Empowering Communities through Environmental Health Education

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Multnomah County Environmental Health Services

Portland, Oregon
Welcome to Multnomah County Environmental Health Services Community Education.

The goals, strategies and key learnings in this PowerPoint are snapshots of a two-year project that hoped to strengthen community members’ understanding of environmental health prevention messages and create healthier and safer homes and environments in Multnomah County.

What is lacking are the stories and the experiences of how people were impacted, which truly demonstrated to us the value of environmental health in our neighborhoods.
The strategies are seeds we planted. The community organizations and members who supported outreach are the gardeners. The changes we have all made to create healthier homes and environments are the flowers that have grown in our community today.

We invite you to enjoy our road map – how we found direction and our journey to establishing a flourishing education and outreach team of environmental health services.
Finding Direction

1. Working with the community and supporting their needs
2. Assess our capacity to support community education and outreach
3. Identify resources
Assessing the Community

- Multnomah County is an urban environment, with 1/5 of Oregon’s residents
- Diversity and poverty are concentrated within different parts of the county
- Environmental health problems are dispersed throughout county
- Disparate communities are concerned about mold, mildew, trash and “feel ignored”
- There is a decline in environmental health specialists and educators
How we know this

• Community Assessment in 2003  (Protocol for Assessing Community Excellence in Environmental Health)

• Other Existing Data
  - City of Portland Demographic Data
  - Community Alliance of Tenants’ Mold Report
  - Coalition for a Livable Future Data
Our Internal Gap Analysis

Used format identified in Essential Services of Environmental Health A Training Module developed by Carl Osaki, RS MSPH and the Northwest Center for Public Health Practice (http://www.nwcphp.org)
Identified Resources

• Three year Essential Services grant from Center for Disease Control

• Prioritized Grant Needs:
  - Community Outreach, Involvement and Education
  – Mobilizing Educational Partnerships
  - Collect and Analyze data to support educational messages

• Strong environmental health community organization network in county
Starting our Journey

1. Identifying work goals
2. Identifying education content areas
3. Creating tools and strategies
4. Building strong partnerships
5. Documenting key learnings
Identify work plan goals

- Connect with clinical and health promotion staff within the health department
- Build and sustain community partnerships
- Educate and empower the community
- Create an informed advisory council
- Support workforce development
Identify Education Focus Areas

• Food Safety Education
  - On-line Food Handler Test, 7 languages
  - Norovirus outbreak response

• Vector Education
  - West Nile virus
  - Rodent prevention
  - Integrated Pest Management

• “Disease of the Day”
Identify Education Focus Areas

- Social Marketing Campaign
- Vector Advisory Committee
- Culturally Specific Outreach
Environmental Health Educator Kari Lyons and Natalie Simpson, intern at a mobile lead testing clinic, worked together on a community-based participatory research project with a Somali community neighborhood in NE Portland.
Create tools and strategies

*On-line Food Handlers Test*

- Worked with Information Technology department to develop web-based food handler test
- Tested curriculum in focus groups to assure linguistically appropriate
- Tested food safety messages in focus groups to assure culturally competent
- Translated test in seven languages
- Culturally competent promotion and marketing in bi-lingual publications and on buses
Create tools and strategies

Food Safety Month

- Education with seniors at Loaves and Fishes Meal sites and with Aging and Disability Case Managers

- Education with Meals on Wheels drivers

- Checklist on food storage, safe handling and resource list
Create tools and strategies

*Restaurant Risk Survey*

- Evaluated food inspection model based on risk
- Created food safety educational messages based on inspection and outbreak findings from risk survey
Create tools and strategies

Vector Education

- Developed Vect-O – Bingo style game on West Nile virus and rodent prevention
- Workshops at sustainability fairs, home and garden shows, and neighborhood associations
- Rodent Prevention training with Inspectors
- “How to Rodent Proof your Home” DVD in three languages
Create tools and strategies

*West Nile virus*

- Developed:
  - Educational display board
  - “Fight the Bite!” brochure
  - E-newsletter and new West Nile website

