <li>17. How much opportunity is there to meet individuals whom you would like to develop friendships with?</li> <li>18. How much of your job depends upon your ability work with others?  How repetitious are your duties?</li> <li>20. To what extent are you able to act independently of your supervisor in performing your job function?</li> </ul>		Amount	Much
<ul> <li>13. How much variety is there in your job?</li> <li>14. How much are you left on your own to do your own work?</li> <li>15. How often do you see projects or jobs through to completion?</li> <li>16. To what extent do you find out how well you are doing on the job as you are working?</li> <li>17. How much opportunity is there to meet individuals whom you would like to develop friendships with?</li> <li>18. How much of your job depends upon your ability work with others?  How repetitious are your duties?</li> <li>20. To what extent are you able to act independently of your supervisor in performing your job function?</li> <li>21. To what extent do you receive information from your</li> </ul>		Amount	Much
<ul> <li>13. How much variety is there in your job?</li> <li>14. How much are you left on your own to do your own work?</li> <li>15. How often do you see projects or jobs through to completion?</li> <li>16. To what extent do you find out how well you are doing on the job as you are working?</li> <li>17. How much opportunity is there to meet individuals whom you would like to develop friendships with?</li> <li>18. How much of your job depends upon your ability work with others?  How repetitious are your duties?</li> <li>20. To what extent are you able to act independently of your supervisor in performing your job function?</li> </ul>			

Yes,

No,

Don't

Please indicate the amount if each of the following				Moderate Amount	very Much
characteristics your job provides.				Alliount	IVIUCII
22. To what extent do you have the opportunity to talk					
informally with other employees while at work?  To what extent is dealing with other people a part of your					
iob?	eopie a pa	iit or your			Ш
How similar are the task you perform	in a tynica	Lworking			
day?	iii a typica	i working			
25. To what extent are you able to do you	ur ioh inder	nendently			
of others?	ar job iriac <sub>i</sub>	Scrideritiy			
The feedback from my supervisor on how well I'm doing?					
Friendship from my co-workers.					$\overline{\Box}$
The opportunity to talk to others on m	ny ioh				一一
The opportunity to do a number differ			$\neg \exists \neg$		一一
The freedom to do pretty much what					一一
31. The degree to which the work I'm inve					
from beginning to end by myself	OIVCG WILII	is riarialea			ш
The opportunity to find out how well I	am doing	on my ioh			
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The opportunity to complete work I st					
37. The feeling that I know whether I am	performing	any job		Ш	Ш
well or poorly.	a al a la tara a stra a				
The opportunity to develop close friendships in my job.					
Meeting with others in my work.					
The control I have over the pace of my work.					<u> </u>
41. The opportunity to do a job from the beginning to end (i.e.			Ш	Ш	Ш
the chance to do a whole job).					
42. The extent of feedback you receive from individuals other				Ш	
than your supervisor.					
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Please indicate your level of agreement	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral/ NA	Somewhat	Strongly
or disagreement to each statement.	Disagree	Disagree		Agree	Agree
43. My supervisor makes sure his			Ш		Ш
people have clear goals to achieve  44. My supervisor makes it clear how I					
should do my work			Ш		Ш
45. I don't know what performance					
standards are expected of me					ш
46. It is clear what is expected of me on					
my job			Ш		Ш
47. I am given enough time to do what					
is expected of me on my job					Ш
48. It often seems like I have too much					П
			Ш		
work for one person to do  49. The performance standards on my			П		П
job are too high					
50. I am usually not told about					
important things that are happening in					
this company					

Please indicate you or disagreement to	r level of agreement each statement.	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral/ NA	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
51. Meetings are f	requently held to olems with my co-					
52. Decisions are	usually made without ople who have to live					
Demographic Information While the survey is a views of the respond summary.	nonymous, the demo					e the
53. Your Health ag	gency is an: Indep	endent 🗌	District	S	ingle County	<u>/                                    </u>
	ollowing best describe all that apply.)	es your posit	tion in the He	ealth Dep	artment?	
Administ Clerical/S Clinical Environn Health E	Support Staff nental		Mana Comn Resea	nunity Ourarch, Plan	ning & Deve	elopment
55. What is your e	mployment status?					
Full Time Part Tim Contract			Seasonal Other,			
56. How long hav	e you worked in your	<u>Departmen</u>	t? Years	M	lonths	
57. How long hav	e you worked in the <u>p</u>	ublic health	field?			
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Bachelors D	-	_	ther			
60. Please rank t	ne followina elements	of vour job	as to how in	nportant tl	nev are to vo	ou with 1

60. Please rank the following elements of your job as to how important they are to you with a being the most important and 4 the least important.

Appreciation	Respect
Salary	Comfortable Work
Environment	

Please use the attached blank page to add any comment on areas of job satisfaction this questionnaire/survey did not address.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!