

Public Health Career Marketing In 9th Grade

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Executive Summary

Would it not be great if all high school students were aware of public health and the careers available in Kentucky public health agencies? Our Kentucky Public Health Leadership Institute Change Master Group thought this would be great and we chose to address the issue of public health career awareness in ninth grade students in two counties of the Commonwealth of Kentucky. We are hopeful that this project will only be a beginning to the push for public health career awareness.

Statistics prove that many public health employees are leaving the workforce and there are few adequately trained replacements; thus there is a shortage in public health workers. The goal of this project is to increase the awareness by development of a multi-media CD to spark interest in public health in students across Kentucky.

A public health informational survey was conducted with ten percent of the ninth grade population in Marshall and Bath counties in Kentucky participating. The results of this survey reflected inappropriate public health career awareness and this prompted the creation of this project's interactive multi-media CD that could be utilized throughout the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

Collaboration between public health, Murray State University Technology Department, Marshall and Bath County School Systems and Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) occurred through the development of this CD. This coordination of agencies created a mutual understanding of the necessity for increased public health career opportunity awareness.

The availability of this educational tool should peak interest in the target age group. The long - term goal of this educational endeavor is to guide students into public health careers ensuring the future of the public health workforce. This goal directly relates to the assurance of a competent health care workforce, which is the # 8 essential public health function.

Our innovative approach used the development of mixed media educational tools in providing an effective method of reaching the age group selected, which is related to #10 essential public health function. Our choice of this educational tool was deemed appropriate to this age group due to availability of computers in the majority of school settings and this method peaking their interest.

This educational tool was not only a project sponsored by health departments/Kentucky Public Health Leadership Institute, but included collaboration with other community agencies, which not only addressed public health careers, but included health education topics, which can be used to inform, educate and empower individuals relating to the # 3 essential public health function.

It is the hope of this change master project group that a similar endeavor will be continued to further the development of the educational tool and to measure the impact of this project.

Introduction

This project was done to encourage ninth graders to pursue an education in public health to ensure a vigorous well-educated work force. Our project included the production of a CD to promote public health interest in this age group.

It is hoped that this project will promote public health career awareness to ninth grade students in two counties of the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

Many public health employees are leaving with few adequately trained replacements. Therefore, it has become apparent there is a shortage in public health workers. We feel that this is due to a lack of knowledge in public health career opportunities, difficulty of recruitment and the aging public health work force,

We conducted a public health career informational survey of ninth graders in Marshall and Bath counties in Kentucky. This survey resulted in information that supported the lack of knowledge in public health career opportunities. A multi-media interactive CD was created to heighten interest in the availability of public health careers to these students.

Project Description

The goal of this project is to develop a multi-media CD to spark interest in this age group and increase the number of students majoring in public health careers, therefore ensuring the future of the public health workforce. The goal of this project builds on a previous change master project that promoted public health awareness.

Objectives & Methods

A public health informational survey was conducted with ten percent of the ninth grade population in Marshall and Bath counties in Kentucky. This project sampling was representative of our ninth grade student body and thought to reflect the knowledge base of this age group. The results of this survey reflected an inappropriate public health career awareness of the students in these counties. It is therefore our assumption that ninth graders are unaware of the availability of public health career opportunities. This information prompted the creation of this project's interactive multi-media CD that could be utilized throughout the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

Through development of this CD, collaboration occurred among public health, Murray State University Technology Department, Marshall and Bath County School Systems and Area Health Education Centers (AHEC). This coordination of agencies created a mutual understanding of the necessity for increased public health career opportunity awareness.

Of the ten essential public health services the following two represent the methodology of this project:

Number 8 - Assure a competent public health care workforce.

Number 10 – Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems.

We recognized a need for more educated school-age youth in the variety of fields that public health offers. Our hypothesis was confirmed by a survey completed by this age group. The availability of this educational tool should peak interest in the target age group. The long-term goal of this educational endeavor is to guide students into public health careers ensuring the future of the public health workforce. This goal directly relates to the assurance of a competent health care workforce, which is #8 essential public health function.

Our innovative approach used the development of mixed media educational tools in providing an effective method of reaching the age group selected, which is related to #10 essential public health function. Our choice of this educational tool was deemed appropriate to this age group due to availability of computers in the majority of school settings and we felt this method would peak their interest more than pamphlets, brochures, posters, etc. This method can be effective in group/individual settings. The change master project group explored the possibility of a video, but felt that the ability to interact was paramount.

This educational tool was not only a project sponsored by health departments/Kentucky Public Health Leadership Institute, but included collaboration with other community agencies, (Murray State University, AHEC, School Systems & others), which not only addressed public health careers, but included health education topics, which can be used to inform, educate and empower individuals directly relating to #3 essential public health function.

Number #3 Inform, educate, and empower people about health issues.

Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) sponsored the initial production of the CDs and with the generosity of the students of Murray State; this project reached the point of readiness. Marshall County and Gateway District Health Departments have the capability of producing the CD to distribute to each health department throughout the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The health department employee time and equipment use was an in kind contribution to this change master project.

Results-outcome

The survey results confirmed our hypothesis that 70.5% of 9th grade students were unaware of public health career opportunities. The change master project has been successful in completing the multi-media CD, however due to time constraints, we have not had the opportunity to measure its impact.

Conclusion

The survey used in this change master project appeared to be non-threatening and well received by the students selected. We feel that the data received from the surveys was credible and reliable. Our project development of a multi-media CD seemed to be a good

avenue to reach this age group. The community collaboration proved to be a substantial addition to the project as overall awareness of public health between these agencies improved.

