

## PUBLIC HEALTH WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

### WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

- The health, safety, and preparedness of America's communities hinges on the nation's public health workforce, which consists of physicians, nurses, environmental health scientists, health educators, laboratorians, managers, and other professionals who practice on the frontlines of public health.
- Frontline public health staff needs a broad array of skills to ensure progress in achieving national *Healthy People 2010* objectives, eliminating health disparities, and achieving readiness against global health threats.
- Workforce shortages are anticipated over the next 5 years in governmental public health due to retirements and limited entry by new graduates into the field.

### WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

In collaboration with a broad array of partners, CDC developed a strategic plan for public health workforce development. The plan outlines strategies for monitoring workforce trends, identifying needed competencies, developing model curriculum, designing an integrated distance learning system, providing incentives for learning and conducting evaluation and research. The 2003 Institute of Medicine Report on educating the public health workforce and building public health infrastructure validates current strategic directions.

The competencies required for core public health practice, bioterrorism and emergency preparedness, as well as leadership development, law and informatics are identified and are being used to develop frontline training programs. In 2000, a national network of Centers for Public Health Preparedness was funded to accelerate availability and access to terrorism-specific training and to complement state and local capacity by linking academia and practice. Since then, over 5 million public health and healthcare providers have been reached through national training activities sponsored by CDC and partners, in response to emerging infections and terrorism preparedness. CDC continues to facilitate a national dialogue on certification and credentialing in public health and disseminated a research agenda for workforce issues to stimulate and inform the field.

### Examples of Program in Action

- The Third Annual Public Health Workforce Development Meeting presented national strategies to help develop a competent and sustainable workforce.
- The Public Health Training Network (PHTN) is a network of partners, headquartered at CDC, that collaborate to provide distance learning, using a variety of instructional media, to meet the training needs of the public health workforce nationwide. During the past year, PHTN courses reached more than 1.6 million learners in the domestic public health workforce, and the network was instrumental in the response to the heightened need for information and education related to smallpox and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome.
- The National Laboratory Training Network (NLTN), a training system sponsored by the Association of Public Health Laboratories and CDC, is dedicated to improving laboratory practice of public health significance through quality continuing education. NLTN trains approximately 11,000 public health and other healthcare workers each year in areas such as biological and chemical terrorism preparedness, molecular diagnostics, detection of anti-microbial resistance, and other public health concerns.
- Hundreds of public health leaders benefit from national programs (the Public Health Leadership Institute) and regional institutes.
- The 21 Academic Centers for Public Health Preparedness, based in schools of public health, provide training for the public health workforce in 46 states.
- The 21 Academic Centers for Public Health Preparedness in Schools of Public Health reach the workforce in 46 states.

### WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

- Implement national strategies in collaboration with partners to address workforce shortages, current and emerging needs and support for life long learning.
- Disseminate national curriculum guidelines for terrorism preparedness and response in local public health agencies.
- Strengthen access to life-long learning through PHTN, NLTN, leadership institutes/programs and the Centers for Public Health Preparedness.

For additional information on this or other CDC programs, visit [www.cdc.gov/program](http://www.cdc.gov/program)

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