Developing a Comprehensive Workforce Development Plan to Retain and Recruit Environmental Health Specialist’s in the State of Georgia

2009- 2010

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In late 2008, the Georgia Division of Public Health became concerned about the increase in turnover of Environmental Health Specialist’s (EHS’s), and empowered a committee to evaluate the problem. This high turn-over rate has led to problems such as inconsistent inspections, consumer/industry complaints, low morale and the potential for increased public health threats. A statewide assessment of the EH program using the National Environmental Public Health Performance Standards indicates that workforce development is in need of improvement and is a priority for the State and 18 health districts.

The purpose of this project is to identify the reasons why EHS’s are leaving the profession and to develop a plan to address this issue. A systems thinking approach was used to evaluate why Georgia is experiencing problems with retaining EHS’s. As a result, it was determined the high turnover rate is due to low salaries, lack of incentives to obtain credentials and training, retirements, lack of professional development and a career ladder needing improvement.

A plan is being developed to support existing staff and enhance recruitment. Existing staff will be supported through a comprehensive career ladder that adjusts salaries, provides incentives for trainings and credentials, adds advancement opportunities, and develops a leadership/management program for mid-career professionals. Recruitment will be enhanced through improved marketing to universities and student career day events to showcase the profession. Sustainable funding for this plan will require the support of the State Legislature. Marketing of the profession’s importance to the legislature will be provided through fact sheets that describe the profession’s role and the economic impact of losing environmental health professionals.

This plan should accomplish the goal of retaining current EH staff and recruiting new graduates to the profession and will prepare the next generation of Environmental Health leadership.

INTRODUCTION/BGACKGROUND:

The mission of Environmental Health (EH) is to provide primary prevention through a combination of surveillance, education, enforcement, and assessment programs designed to indentify, prevent and abate environmental conditions that adversely impact human health\(^1\). Environmental Health is a cornerstone of the public health system with early accomplishments in “…preserving the purity of food and water, and ensuring basic sanitation” to more recently responding to the “…emergence of new threats, including West Nile virus and being at the forefront of emergency preparedness activities.”\(^2\) Georgia Environmental Health Specialists accomplish this mission by utilizing their scientific education and training to perform health assessments, investigate complaints, and provide education and technical assistance. Georgia’s 159 counties are divided geographically into 18 health districts with each county having a constitutionally mandated board of health that provides environmental health services. However, with the emergence of new threats and additional programs, the responsibilities of environmental health are rapidly increasing and many counties in Georgia are facing a shortage of experienced and trained environmental health staff to handle these increasing demands. This shortage in staff
is due to increased turnover and retirements and has led to problems such as inconsistent inspections, increased consumer and industry complaints, low morale, and the potential for public health threats that go undetected and unabated. The purpose of this project was to identify the reasons why EHS’s are leaving the profession and to develop a plan to address this issue. This is crucial because Georgia, like many other states, is experiencing the following current and future challenges:

- Experienced staff retiring in large numbers
- Limited ability to keep or attract new Environmental Health Specialists due to compensation, advancement, and training opportunities being well below regional and national levels
- Potential low quality workforce due to no training or education opportunities beyond the minimum required to perform basic duties available to new and existing staff
- Emerging threats of pandemic flu, bioterrorism, and other diseases
- Extensive loss of county fee revenue due to the precipitous fall in housing construction while non-fee service requests increase

A survey of the health districts in late 2008 indicated an approximate 25% turnover rate with over 100 vacant EH positions across the State. This problem is further exasperated by a large percentage of senior environmental health staff that will retire in the next five years, which leads to the proverbial “brain drain” of institutional knowledge and experiences. By the end of 2010 alone, Georgia will lose approximately 40 EHS to retirements or 9% of its total EH staff. These challenges are being faced by many states and according to Resnic et al., a study by the Pew Environmental Health Commission indicated the challenges to maintaining an adequate environmental public health workforce include retirements, recruitment and retention difficulties, limited compensation and career advancement opportunities. In addition, the current economic crisis has created additional vacancies because in many districts, EH fee’s are linked to services provided for land use activities and when the real estate market tanked, land use fee’s that were used to offset salaries drastically declined. This has led some districts to lay off EH staff and to keep positions vacant. In one district alone it has been reported there are approximately 30% fewer EHS and EH support staff currently than in 2004. This trend has been reported nationally with an estimated 55% of local health department reporting program cuts.

