

# **What is Public Health?**

## **Public Health Orientation TRAIN Module For Public Health Employees**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In an effort to find ways to cope with budgetary constraints, Kentucky offered a retirement package to State employees designed to encourage retirement for eligible employees by 2008, thereby reducing the overall cost of salaries. Unfortunately, this approach to cost savings has resulted in many challenges associated with losing a large knowledge pool and attracting, hiring, training, and deploying a new generation of Public Health employees. According to the National Association of Local Boards of Health as many as 45% of the Public Health workforce may be eligible for retirement by 2008.<sup>1</sup>

The Institute of Medicine released *The Future of Public Health* in 1988, which emphasized many deficiencies in Public Health, including the Public Health workforce.<sup>2</sup> In 1994, the Core Public Health Functions Steering Committee defined the 10 Essential Public Health services, which elaborated on the three core functions identified by the Institute of Medicine in their 1988 Publication, *The Future of Public Health*.<sup>3</sup> The 10 Essential Public Health Services specifies, as number 8, the necessity of ensuring a competent Public Health workforce. Additionally, the Essential Public Health Services specifies, as number 3, the necessity of informing, educating and empowering people, including Public Health employees, about health issues. Clearly, the new generation of Public Health employees must receive adequate orientation and training to be able to provide communities with the Essential Public Health Services.

While there will be many new challenges Public Health will face during this massive turnover of Public Health employees, our Change Master Group chose to address the challenge of efficiently and effectively orienting the new generation of Public Health employees. Our research revealed that although most Health Departments report they offered an orientation to their employees, no standard tool was available. Additionally, the Health Departments' orientation of staff was conducted by a supervisor or Human Resources staff member. An informal discussion with many Health Department employees revealed that their orientation included very little information on Public Health's historical contributions, or the Core Functions and Essential Services of Public Health. These conversations with current Public Health employees indicate that, if current employees received orientation on Public Health, their orientation was not as complete as it should be. Our research exposed a gap between orientation methods and tools and a competent workforce.

As a result, we developed a four-part training module and made the module available online via the Training Finder Real-time Affiliate Integrated Network (TRAIN - <https://ky.train.org/>). Public Health has an obligation to ensure the new generation of employees are adequately oriented and trained, and it is our goal that this online module will offer a thorough, accurate, and standardized training tool that will be more efficiently delivered than face to face training.

## INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND:

“It is your people who make the ultimate difference. You put the investment into training the people and then, when you get invited to the party with the big boys, that is a unique selling point,” according to Phil Dixon, a member of the Board of Governors for the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum in Kansas City and well known author of many books advocating equality for African-American athletes in baseball and sports in general.<sup>4</sup> Certainly Mr. Dixon is not alone in recognizing the value of a trained workforce. The Institute of Medicine’s 1988 report<sup>5</sup> and their 2002 report<sup>6</sup>, the Joint Council of State and Local Health Officials, national goals identified by Health People 2010<sup>7</sup>, and numerous other Public Health organizations and publications emphasize the importance of a competent workforce. Although there are many factors that contribute to the health of our communities, it is certain that those factors cannot be successfully addressed with an inadequate or substandard workforce. Therefore, a competent workforce is the foundation upon which all Public Health initiatives rely.

During the first years of the 21st century, nearly half of all Public Health workers are reaching retirement age. Furthermore, in an effort to reduce budgeted expenses, Kentucky has offered retirement incentives that further encourage the retirement of this knowledge pool. Kentucky Revised Statute (KRS) 61.510(14)(b)<sup>8</sup> allows the Kentucky Employee Retirement System (KERS) to offer employees who have at least 27 years of service, and whose age plus years of service equal at least 75, the option to retire and receive retirement benefits based on an average of the three years of service during which they received the highest salaries. That package will no longer be available after December 31, 2008. Instead, beginning January 1, 2009 KERS retirement will be based on an average of the highest salary an employee has been paid in a five-year period. Another incentive to retire from Public Health is a law passed by the legislature, specified in KRS 61.595(1)<sup>9</sup>, which drops the benefit factor, a number used to calculate benefits retirees receive, from 2.2% to 2.0% for employees qualified for retirement after January 1, 2009.

