Supporting the Public Health Workforce in Shifting Times: The Bad, the Good, and the Opportunity

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Introduction
Objectives

• Identify shifts to the external and internal workforce landscape affecting the workplace and workforce.

• Name challenges facing your public health agency’s workforce and how they affect the organization’s operations.

• List at least five actions or resources to address contemporary public health workforce issues.
ASTHO Mission & Members

Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Mission: To support, equip, and advocate for state and territorial health officials in their work of advancing the public’s health and well-being.

ASTHO is a nonpartisan organization and the collective voice of the nation’s health officials. Its members are the chief health officials of the 59 states, territories, and Freely Associated States, as well as Washington, D.C.
Reflection

You have superpowers. You can solve two problems facing your organization’s workforce. What are they? What effect are they having on your organization and the people who work there?
Political and Legislative

During COVID, many states considered or enacted measures to support the workforce: expanding or extending professional licenses, creating student worker authorizations, and enacting protections from harassments and threats of violence while performing job duties. A handful of states developed commissions or taskforces to assess funding sustainability.

On the other hand, some states restricted or eliminated the health department’s ability to use emergency orders to keep people safe, undermining their previous authority.

Workforce-related issues are expected to be a top issue for the 2024 legislative session.

ASTHO. Strengthening Public Health Agencies for Safe and Healthy communities, Legislative Overview Series: 2023 Public Health Spotlight.
Media

Public health in America at a breaking point. The question is now 'Can it recover?'

USA Today, January 20, 2022

Pandemic exposes dire need to rebuild public health infrastructure

AMA, February 10, 2021

Why Public Health Faces a Crisis Across the U.S.

An examination of hundreds of health departments around the country shows that the nation may be less prepared for the next pandemic than it was for the current one.

New York Times, October 20, 2021

Obesity Rates Rise During Pandemic, Fueled By Stress, Job Loss, Sedentary Lifestyle

NPR September 29, 2021

Science Daily, October 14, 2021

Perspective

Covid-19 and Health Equity — Time to Think Big

Seth A. Berkowitz, M.D., M.P.H., Crystal Wiley Cené, M.D., M.P.H., and Avik Chatterjee, M.D., M.P.H.

New England Journal of Medicine, September 17, 2020

Dr. Amy Acton's handling of coronavirus crisis made her an Ohio 'icon' — and a target

NBC News, May 9, 2020
Health Agency Insights: Workforce Trends

• Most health agencies have restructured or redesigned their organization since 2019.

• An increase in employee turnover has left many health agencies struggling to meet workforce capacity.

• Funding allocated for the COVID-19 pandemic allowed for an increased number of hired and trained community health workers.

• Workforce capacity, public health data systems, and health equity have become increasingly prioritized by health agencies.

Data Source:
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) Profile of State and Territorial Public Health Survey, 2022
Health Agency Insights: Workforce Capacity

Health agencies are struggling to meet their workforce capacity needs.

**Recruitment & Retention**

- **80% of SHA respondents reported needing an increase in permanent positions after the COVID-19 pandemic.**
- **The number of positions being actively recruited by SHAs’ HR departments, on average, is equivalent to 12% of their total number of employees.**
- **The average number of permanent employees who separated from SHAs increased by an average of 16% between 2020 and 2021.**

**Post-Pandemic Workforce Transition**

- **The average total number of temporary or contract workers increased by 67% between 2019 and 2022 among SHAs.**
- **86% of SHA respondents reported that it has been either “very” or “somewhat” challenging to convert their temporary staff to permanent employees.**

Data Source:
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) Profile of State and Territorial Public Health Survey, 2022
Public Health Infrastructure Grant (PHIG)

3,875 staff hired in Year 1
6,174 staff hired by Year 5

We have seen a shift in what is meant when using terms like “workforce” and “workforce development” within public health. What had largely been synonymous with “training” is rightfully expanding to include factors like well-being, satisfaction, engagement, recruitment, retention, psychological safety, culture, belonging, work/life balance, and the like. Prompted by this shift, ASTHO is working to define these terms to establish a common reference.
Challenges

Recruitment/Hiring

- Cumbersome and/or ill-defined processes
- Takes too L—O—N—G: resulting in work that remains incomplete, remains a burden on someone else’s plate, and/or candidates lose interest
- Limitations on how and where to post/promote
- Templates/position descriptions are unappealing
- Required or engrained practices thwart efficiency and ability to attract desired diverse talent
- Salary limitations
- Competition for limited pool of candidates with desired skill
- FTE restrictions
- Job requirements limit applicant pool
Challenges

Retention

• Lack of career path and advancement opportunities
• Lack of work-life harmony
• Compensation ceilings
• Work conditions: lack of flexibility, remote options, etc.
• Lack of psychological safety (shared belief that it is okay to take risks, express ideas & concerns, speak up with questions and admit mistakes all without fear of negative consequences)
• Absence of efforts directed at unique needs of underrepresented employee groups
• Limited initiatives such as scholarships, loan forgiveness, bonuses
• Absence of recognition, reward, and/or appreciation and celebration of success
Challenges