In the last 10 years, EH leaders have discussed and studied the issue of EHS leaving the profession and the impending retirements of senior staff. Efforts were made to increase salaries several years ago, but lost legislative support and were not approved. In addition, the merit system increased salaries slightly in 2000-2001, but this did little to make salaries competitive to other environmental disciplines. While efforts have been made, there has been no collaborative effort to develop a comprehensive workforce development plan that supports changing the system.

In late 2008, the Georgia Division of Public Health, Environmental Health Branch expressed concern about the increase in turnover of Environmental Health Specialist’s and pending retirements, and in early 2009 empowered a committee to evaluate the problem. This committee was comprised of District EH Directors and County Environmental Health Specialists. Its mission was to determine why EHS’s are leaving the profession and to develop an enhanced career ladder to improve retention and recruitment. At the time, I was the Chatham
County EH Director and had not been promoted to the State Deputy Director position, but was on the committee. This committee met via conference calls and WebEx several times and through discussion regarding exit surveys and conversations with former EHS’s, determined the number one reason EHS’s leave the profession is salary inequities with other state agencies, surrounding states and the private sector. In addition, other factors discussed that influence turnover is the lack of incentives to obtain additional credentials, lack of professional development opportunities, lack of opportunities for advancement and discrepancies between hiring and promotion practices between districts.

The disparity in compensation between Georgia, surrounding states and industry is a hindrance for recruitment and retention. Georgia requires all entry level EHS’s to have a minimum of a Bachelor of Science degree and all EHS’s must attend an EH training program administered by the state. In addition, they must obtain professional certifications in the onsite sewage program, National Incident Management System and become F.D.A. food code standardized. Many of these credentials require maintenance through continuing education courses. Georgia’s entry level salary is currently $26,672, which is well below other professions that require similar degree requirement and credentials. There have been many anecdotal stories of EH staff that left the profession for jobs in industry, other state EH programs and even other state agencies making $5,000-$20,000 more in salary. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Georgia’s entry level salary does not meet the national 10th percentile average of $32,220 for our job classification.5

In addition, more affluent health districts are able to offer higher entry level salaries, which results in districts competing against each other for the top candidates and current staff. There are many examples of well trained and competent EHS’s that leave one district to take the same position in a neighboring district for more money. While this benefits the individual EHS, it is bad overall for the continuity of the program statewide.

After transitioning to the State office in May 2009, collaboration began immediately with the State EH Director on this plan. After reviewing all the variables and advice from my EPHLI team, this project grew from a simple career ladder improvement to a full workforce development plan that has two basic components: Support of existing staff and enhanced recruitment. The goals of this project are to develop a plan that will include the following elements:

- Support of existing staff with a comprehensive career ladder that adjusts salaries, provides incentives for trainings and credentials, and adds additional advancement opportunities
- Develops a leadership/management program for mid-career professionals to enhance management skills and build leadership capacity for the next generation of EH leaders
- Enhanced recruitment through improved marketing to universities and student career day events to showcase the profession.
- Sustainable funding through enhanced marketing of the profession’s importance to the state legislature via fact sheets that describe the profession’s role and the economic impact of losing environmental health professionals.
• Encouragement and eventual requirement of EHS’s to become credentialed as a REHS/RS and to compensate and celebrate this achievement

The goals of this plan match recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control, Environmental Health Branch and the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials. In addition, by legislative action, the Georgia Division of Public health recently moved to the Department of Community Health (DCH). Leadership within the Department of Community Health has stated that workforce development is an important initiative and has verbally supported our workforce development plans.