- Tailored community outreach:
  - Senior Case Managers
  - Homeless community
  - DEET-Free and DEET insect repellent donations
Create tools and strategies

“Disease of the Day”

• Avian Flu
  - Created FAQ sheet
  - Tailored presentation to Urban Chicken Owners

• Bed Bugs
  - Multi-agency Best Practices developed

• Mercury Fire Emergency Response
  - Education to Affected Community Members
Create tools and strategies

Social Marketing

Created a logo and brochure to give our department its own unique brand
Create tools and strategies

**Healthy Homes Training**

- Principles of Healthy Home brochure
- 50-minute interactive training
- User-friendly environmental health assessment and action plan
- Presented at neighborhood associations, health fairs at scheduled trainings with community organizations, such as Head Start
Community Health Fair

- Coordinated environmental health organization booths
- Free chili and cornbread, donations from local organic grocer
- Sponsored blues and gospel music all day
- Clowns, face painting
- Grassroots marketing (flyers, door knocking)
- Public Service Announcements
Health Educator Kari Lyons and Community Outreach Worker Ben Duncan show some smiles at the health fair.
Create Tools and Strategies

**Latino Outreach**

- Mercury Fish Advisory Outreach
- Distribution of WNv materials to Mexican consulate
- Health Education “Message of the Week” at Hispanic Chamber of Commerce listserv
Create Tools and Strategies
*Somali Lead Poisoning Prevention*

- Recruited PSU Intern for bicultural, bilingual community health specialist position
- Focus Groups, Informal Interviews
- Messaging in Storyboard Format
- Advocacy and Education in Clinical Setting
I have bigger dreams because of this internship. Now more than ever I want to be a Community Health Outreach Worker, my primary focus will be on helping to reduce health disparities in our communities.

- Kamar Haji, Somali Lead Poisoning Prevention Intern
STOP: Key Learnings

• People care what you know when they know that you care

• Demonstrate commitment and flexibility – sometimes you work weekends and nights!

• Demonstrate a compassionate understanding of people’s needs – i.e. have meetings with food, spaces that are accessible and with childcare.

• Use education as a means by which individuals participate in the transformation of their world
Use an education model that supports sharing and listening to the community’s needs

Our Model: Popular Education Training Model

- Values people’s education, life experience and knowledge of their communities
- Learning is a process based on dialogue
- Share stories and experiences and histories, reflection
- Evaluating trainings to support improved educational workshops and messages
Create tools and strategies

Workforce Development Goals

• Developed post-secondary internship: *Developing on-the-job skills and applying academic theory to workplace practice*

• Developed high school environmental health educational curriculum and clubs *Developing a curiosity for the environment and health; EH career exposure*
Post-secondary internship goals

• Gain practical “on-the-job” skills

• Better able to apply academic theory into workplace practice

• Outcome-based experience
Sample Internship Concepts

• Bi-cultural bi-lingual lead poisoning prevention outreach to Somali community
• West Nile virus education to homeless and elder service providers
• Researching an exotic mosquito species
• Ride-a-longs with EH Specialists
Outcomes

• Increased education our local community about environmental health hazards such as West Nile Virus

• Culturally Competent Somali Lead Poisoning Prevention outreach

• Support development of high school environmental health curriculum

• Hired three interns
Thank you for creating an atmosphere here at MCEHS that welcomes interns into a effective learning experience. I appreciate all of the time and effort given to help me grasp public health practices/regulation and education.