By delaying retirement until this package expires, eligible employees will see a reduced retirement benefit as a result of these two changes to the retirement package available to Public Health employees. Therefore, all employees who become eligible for retirement during this time period are financially motivated to retire no later than the end of 2008.

As a result of the retirement incentives offered the aging workforce, the National Association of Local Boards of Health estimates an average of 26%, and as many as 45%, of Public Health employees may retire by the end of 2008. Consequently, employees must be hired to fill these vacant positions. Health Departments are spending more and more time recruiting, hiring, and training staff.

While the different job disciplines in Public Health require varied skills, orientation for all employees should include instruction on Public Health’s history, mission, and vision and should be provided to all employees. That training should include the three Core Functions of Public Health as defined by the IOM’s 1988 report, and should also describe the 10 Public Health services.

**Problem Statement:**

Public Health does not have a standard, efficient, and effective way of orienting the large number of Public Health employees that must be hired after an average of 26% of the current Public Health workforce retires by the end of 2008.

**Behavior Over Time Graph:**

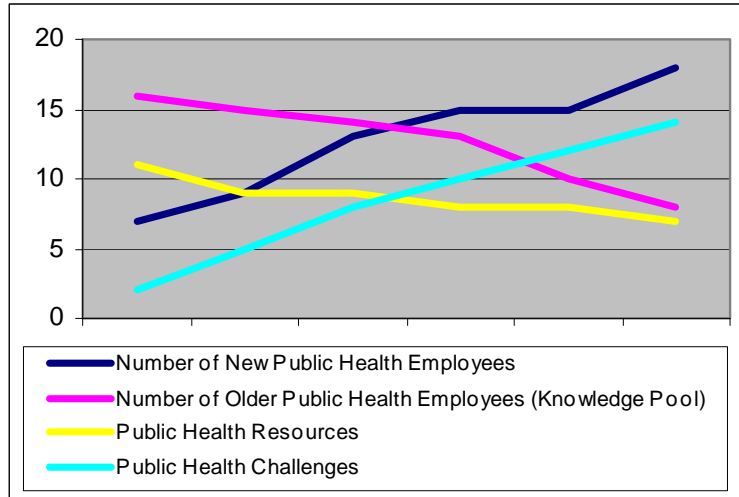


Figure 1 - Graphical depiction of change in staff and resources over time.

**Causal Loop Diagram:**

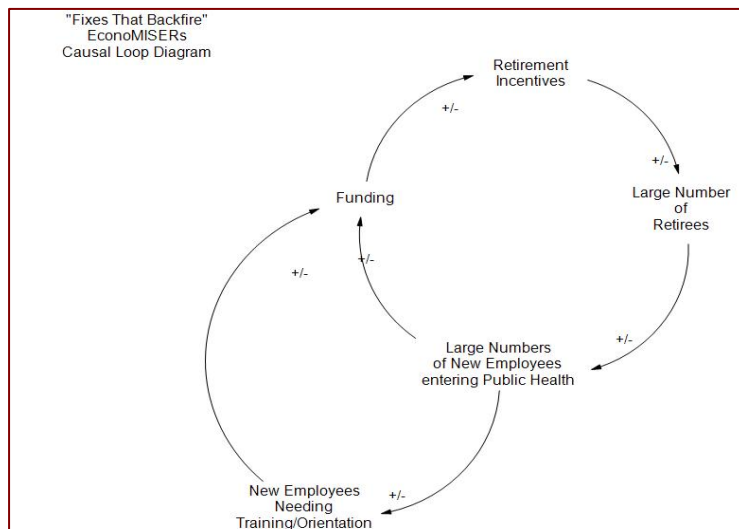


Figure 2 - Depicts the connected relationship between retiring staff, funding, newly hired staff, and orientation/training.