**Problem Statement:** With the high turnover rate of EH staff contributing to inconsistent inspections, increased complaints from consumers and industry, low morale, and the potential for public health threats, the long term results of the State of Georgia’s EH workforce development plan will achieve its goals of retaining current EH staff and enhance its recruitment efforts for new EHS’s.

**Benefits of Change**

Changing the current system will provide tangible and intangible benefits to the Environmental Health Program in the State of Georgia. One major precondition for change is the increased pressure to reduce budgets and stretch dollars. This seems contradictory because implementation of the plan will require more money. However, increased turnover of EH staff is costing the counties and the state substantial dollars in training costs and loss fee revenue. As outlined in this chart, the benefits of changing far exceed the benefits of not changing. Developing a comprehensive workforce plan allows the State to reward current staff for obtaining additional credentials and provides additional advancement opportunities in their career. Increasing the entry level salary will make the profession more competitive and should assist with recruitment and retention. In addition, sending mid-career EH professionals through a management/leadership program ensures well trained staff are ready for leadership positions.

The costs of changing the system will require an increase in money budgeted for the program. However, the long term cost of retaining a well trained and competent workforce will save money over the long run and reduce public health threats in the State. The ultimate goal of environmental public health programs is to protect the health of the community and the environment. If the current system does not change, the result is unhealthy communities as outlined in Figure 1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Not Changing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-Reduction in turn over rate of EH professionals</td>
<td>-Position vacancies are filled quickly</td>
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<td>-Budget Savings</td>
<td>-Inspection mandates are met, albeit temporarily</td>
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<td>-Well trained and satisfied EH staff</td>
<td>-Increased turnover of EH professionals</td>
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<td>-Reduced PH threats</td>
<td>-Lack of EH coverage in counties equals loss of fee revenue</td>
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<td>-Increased inspection and rule interpretation</td>
<td>-Increased consumer complaints due to services not rendered</td>
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<td>consistency among counties</td>
<td>-Loss of knowledge when staff leaves</td>
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<td>-Decreased consumer complaints</td>
<td>-Prevention of EH staff from building relationships with the regulated community and consumers and their community</td>
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<td>-Meeting state mandated inspection frequencies</td>
<td>-Potential Public Health threats due to lack of monitoring and inspections</td>
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<tr>
<td>-More time allowed for career development</td>
<td>-Not meeting inspection mandates=Trouble with legislatures</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Enhanced recruitment and interest in EHS career via marketing</td>
<td>-Less time allowed for career development</td>
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<td>-Healthier communities</td>
<td>-Political problems associated with looking like the PH agency is ineffective</td>
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<td>-Leadership Succession planning</td>
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<th>Costs</th>
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<td>-Budget increase to implement and fund plan</td>
<td>-Loss of money spent on training new EHS (Approx $45,000 per EHS, or $4,400,000 per year)</td>
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<td>-Raising entry level salary</td>
<td>-Increased turnover of EH professionals</td>
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<td>-Cost to realign current EHS salaries so they are competitive with private industry and other agencies</td>
<td>-Lack of EH coverage in counties equals loss of fee revenue</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Increased costs to reward EH professionals for obtaining credentials</td>
<td>-Increased consumer complaints due to services not rendered</td>
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<td>-Increased marketing associated with recruitment</td>
<td>-Loss of knowledge when staff leaves</td>
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<td>-Prevention of EH staff from building relationships with the regulated community and consumers and their community</td>
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<tr>
<th>Environmental Health (EH) Workforce Crisis Feedback Loop</th>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of skilled EH workforce</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unhealthy Communities</td>
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<td>-Communities less resilient to emergencies, natural disasters</td>
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<tr>
<td>-↓Sickness and death</td>
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<td>-↑Health care costs</td>
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<td>-Businesses lose money</td>
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<td>-Lower quality of life</td>
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<td>EH profession less attractive to top talent, who leave or do not enter EH careers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reduced role leads to fees-only programs, low pay, low respect, less-interesting work</td>
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<tr>
<td>EH role reduced to checklist approach, losing systematic thinking needed to identify and prevent problems</td>
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Figure 1: EH Workforce Feedback Loop
**Behavior Over Time Graph:** The behavior over time graph illustrates with the increase in turnover of EH staff, there is an increase in travel and training expenses for new EHS and increased pressure to reduce the budget; all while the demand for EH services is going up. Turnover leads to a decrease in knowledge, consistency of inspections and morale. Reducing turnover will decrease budget pressure because travel and training cost will decrease, and increase the knowledge, consistency and morale of EH staff to respond to the demand for EH services.

