

PUBLIC HEALTH PREVENTION SERVICE

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

The expanding mission of public health requires a public health workforce capable of applying a range of disciplines and strategies to programs for the prevention of disease and injury and the promotion of health. Currently, there is a workforce gap in public health management positions at the federal, state, and local levels. This shortage is the result of the expansion of public health programs, competition for trained professionals, and the aging of the current workforce. Although there are accredited schools of public health across the United States, these programs provide their graduates with little practical public health experience. In response to this problem, CDC has developed and implemented a program designed to train and prepare tomorrow's public health program managers.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

In 1997, CDC established the Public Health Prevention Service (PHPS), a 3-year training and service program for master's level public health professionals. About 25 prevention specialists enter the program annually. The program focuses on public health program management and provides prevention specialists with experience in program planning, implementation, and evaluation through specialized hands-on training and mentorship at CDC and at state and local health agencies. In addition to on-the-job training, the PHPS program provides formal instruction in program management, epidemiology, surveillance, emergency response, and project evaluation. Prevention specialists participate in various activities, including seminars, evaluation projects, Web-based training, temporary duty assignments, and conferences that are designed to provide them with essential public health program management skills.

- As of September 2003, 89 prevention specialists have completed the program. Half have returned to federal service and half are in other public health settings.
- Currently, there are 88 prevention specialists: 54 assigned to state and local health agencies; 25 to CDC Centers, Institutes, or Offices; and 9 to CDC's Global AIDS Program (GAP).

Example of Program in Action

As prevention specialists strengthen their skills in public health program management, they work in various public health program areas. Some of the management activities that prevention specialists perform include developing strategies for asthma prevention in collaboration with community partners; developing and implementing HIV/AIDS action plans for GAP in other countries; developing partnerships with faith-based communities to combat HIV/AIDS; planning and developing state Healthy Aging programs; conducting community health needs assessments for public health initiatives; and, evaluating programs, such as tobacco-free initiatives.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

The PHPS Program will continue to support the public health workforce by training public health program managers to meet new public health challenges. New training technologies and delivery methods will be developed to address these challenges.

For additional information on this or other CDC programs, visit www.cdc.gov/program

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