Public Health Workforce Program

The Prevention and Public Health Fund (the Fund, or PPHF), created in the Affordable Care Act (ACA), is the nation’s largest investment in prevention. The Fund invests in cross-cutting prevention programs that have the potential to transform our public health system, improve health, and reduce health care costs.

Public health workers are responsible for protecting the health of Americans. But the public health workforce faces immense challenges. Estimates show that an additional 250,000 public health workers will be needed by 2020, yet between 2008-2010 budget cuts have meant the loss of more than 44,000 jobs in state and local health departments. The ACA included several important investments in in addressing the public health workforce shortage, including the expansion of the Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) program, the Public Health Informatics Fellowship Program, and other applied epidemiology and laboratory fellowships.

The PPHF supports other fellowships and workforce development activities described below. PPHF support allows public health-related training (including e-learning) to be freely available to the public through the CDC Learning Connection website (www.cdc.gov/learning) and the CDC Training Finder Real-time Affiliate Integrated Network (TRAIN) learning management system. PPHF also supports the development of a public health core curriculum in basic public health sciences, which will be made available to the public via e-learning modules on CDC TRAIN.

For those interested in public health, CDC runs a variety of fellowship programs in applied public health sciences and public health program operations, policy, management, and leadership for recent graduates of baccalaureate, masters, and doctorate programs. The fellowship programs with partial support from PPHF include: EIS, Public Health Associate Program (PHAP), Applied Public Health Informatics Fellowship, Health Systems Integration Program, Emerging Infectious Diseases (EID) Laboratory Fellowship, and the CDC/Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) Applied Epidemiology Fellowship.

Expected Outcomes

- The PPHF-supported Public Health Workforce programs focus on increasing the number of CDC and CDC-sponsored trainees assigned to state and local health departments, as well as increasing the number of epidemiologic and informatics technical assistance activities provided to state and local health departments.

Program Successes

- In FY12, PPHF supported 320 fellows. Of these, 251 fellows (78%) were placed in areas of greatest need in state, local, tribal, and territorial public health agencies. PPHF supports 74% of CDC’s trainees placed in the field. PPHF supported a greater number of fellows in FY12 as compared to FY11.
Of the PPHF-supported fellows, 259 field assignment proposals were received from state, tribal, local, and territorial public health agencies for the 100 incoming Public Health Associate Program fellows in FY 2012; 36 state and local public health agencies expressed interest in hosting the eight Applied Public Health Informatics Fellows.

The benefits of the workforce programs are evident: participants contribute to improving health in the communities in which they work during their fellowship, and in FY12, 84 percent of CDC fellowship participants obtained jobs in public health or continued their public health education after graduation.

The PPHF-supported CDC Learning Connection website and CDC TRAIN learning management system increases access for all health professionals to training resources and reduce the travel, printing, and instructor costs associated with training for state and local health departments.

EIS officers have played a prominent role in CDC’s response to the nationwide outbreak of fungal meningitis in 2012. At least 65 EIS officers participated in CDC’s response. An additional 21 state/local-based EIS officers contributed to the response in their state and local assignments.

State Successes

**Louisiana**

- Public Health Associate Programs fellows assigned to Louisiana conducted preparedness and response activities with the New Orleans Department of Health and the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals during Hurricane Isaac.
- Activities included triage of persons with critical medical and transportation needs prior to storm landfall, round-the-clock support of City and State Emergency Operations Centers, and staffing evacuation shelters set up for persons with special medical needs.

**North Carolina**

- A CDC-supported Public Health Associate in a local health department in North Carolina led HIV outreach efforts in the community, which resulted in the health department exceeding its HIV outreach and testing goal by 200 percent.

**District of Columbia**

- A CDC-supported Public Health Associate in Washington, D.C., led a large tuberculosis contact investigation at a local university by personally making contact with more than 300 case contacts, linking them with required assessments, medical evaluations, and follow-up.