



PENNSYLVANIA & OHIO PUBLIC HEALTH TRAINING CENTER

Pennsylvania and Ohio

Summary of the PHTC

The Pennsylvania & Ohio Public Health Training Center (POPHTC) is a collaboration with the University of Pittsburgh's Center for Public Health Practice in the **Graduate School of Public Health at the University of Pittsburgh**, and the **Ohio State University's School of Public Health**. The mission of the POPHTC is to engage academic and organizational partnerships in both states to provide timely and relevant training with a special emphasis on underserved areas. A goal of POPHTC is to enhance the ability of public health agencies to provide training programs that focus on a continuous quality improvement model.

Impact of the PHTC

- **Program Planning for Health Outcomes:** As partners in workforce development, the Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) and POPHTC are committed to train workers in public health in order to produce a measurable impact on the agency's performance effectiveness. The effort began with the ACHD's strategic performance assessment in 2001, which showed that the agency's program planning was too heavily focused on processes (i.e., number of clients seen) and too remote from program-impact on the health of those served. To address this strategic weakness, ACHD and POPHTC developed and delivered a 30-hour training that focused specifically on program planning and evaluation. This practical, strategic approach to training proved to be very effective. When compared to pre-training documents, the agency's post-training Annual Program Plans had clearly improved. The new program plans had measurable goals and objectives that focused the agency's performance on real health outcomes for the county population.
- **Just-in-Time Training in Epidemiology:** The need for qualified epidemiologists in state and local health departments has increased sharply in the past two years. In PA, as in most other states, these positions have become increasingly difficult to fill. Facing imminent threats (including a SARS outbreak, the threat of pandemic flu, and a recent unprecedented outbreak of Hepatitis-A), PA recognized the need to increase its epidemiologic capacity on an interim basis. Existing staff of the Commonwealth's Department of Health included public-health nurses who were already skilled in data gathering, but lacked the necessary data interpretation skills. These individual employees often carried heavy workloads in high-demand positions, so taking time off was impossible for specialized education or for lengthy in-service training. Instead, the Health Department called on POPHTC to help address this multi-faceted but urgent problem. POPHTC responded by developing a series of just-in-time, self-instructional resources to enhance the epidemiology skills of health department workers. By providing on-line access to training at any time for busy public-health workers, POPHTC are effectively filling a critical gap in Pennsylvania's public health capacity.
- **Additional Trainings:** The Center has a relationship with the Delaware General Health District in Ohio, and has formed a training committee to oversee the department's training efforts. The committee planned nine hours of training for employees to be offered annually, which addresses issues such as cultural competency, violence in the workplace, HIPAA, blood borne pathogens, and human resource concerns such as the FMLA Act and the American Disability Act.