## 10 Essential Public Health Services

Of the 10 Essential Services defined by the Core Public Health Functions Steering Committee in 1994, which elaborated on the three core functions identified by the Institute of Medicine in their 1988 Publication, *The Future of Public Health*, our project supports the following:

- EPHS #3 “Inform, Educate and Empower People about Health Issues”
- EPHS #8 “Assure a Competent Public and Personal Health Care Workforce”



Figure 3 - The Core Functions of Public Health and the Ten Essential Public Health Services<sup>10</sup>

### National Goals Supported

Healthy People 2010 defined a set of health objectives for the Nation to achieve over the first decade of the new century to help Public Health develop programs to improve health<sup>11</sup>. Our project has been an effort to support the following Healthy People 2010 Objective:

### Healthy People 2010 - Workforce Related Objective:

- Goal: Ensure that Federal, Tribal, State, and local health agencies have the infrastructure to provide essential Public Health services effectively.
  - Focus Area 23 - Public Health Infrastructure
    - 23-8 Competencies for Public Health workers
    - 23-9 Training in essential Public Health services
    - 23-10 Continuing education and training by Public Health agencies

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has adopted health protection goals that address four themes<sup>12</sup>:

- Healthy People in Every Stage of Life
- Healthy People in Healthy Places
- People Prepared for Emerging Health Threats
- Healthy People in a Healthy World

By helping to educate and prepare the new generation of Public Health employees, the module we developed contributes to the assurance of a competent Public Health workforce who will be able to deliver CDC's health protection goals as well as supporting the Healthy People 2010 goals.

### **PROJECT OBJECTIVES/DESCRIPTION/DELIVERABLES:**

Our project objectives, description, and deliverable include the following:

- Develop four-part orientation/training module.
  - Chapter 1 – Discusses the History, Mission, Vision of Public Health and provides an introduction to the IOM's three Core Functions and the Ten Essential Public Health Services
  - Chapter 2 – Discusses the Core Function of Assessment and the Essential Public Health Services that are part of this Function.
  - Chapter 3 – Discusses the Core Function of Policy Development and the Essential Public Health Services that are part of this Function
  - Chapter 4 – Discusses the Core Function of Assurance and the Essential Public Health Services that are part of this Function
- Publish training module on TRAIN

### **METHODOLOGY:**

To determine the current orientation methods and tools employed by local Health Departments, our team surveyed all Local Health Department Directors to gather information on the following (see Appendix I):

- Requested information on current orientation tools and methods, exploring willingness to adopt module
- Reviewed orientation tools currently provided to employees by local Health Departments

We also conducted extensive research on various websites and reviewed several texts on history, mission, and vision of Public Health. Additionally, we reviewed an Introduction

to Public Health video, “Public Health, Can We Live Without It?” developed by a previous Kentucky Public Health Leadership team and began the process of compiling all these different resources into our on-line module. Because of the wealth of information available and necessary to offer a comprehensive orientation module, we chose to break the module down into four different chapters that could be completed at four different times by staff working on completing the module. We were able to work with Kentucky Board of Nursing to offer CEUs to nursing staff upon their completion of all four parts of the on-line orientation module.

## **RESULTS:**

Our Change Master team was successful in developing an on-line orientation module. The creation and publishing of this module resulted in the following:

- Employees have access to a comprehensive online orientation on:
  - The history, mission, and vision of Public Health
  - The Three Core Functions of Public Health
  - The Ten Essential Public Health Services
- Four-part orientation module gives Public Health Departments access to a standard form of orientation
- Module is available and accessible on TRAIN (<https://ky.train.org>) from Kentucky and 28 other States
- Public Health Departments are now able to efficiently allow employees to access and complete module without a significant investment in human resource and/or training staff
- Upon module completion, nurses are eligible for CEUs by the Kentucky Board of Nursing

## **CONCLUSIONS:**

Because as many as 45% of the Public Health workforce may retire by 2008, Public Health Departments will be facing the orientation of many employees. To assure a competent workforce, able to achieve Public Health Goals and deliver Essential Public Health Services, Public Health must find a way to orient these employees as effectively and efficiently as possible. An online orientation/training module offers Public Health an efficient tool to orient and train employees on the history, vision, and mission of Public Health, the Core Functions of Public Health, and the 10 Essential Services of Public Health.