It is the hope of this change master project group that a similar endeavor will be continued.

Leadership Development Opportunities

Greg Brewer: I have enjoyed working on the Public Health Career Marketing project. I have become good friends with three fellow health department employees and our two project mentors. The project has reminded me that teamwork is essential to any task. Everyone has pitched in and worked together to produce a great project. The project has proven that public health career awareness is needed to help bring Kentucky students into the workforce. This project has met my personal learning objectives in several ways, but the realization that technology is so advanced today has amazed me the most. I am amazed at the technology that is available today and I feel this project utilized the technology in a format that students will enjoy.

Tracy Pierceall: When I first began this project, I was uncertain of my personal goals regarding the end product. I was simply in amazement of the combined knowledge that filled the room at the first KPHLI meeting in the spring of 2001. I recall being overwhelmed and hoping that through osmosis the public health knowledge of others might filter through to me. This year and the Public Health Career Marketing project have been wonderful. I have met so many enthusiastic Public Health Employees. This has been so refreshing. I have realized for Kentucky students to choose a career in public health they too must become enthusiastic. This project has helped me remain excited about public health and to remember the main reason I choose a public health career – to help others. The development of the CD as the media chosen to present information about public health careers is great, but we must all remember that our perspective regarding our own career might influence others even more. With all of us working together we can create a competent public health workforce for today and for the future of Kentucky.

Florence Pittman: For nearly twenty years I have been traveling the public health highway. At times, when I pause to reflect upon the journey, the hills, the valleys and the stops along the route, the memories are as vivid as though they were only yesterday. At other times, they are pale images disappearing in my rearview mirror. I have enjoyed the evolutionary odyssey; survived the changes, some good, some not so good. Through it all, I have never lost my vision, my desire to serve others, my unbridled faith in public health institutions. I consider myself fortunate to be involved with others who share my passion and commitment. Others who are willing to share their wisdom and help me navigate the ever changing maze of health policy issues.

The Kentucky Public Health Leadership Institute Change Master Project has not only provided me the opportunity to diverge from the beaten path, but has also been an oasis. My experience has been refreshing, my efforts fruitful, my spirit renewed.

To each of my fellow travelers, I say THANK YOU and sincerely hope that as we continue our individual quests, our paths will cross again.

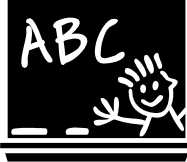
Tina Rodgers: Our change master project group had set the goal to complete the CD to distribute to 9th graders informing them of the available careers in public health, at the same time marketing public health as a whole by introducing these children to the possible avenues available to them. I feel that in the process we have succeeded with that goal, as well as other goals we had set for ourselves, individually. Our team members communicated well, although we were a long distance from one of our team members, we were able to complete our project quite to all of our satisfaction.

The Kentucky Public Leadership Institute Leadership Program has allowed me to gain more experience from all the other areas of public health. When I became employed with the health department, I worked specifically in the clinic setting. I am no longer in that setting, but am in a financial/human resources type position. I had lost touch with all the aspects, but through this program have been able to get better acquainted with public health.

I feel I have increased my leadership abilities because of the roles I have been able to take during and after this program. It has become easier for me to take the step forward to be a role model and leader for my community, home, family, employer, etc. I have enjoyed interacting with all the different disciplines and different personalities of the individual that were in the group as a whole. This interaction and involvement has motivated me to broaden my horizons. I realize that I should always strive to learn and absorb every bit of information I can in order to increase my value for the department and community I am responsible to serve by teaching to go forth and improve myself professionally and personally. I have been motivated to return to school to accomplish the goals I have set for my future, as well as the future for the department and community I work to improve.

Public Health Survey

The Kentucky Public Health Leadership Institute has created this survey to help plan for a public health career-training program. You have been chosen to get a survey and we would appreciate it if you would take a few minutes to help us rate students' knowledge about public health. We have given a number to identify your survey, so please do not place your name on the survey. Thank you for helping with this project. In a few months we may contact you to help us again.



As public health workers, we are interested in what you know about public health and jobs in public health. Please circle your answers.

1. From the list below, please choose two (2) careers found in public health.
 - a. actor
 - b. public works
 - c. financial officer
 - d. mechanical engineer
 - e. epidemiologist
 - f. health educator
 - g. chemist

2. From the activities listed below, which are performed by a public health environmentalist:
 - a. Inspects restaurants
 - b. Assists with animal bites
 - c. Performs septic tank inspections
 - d. Checks blood pressures
 - e. Tests water quality
 - f. Balances bank accounts
 - g. Teaches Food Safetyplease choose the correct answer for activities performed by a public health environmentalist.
 1. all of the above
 2. a,d,e,f,g
 3. a,b,c,e,g
 4. none of the above

3. Below is a list of job duties, which of the following duties will you find employees doing at the public health department?
(Please circle all that apply)
- a. Investigating food poisoning outbreaks
 - b. Balancing budgets
 - c. Teaching Family Wellness
 - d. Investigating fires/providing security
 - e. Teaching Health Education
 - f. Providing Patient Services
 - g. Performing lab tests
 - h. Maintaining local birth and death certificates
 - i. Working directly with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on a daily basis
4. Have you or your family ever received services from a health department?
- a. yes
 - b. no
 - c. I do not know
5. Public Health is for:
- a. Low income families
 - b. All people
 - c. People who work for the state
 - d. None of the above
6. Do you think Public Health is important to your community?
- a. yes
 - b. no
 - c. I do not know
7. Have you ever thought of a career in public health?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I do not know

Thank you for your assistance with completion of this survey.