

EXAMPLE OF DNP CAPSTONE PROJECT



Improving Health Outcomes with Public Health Workforce Development

Abstract

Poor health conditions among residents of South Carolina, indicated through an overall health ranking of 42 in the US (Health Rankings in the USA, 2015), may prove to be the result of underdeveloped public health workforce. This may be mediated using a thorough assessment of the entire public health workforce that is followed by the establishment and implementation of an effective workforce development plan. The aim of this project for quality improvement was to evaluate the competency level of the public health workforce in South Carolina and to establish, implement, and assess a workforce development plan in order to address the identified weaknesses through the evaluation process. The Public Health Professionals Competency Assessment developed by the Linkages Council between the academe and the public health practice was used in evaluating the competency level of the Region Program Managers in the different domains of the instrument (Lionel, Y., Wesley, T. & Lindsey, Q, 2010).

Introduction

The public health workforce has faced pressure in performing a quickly changing environment and healthcare setup, respond to existing epidemics, and address primary health determinants, while the budgets on public health are decreasing rapidly. This result with the public health workforce performing more work with less resources. Due to the waning budgets, as well as an increased threat of communicable epidemics and diseases, it is imperative that individuals maintain a public health workforce that is highly competent.

As of the moment, the number 42 ranking of South Carolina is based on four factors: health care policy, behaviors, clinical care, as well as the environment in which we currently live in. The core measures that are used in determining the rank are excessive drinking, smoking, obesity, drug deaths, high school graduation, physical inactivity, occupational fatalities, violent crime, air pollution, lack of health insurance, infectious disease, public health funding. And several others.

Most of the public health workforce of South Carolina lacks formal education in public health. Many on the senior and executive leadership team have no experience in working with the public health before employment with the Department of Health and Environmental Control (Alacsa, 2014). While most of the public health care agencies are spearheaded by physicians with public health training, the Director in Charge for the DHEC is an attorney who does not have any previous public health work experience. Out of the eight members of the executive team, only two are equipped with a background in public health. Because of this lack of knowledge at the executive level, a lot of descriptions in the position in the agency have been established and rewritten, no longer requiring work experience and formal public health education as a minimum requirement. This has further resulted to the lack of public health knowledge all throughout the levels of the agency, thus contributing to the overall pool health conditions among South Carolinians.

Evidence Based Practice

Tang Framework was used in evaluating and choosing Grade 1 strength evidence in order to further facilitate this project. This evidence shows that partnerships between local health departments and the academia can further reduce costs, allowing for shared knowledge which results in a stronger public health workforce. Further studies indicate successful strategies for the access of public health workforce, as well as in implementing trainings in order to address different deficiencies throughout the adult learning process.

References

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