## **LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES:**

### ***Andrea Adams***

KPHLI provides an excellent opportunity to gain perspective and increase leadership skills. As one of the few participants from the private sector, KPHLI has also afforded me the opportunity to better understand how Kentucky's health departments function at the State and local levels. The hard work and dedication of my public health teammates has been very impressive. I look forward to continuing to build on relationships formed during KPHLI and increasing public-private collaboration.

### ***VivEllen Chesser***

My experience in KPHLI this year has been very rewarding both personally and professionally. This last year has taught me that I can grow as a person by challenging myself professionally. A big part of my formal education was in business management. The reading assignments helped me to become familiar with new methods of leadership. The expertise and enthusiasm of the speakers at the Summits has inspired an interest in learning more about Systems Thinking. Working on the change master project has helped me achieve my goal of learning about the big picture in Public Health. I now have a better understanding of how the local health departments function and how the Department for Public Health supports them. I can't say enough good things about the members of my Economizers team. There are a strong group of women with whom it has been my honor to work on our project. This diverse group of women with varied work experience and responsibilities expanded my perspective of Public Health. I believe we have created four excellent online modules that will assist with the orientation of new staff for many years. Cynthia, Erin and Maya were so supportive and helpful all year. As graduation draws near, I know that I am a better leader and person because of KPHLI.

### ***Leah Maybrier***

As an IT manager for a District Health Department, my job duties don't often allow me to do more to further Public Health goals than manage electronic data and equipment. It has been a pleasure to have the opportunity to examine Public Health as a whole, see Public Health from many different perspectives and, at the same time, hone my leadership skills. The year I spent in the Kentucky Public Health Leadership Institute has been a rewarding and fulfilling experience. I learned the value of Systems Thinking and how to apply Causal Loop diagrams. The course gave me the opportunity to find tools such as the BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory, the Situational Leadership instrument, and the 360 Degree Feedback instrument, to evaluate and enhance my leadership skills. I enjoyed the development of Team Learning and the evolution of a Shared Vision with my team members. The working relationship and friendships that



developed through our Change Master Project are invaluable and KPHLI was a rewarding journey I am grateful to have experienced.

***Sherra Morgan***

KPHLI has opened my eyes to the global view of public health. KPHLI has been a challenge and a pleasant surprise over the past year. The challenge has involved the juggle of scheduling team meetings, beating deadlines for assignments, and confronting my technology limitations. I have learned so much this year about leadership and about myself. The "360 Degree Feedback" and "Social Style" assessments were beneficial to identify areas that I need to further develop, and to assist the growth of my communication skills. I have enjoyed traveling to different parts of the State and networking with so many other public health employees. I am thankful for the variety of speakers and public health experts that we have had the opportunity to hear from. The best experience has been my master change project team. It has been such a blessing to work with this group of strong, intelligent women. I believe our project to orient employees to public health will be a great success.

I want to extend a special thank you to James Rousey, Director, Carla Baumann, Director of Nursing, and Michelle Malicote, School Health Supervisor, for allowing me to participate in this great learning experience.

***Rona Stapleton***

KPHLI has been a rich experience that has furthered my professional career knowledge and has allowed me to network within public health. The broad range of exceptional experts that spoke at the Summit's was of the highest caliber I have seen, as is the Director and staff of KPHLI. I have learned about public health's mission, goals, standards, affiliations, and a well-rounded retrospect of the field. My change master team is composed of exceptionally dedicated and talented individual's and I feel fortunate to have been of part of the EconoMISER's 2007.

I want to extend a special thank you to Dr. William Hacker, George Robertson, Gary Kupchinsky, and Dr. Kraig Humbaugh for allowing me to participate in this exceptional learning experience.

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## Appendix

August 11, 2006

Greetings Health Department Director;

In conjunction with the KPHLI class of 2006-2007, our Change Master group, *The EconoMISER's*, would like you to please answer these confidential questions and return via e-mail to Leah Maybrier, Systems Information Manager for the Lake Cumberland District Health Department at [leah.maybrier@ky.gov](mailto:leah.maybrier@ky.gov) by Aug. 30, 2006. Only aggregate data will be used.