~ Joe Laxson, Benson High School EH Curriculum Development Intern
Characteristics of a Model Program

- Need management support
- Ability to provide hands-on experience to apply university learning
- Clearly defined, tangible work plan
- Resources available, such as desk, phone
- Resource capacity to develop and implement a solid internship infrastructure prior to student placement
STOP: Key Learnings

- Develop strong program infrastructure
  - Supervision of interns
  - Student intake and orientation
  - Marketing program to academic institutions

- Nurture relationships with institutions

- Develop strong evaluation to improve program
High School Curriculum Goals

• Establish partnership with Portland Public Schools Health Occupation Teachers
• Flexible to students’ clinical needs and after school schedules
• Tap into existing community resources
• Align with school standards

Benson High School Environmental Health club students practice a presentation on indoor air quality and water quality for the administration
The Need

95% of parents support environmental education in our schools. National Environmental Education Training Foundation states that “this support probably stems from a common perception that exposing a child to the wonders of nature, animals and cleaner communities helps overcome apathy and teaches respect.”
Meeting State Health Occupation Standards

Examples:

• Ability to practice health-enhancing behaviors and reduce health risks.
• Analyze the influence of culture, media, technology, and other factors on health.
• Demonstrate interpersonal communication skills to enhance health.
• Demonstrate goal-setting and decision-making skills to enhance health.
Objectives

• Support young people to research, design and organize neighborhood and school-based improvement projects

• Support a workforce that reflects the community

Students learn about the connection between water quality and health with assistance from the Portland Water Bureau
Tram Pham educates classmates about rodent- and mosquito-borne diseases. Tram entered into Environmental Sciences and Community Health as a dual degree at Oregon State University in the fall of 2007.
Objectives

• Foster academic motivation, youth empowerment
• Create pathways for youth to succeed as community leaders
• Foster an understanding of the principles of environmental justice, environmental health practices
Health Educator Role

- Provide suitable experiences, pose problems, support learning, and help facilitate the learning process.

- Listen to students, take risks in project development, openness to connecting with community partners, patience.

Environmental Health Educator Kari Lyons spends a day in the field with five health occupation students at the Portland Water Bureau.
Sample Curriculum Topics

Benson High School Clinical Curriculum:

- Environmental Health 101 class
- Air quality and water quality testing
- Asthma education
- Asthma/allergy student survey
- Advocacy with school administration for student on health and safety committee
Sample Club Curriculum

- Environmental Health 101 presentation
- Community Organizations serve as “content experts”
- Global Climate Change focus:
  - Increase in emerging EH diseases
  - Increase in asthma rates throughout Oregon
  - School based marketing and assemblies, such as no idling campaign
How We Learn Matters

• Experiential and inquiry-based education model: Helps students to become engaged in investigating, posing questions, and solving problems

• Students explore and examine their own values and career paths
How we learn matters

- Students are supported by reflection and analysis
- Results of the learning are personal and form the basis for future experience and career choices
Outcomes

• Two students university focus on pediatric environmental health
• Two students accepted in OSU Environmental Sciences and Community Health dual degree
• Two Environmental Health clubs formed with 2007-2008
Benson High School students finish their EH clinical, with Joe Laxson, Portland State University Intern, and Kari Lyons, EH Educator
Building and Sustaining Community Partnerships

Environmental Health Education Work Group:

- Networking bi-monthly
- Resource sharing of materials
- Article exchange, workshop, training list serve
- Joint public relations capacity
- Joint outreach capacity
Building Community Partnerships

Vector and Code Enforcement

Advisory Board

Health Educator role:

• Recruit diversity in Membership
• Facilitate “Form, Norm, Storm, PERFORM!!”
• Strategic Agenda Setting
• Informative summer workshops
• Support subcommittees and recommendations
Environmental Health Educator Kari Lyons and Josiah Hill Clinic – a local mobile lead testing - Executive Director Erin McNally at their annual fundraiser.
• Build strong relationships through listening, caring and sharing

• Employ creative brainstorming - wonderful partnerships happen when you least expect it!

• Keep people informed and connected by consistently checking in on community partners
Final Thoughts

The Health Educator role has immeasurably increased capacity to connect with the community with messages that resonate with them.

– Lila Wickham, Program Director
The Drivers

• Kari Lyons, Health Educator
• Lynn George, Program Development Specialist Sr.
• Lila Wickham, Program Director
• Chris Wirth, Vector Control Program Manager
• Mark Fulop, Community Services Program Supervisor