Belonging

- Insufficient social connection opportunities
- Homogenous workplace
- Lack of support for BIPOC employees
- Lack of support for LGBTQ+ employees
- Unintentional organizational bias
- Disconnect with organizational mission/programming
- Incongruity between job and personal passion
- Few opportunities for underrepresented employees to contribute to decision-making and “sit at the table”
Challenges

Expectations

- Multigenerational skill and work preferences and expectations of work, one another
- Changes in perceived value of traditional benefits for new hires
- Conditions of work: remote, flexibility, tools, processes, communication
- Opportunities to engage at higher levels of decision-making
Challenges

Visibility

• Public health in the media resulting in more attention on work and how it is done
• Politicalization of public health issues
• The emergent divide brought upon by differences in perceptions/beliefs about public health (science, right to choose)
• Intentional messaging that deprecates or misrepresents public health
• Misinformation
• Job-related harassment or threats
• Instantaneous communications
Discussion

What is your organization doing (or what have you heard of others doing) to address some of the workforce issues you reflected upon earlier? Some of the other issues just listed?
Opportunities

Yes, public health is facing unprecedented challenges – some are new, some have been percolating for some time and are bubbling to the surface. *And* there are many good things happening and new resources to help support the public health workforce.
The “Why”

• The mission
• The ability to have an impact, make change, see change, do good
• Contribute to greater good
• Community focus
• The colleagues and people
• Benefits
Opportunities

Recruitment/Hiring

• Apply QI methodology to improving processes, and position promotion
• Tell the stories of the diverse workforce
• Use enticing language in messaging, even if the description language remains prescribed
• Share benefits info in engaging ways
• Expand where & how positions are posted
• Use current staff as recruiters
• Promote/Establish/Expand scholarship, loan repayment programs
• Engage in pathway programs
• Engage academic institutions (Yes! to HBCUs, but don’t stop there!)
• Look beyond traditional public health degree programs
• Start now to work on goals that you know will take time to achieve (such as FTE cap expansion, classification & salary changes)
Opportunities

Retention

• Implement succession planning with eye to diversity
• Implement psychological safety programming
• Explore salary, bonus, benefit enhancement options
• Revisit legacy policies that no longer work to your advantage (flexibility, remote work, etc.)
• Assign stretch and temporary growth experiences to develop staff
• Support Employee Resource Groups, Affinity Groups, internship cohorts, etc.
• Generate career path opportunities
• Implement supervisory supports such as training supervisors on how to talk about mental health in non-stigmatizing manner and trauma-informed leadership practices
• Conduct stay interviews
• Make it a routine practice to talk about retention in manager : staff

Opportunities

Belonging

- Intentionally and frequently connect day-to-day work to the larger mission
- Make personal and social connection deliberate in routine interactions
- Implement efforts to ensure the workforce reflects population served
- Ask employees what they need to achieve belonging; take action
- Implement policies that are supportive of underrepresented populations
- Examine policies and practices for unintentional bias; make revisions
- Practice stretch assignments as development opportunities
- Include underrepresented staff in decision-making
Opportunities

Expectations

• Communicate job benefits in ways that resonate with potential applicants
• Implement flexibility in work conditions where possible
• Offer opportunity for staff to provide input into organizational level decision-making
• Provide transparency to the fullest degree possible when communicating actions/decisions
• Train staff on multigenerational preferences and work styles
• Capitalize on individual strengths when making work assignments
Opportunities

Visibility

- Embark on public health and organizational communication campaigns
- Share your success stories
- Capitalize on social media and other creative avenues for messaging
- Engage staff in messaging/communications
- Act on real or perceived threats to psychological and physical harm by implementing safeguards/programs to address them
We are hiring!
Pathway & Post Degree Programs

CDC Foundation Internships

cdcfoundation.org/internships

cdc.gov/fellowships

APHL Career Pathways in Public Health Laboratory Science

aphl.org
Pathway & Post Degree Programs

Colorado Public Health Works Program

Paving New Pathways Into the Field of Public Health

Connect to talented and diverse future health leaders.

100% of interns would recommend HCC internships to their peers.
95% of employers say hosting an HCC intern is a good return on investment.
70% of interns were offered a job or extended internship with their host organizations.

AmeriCorps and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have joined forces through Public Health AmeriCorps. Together, we are creating a new career pathway, lasting professional development of the next generation of public health leaders who will be ready to respond to the nation’s public health needs.