1. Who facilitates and/or conducts orientation on the history/mission/vision of Public Health for new employees?
  - a. You
  - b. HR (Human Resources)
  - c. Employee's Department Manager
  - d. Employee's Immediate Supervisor
  - e. Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
  - f. History/Mission/Vision of Public Health orientation not providedComments: \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. When do employees receive an orientation on Public Health history/mission/vision?
  - a. 0-2 weeks
  - b. 3-4 weeks
  - c. 1-6 months
  - d. Never
  - e. OtherComments: \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. What Public Health history/mission/vision topics are covered by your orientation? Please specify or fax a copy of your checklist to 606-678-2708.  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Total amount of time spent on history/mission/vision of Public Health:
  - a. 0-30 minutes
  - b. 31-60 minutes
  - c. 61-90 minutes
  - d. 91 or longer
  - e. NeverComments: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Would you like to see a Statewide-standardized form of orientation regarding Public Health history/mission/vision offered to employees?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. No opinion

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

6. If so, what format would you prefer?

- a. Online module
- b. Face-to-Face Training
- c. Written materials
- d. Video conference
- e. Other

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Would you be receptive to and support a Statewide standardized on-line module to orient your employees that would be required to be completed by the employee's 6-month probation date?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. No opinion

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional comments \_\_\_\_\_

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Thank you for your time.

KPHLI -- LHD Survey	*Respondents may answer some questions two or more times...						Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments
	A	B	C	D	E	F									
1. Who facilitates and/or conducts orientation on the history/mission/vision of public health for new employees?	9	5	2	3	2	3	We do not provide a formal orientation on this.	Program Director for Com. Services	Very little information provided.						
2. When do employees receive an orientation on public health history/mission/vision?	12		3	3	1	N/A	No formal time set for this.	During the course of the year, they get a brief exposure to history/mission during OSHA training, etc.							
3. What public health history/mission/vision topics are covered by your orientation?	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	30 min. PowerPoint.	Just our organization mission/vision.	Modern history. No great depth before 20th century.	We do a Public Health 101 that was developed at the State level and critique to meet our needs.	The new employee orientation at X LHD consists of the new employee meeting for an hour or more with each department manager. Each manager incorporates history/mission/vision into the discussion of his or her individual department. Director discuss the overall "big picture" of public health with the employee for an hour or more and uses ppts. The entire process is scheduled by HR personnel.	District's History, vision, mission, responsibilities for core services, policy development and assurance	Overview of National, State and Local public health mission Statements and vision; Progress that has been made thorough the years in all 3 levels; the core public health functions of assessment, policy development and assurance giving examples of each on the local level; and future challenges for public health on each level.	How the X LHD began, year, purpose, standards of conduct, various services.	What is public health (101), past pandemic, mission of public health and local health department, county data in regards to health, safety, diseases, etc.

KPHLI -- LHD Survey	*Respondents may answer some questions two or more times...						Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments
	A	B	C	D	E	F									
4. Total amount of time spent on history/mission/vision of public health:	7	7	1	1	4	N/A	31 to 60 minutes max. during first year.								
5. Would you like to see a Statewide standardized form of orientation regarding public health history/mission/vision offered to employees?	12	3	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	No travel.	Possibly.	Public Health 101 PowerPoint is used with modifications that include local examples, etc. so this is not needed for X LHD.						
6. If so, what format would you prefer?	12	4	2	2		N/A	No travel.	I think written materials along with video conference.							
7. Would you be receptive to and support a Statewide standardized on-line module to orient your employees that would be required to be completed by the employee's 6-month probation date?	12	5	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	Possibly if there was the opportunity to review the information in the draft stage.	It would be OK to have a voluntary module but to make it required is overkill.	I think it would be fine but believe it needs to be covered at initial orientation. Are you covering the national history of PH or KY?	I believe use of local public health information creates more interest. I also like the face-to-face encounter. I would hate to see it become just "one more boring activity I have to do." Actual people and discussion make it more interesting.	I believe this type of training is best retained during face-to-face discussions. This gives the new employee an opportunity to ask questions and to participate in reflective listening and learning.	I think this is an excellent idea as we all wear many hats and this would allow the orientation in a timely manner.			
Additional comments (below)															
Keep it simple.															
Yes, this would be beneficial and save time and travel.															