Self-assessed Skill in Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals in a State Health Department: Vermont’s Workforce Development Assessment

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Outline

• Why to assess core competencies
• How VDH prioritized competencies
• Survey design and methodology
• Results – how competent do we feel?
• Data driven workforce development plan
• Future directions in Vermont
Objectives

1. Understand the process that one state used to assess public health core competencies
2. Demonstrate how workforce development activities are linked with familiar programmatic frameworks & quantitative approaches
3. Share the lessons learned with colleagues who may undertake this to write a workforce development plan
Background
National focus on Workforce

10 Essential PH Services:
Assure Competent Workforce

PH Accreditation Domain 8:
Maintain a competent public health workforce

Standard 8.2: Assess staff competencies and address gaps by enabling organizational and individual training and development opportunities
VDH Strategic Plan
2010-2012

**Goal 4 Strategic Directions:**

4.1 Establish infrastructure that assures professional workforce competency as a priority
   4.1.1 Assure that public health competency standards are communicated and demonstrated throughout the Health Department

4.2 Develop employees who are technically proficient and who maintain state-of-the-art skills, abilities, and knowledge in public health
   4.2.1 Develop and implement a workforce development plan that addresses gaps and supports public health competencies

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**Strategic Plan Summary**

**Mission**
To protect and promote optimal health for all Vermonters.

**Vision**
Healthy Vermonters living in healthy communities.

**Goals**

1. Effective and integrated public health programs
2. Communities with the capacity to respond to public health needs
3. Internal systems that provide consistent and responsive support
4. A competent and valued workforce that is supported in promoting and protecting the public’s health
5. A public health system that is understood and valued by Vermonters
6. Health equity for all Vermonters

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Vermont’s Workforce Development Assessment

http://healthvermont.gov/admin/strategic
Vermont Department of Health

Organizational Structure

• ~530 employees
• Within the Agency of Human Services

• VDH Functional Divisions
  – Administration
  – Alcohol & Drug Abuse Programs
  – Health Promotion & Disease Prevention
  – Public Health Preparedness
  – Health Surveillance
  – Environmental Health
  – Maternal & Child Health
  – Local Health
Vermont’s Resources

Vermont has:

• VDH Strategic Plan
• Centralized health department
• Committed VDH leadership
• National Public Health Improvement Initiative funding (NPHII)

Vermont lacks:

• Public Health Institute
• Public Health degree programs
VDH Guiding Frameworks

Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF)

Vermont Prevention Model (Ecological Model)

Methods
Survey Design

• Web-based administration
• Staff informed via emails
• Voluntary
• Anonymous
• 2 parts – 30 questions each
• Collected division of VDH
  – No job title or role
Survey Design

• Originally planned for integrated prevention staff
  – Strategic Prevention Framework
  – Vermont Prevention Model
• Core Competencies
  – Council on Linkages
  – National Association of Chronic Disease Directors
  – International Certification and Reciprocity Consortium
Question Topic Areas

- Assessment
- Capacity Building
- Planning
- Implementation
- Cultural Competence
- General Public Health

- Communication
- Systems Thinking
- Team Building
- VDH-specific
  - Mission & Vision
  - Strategic Plan
  - Organizational structure
  - Partners
Question Template

In my work I am able to (choose all that apply):

- Tier 1
- Tier 2
- Tier 3
- I don’t have these skills
- Not applicable

Tiers build on each other
Select Questions

Assessment

In my work I am able to:

- Identify sources of public health data and information
- Use and reference sources of public health data and information
- Expand internal and external access to public health data and information
- I don’t have these skills
- Not Applicable
Select Questions

**VDH-specific**

In my work I am able to:

- Identify goals of health reform in Vermont
- Promote goals of health reform in Vermont to current and potential partners
- Consider incorporation of health reform goals into my work
- I don’t have these skills
- Not Applicable
Select Questions

1. Examine the integrity and comparability of data
2. Respond to diverse needs that are the result of cultural differences
3. Describe the scientific foundation of the field of public health
4. Describe evidence based approaches to prevention and control of chronic disease
Analysis Methods

• Web-based analytics limited
• SAS 9.3
• Descriptive Statistics
  – Proportion of respondents in each tier for each question
• Communication to Workforce Development Workgroup division representatives
  – Tables
  – Bar charts
Prioritization Methods

- Representative Workgroup
- Division-specific prioritization
  - Based on survey results & manager expertise
  - Consensus building
- Nominal group process
- Dotmotcracy
Results
Response Rates

- Survey 1: 67% (362 staff)
- Survey 2: 53% (284 staff)
- Divisions ranged from 46%-80%
- Responses dropped off for later questions
Responses

- Tier 1
- Tier 1 & 2
- Tier 1, 2 & 3
- I don’t have these skills
- Not Applicable

- Tier 2
- Tier 3
- Tier 1 & 3
- Tier 2 & 3
- Any Tier and Don’t Have or N/A
Responses

- Tier 1
- Tier 1 & 2
- Tier 1, 2 & 3
- I don’t have these skills
- Not Applicable

- Tier 2
- Tier 3
- Tier 1 & 3
- Tier 2 & 3
- Any Tier and Don’t Have or N/A

Any Tier 1

Don’t Have
Priorities by Division

Dotmocracy Results

- Local Health
- MCH
- EnvHealth
- Hsurv
- OPHP
- HPDP
- ADAP
- Administration

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Discussion
Discussion

Cross-divisional priorities identified by a representative group of stakeholders

• Public Health Practice
• Communication
• Systems thinking
Limitations

• Lengthy
• Tailored to VDH
• Not mandatory – Response rate <100%
• Lacks job title, role, or connection to major job duties
• Does not measure skill but self-assessed ability and current use
• Comfort/awareness of competency language could lower self-assessment
Strengths

• Tailored to VDH
• Response rate (>50%)
• Quantitative analysis
• Sustainable, ongoing
• Captures perceived gaps
• Promotes open dialogue
• Using for planning and informing plan
Future Directions

Workforce Development Plan Goals

1. Identify core competencies & priorities
2. Assess staff competency
3. Assess current opportunities
4. Identify & expand a variety of opportunities
5. Create & implement an ongoing communication plan for opportunities
Future Directions

- Implementation
- Evaluation
  - Of plan
  - Of trainings
- Assessment again
- Accreditation!

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