Make Your Mark

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Public Health AmeriCorps service marks:

Trailhead.institute
healthcareers.org
americorps.gov
## Intermediary Hiring

### STATE FUNDED PROGRAMS (SFP)

#### CONNECTICUT- SFP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>State Funded Programs (SFP)</th>
<th>Connecticut</th>
<th>Full-Time</th>
<th>Hybrid</th>
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<td>Administrative Assistant</td>
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<td>Communications Specialist</td>
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[Apply](astho.org)
Public Health Training Centers

Region 2: Recruitment Toolkit
Region V: Public Health Model Job Descriptions

Introducing The Racial Justice Competency Model for Public Health Professionals (RJCM)

phtcn.org

Public Health Training Center Network
We are a consortium of ten regional Public Health Training Centers that collectively represent the nation’s most comprehensive resource for public health workforce development.

Training Centers offer a model that addresses critical needs we are building and for future—today, and for tomorrow.

- 1,000,000+ Learners
- 25,000 Hours of instruction
- 11,000 Trainees
- 978 Courses Offered

phlearningnavigator.org
Training & Development

- Diverse Executives Leading in Public Health
- Public Health Regenerative Leadership Synergy
- NACCHO’s Adaptive Leadership Academy
- Global Health Corps
- Leadership Academy for the Public’s Health
- Region V Public Health Leadership Institute
- Building Capacity to Advance Health (coming soon)
- CDC Training Plan
- Public Health Training Centers
PHIG Resources

PHIG Partners

About Us

The Public Health Infrastructure Grant (PHIG) is a groundbreaking investment that supports critical public health infrastructure needs of health departments across the United States. Funding from this grant will help ensure that every U.S. community has the people, services, and systems needed to promote and protect health.

In Fall 2022, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) awarded the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), National Network of Public Health Institutes (NNPHI), and Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) historic grants to support state, local, and territorial health departments through the PHIG grant. Together, these national partners will collaborate with health agencies in their efforts to modernize data systems, recruit and retain a skilled public health workforce, and address longstanding public health infrastructure needs.

This website, produced by the national partners, supports jurisdictions in their drive to modernize the nation’s public health systems. Visitors can explore technical assistance offerings, view resources to accelerate their work, and see stories of impact from the PHIG grant in communities.

phininfrastructure.org

Latest Resources

ASTHO STAR Center
The ASTHO STAR Center connects public health agencies to peers, resources, and consultants who can help leaders modernize and strengthen their agency’s infrastructure and processes.
Read More

Glidepath to the Future of Public Health Report
This report provides both tactical and strategic frameworks to assist users engaged in modernizing public health structures, systems, and practice.
Read More

Tools for Public Health Transformation
These modern tools and resources by PHAB help health departments transform their public health systems.
Read More

Transforming the Public Health Workforce
Strategies and examples for strengthening and transforming the public health workforce.
Read More

Workforce Spotlight: Successfully Raising FTE Caps in Rhode Island

Missouri DHHS Director Paula Nickelson on Historic PHIG Funding

Read Story

Access Resource

Workforce Spotlight: Successfully Raising FTE Caps in Rhode Island

Learn how Rhode Island successfully advocated for new permanent positions through the state budget process by focusing on documentation, staying within the position cap, emphasizing the value of public health, prioritizing engagement, and persistently working through the process.

Access Resource
Groups

National Consortium for Public Health Workforce Development
Collaborate to strengthen and support the PH workforce through research, public engagement, advocacy, convening & creating learning opportunities

Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health
Framing the Future Education for Public Health Undergraduate Network for Academic Public Health

Public Health Foundation – Academic Health Department Learning Community
Designed to support development, maintenance & expansion of formal affiliations of HDs and academic institutions
Groups

04
Consortium for Workforce Research in Public Health
Six universities working together to research and support the PH workforce

05
Peer Networks, Learning Communities
Organized groups of professionals working on like initiatives convening for the purpose of sharing ideas, jointly problem-solving and learning together.
Video

Hear from Public Health Professionals | Public Health Careers.org
PublicHealthCareers.org

1. A centralized space for those seeking employees at all levels of governmental public health
2. A place to be seen by both new and experienced talent
3. Dynamic and engaging, with content to inspire a new generation of candidates

Who should post opportunities?
Professionals with responsibilities for human resources and/or workforce development activities in governmental public health jurisdictions.

Promote Individual Openings
Post jobs to the ASTHO Job Board (ASTHO.org) to have them appear in PublicHealthCareers.org searches. Governmental public health agencies use promo code STHA72022 at checkout to post unlimited 30-day listings.

Automate Your Postings
Explore how you may be able to promote jobs by automatically providing an XML feed. Contact workforce@astho.org to find out how!
PH-HERO

The Public Health – Hope, Equity, Resilience, and Opportunity (PH-HERO) initiative is designed to address workforce burnout, moral injury, and aid in overall retention and recruitment efforts to support a culture of well-being and resilience within public health agencies at the organizational level. PH-HERO is building upon the best available evidence for designing thriving workplaces using a trauma-informed approach and equity framework.

astho.org/ph-workforce-resources
Actions
Reflection

What resource might you use?
What is one action you could take within the next week?
Q & A
Contact

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