**Current Reality**

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1 = Turnover rate of Environmental Health Professionals is gradually increasing over-time  
2 = Travel and training costs and increased percent of budget going to training  
3 = Increased pressure to reduce budget  
4 = Increased demand from the public for Environmental Health services  
5 = Level of knowledge, consistency of inspections and morale with turnover of EH staff
Causal Loop Diagram and applicable Archetype

In utilizing the systems thinking approach, the overall archetype that was used to evaluate the workforce issues in Georgia was the “shifting the burden” model. This diagram shows that the quick fix to solving the turnover problem in Georgia is to fill a position quickly without analyzing the reasons or consequences of why EHS’s are leaving the profession in the first place. This cycle perpetuates the long term problem of increased turnover rates and broadens the knowledge gap between “rookie” EHS’s and senior EHS’s, with limited mid-career professionals to fill the leadership void created by retirements. The solution to correcting this problem is implementing a comprehensive workforce development plan, which will reduce the burden of high turnover and increase the professional competency of EHS’s in Georgia.

In additions, embedded is a “fixes that backfire” archetype in which new EHS ability to succeed is diminished because in a rush to put a body in a position and generate inspection numbers, career development is put on hold, which frustrates the new EHS resulting in them leaving the profession.
10 Essential Environmental Health Services:

Essential Service # 8: Assure a Competent Workforce

This project strives to create a workforce development plan that will fulfill Essential Service # 8, assuring a competent workforce. It is my belief that to provide the other nine essential environmental health services, a well trained, and competent Environmental Health Professional must be in place to succeed. In keeping with national recommendations, the State of Georgia conducted an assessment of its environmental health program to determine how it measures in meeting the goals of the ten essential environmental health services. This assessment indicated that workforce development was in need of improvement and was made an initiative of the State. The workforce development plan described in this project, when implemented, will put Georgia in a position to improve its service delivery of all essential environmental health services by having a well trained and competent staff.

![Diagram of Essential Environmental Public Health Services]

Figure 2: 10 Essential Environmental Public Health Services

National Goals Supported

1. CDC Health Protection Goals

   - Health People in Healthy Places
     - A competent, well trained environmental health workforce ensures that people stay healthy by living in a community free from EH hazards. EH professionals protect the
health of people in their communities through programs such as housing inspections, indoor air quality education, proper disposal of waste water and garbage and ensuring safe drinking water supplies. A competent workforce has the necessary skills to assess EH problems in their community and provide the expertise to solve those problems.

- People Prepared for Emerging Health Threats
  - A competent EH workforce is trained and well prepared to participate, recognize and respond to public health emergencies such as natural disasters, disease outbreaks or emerging threats such as climate change and drought related emergencies. In many situations, EH professionals are the vital link to ensuring basic quality of life services during disasters such as ensuring safe food, water, and shelter.

2. National Strategy to Revitalize Environmental Public Health Services
   - Goal # 1: Build Capacity
     - A competent EH workforce helps achieve this goal by providing the capacity to assess EH problems in a community and the ability to prevent and respond to EH threats.
   - Goal # 3: Foster Leadership
     - The goal of this project is to develop a workforce plan that includes management/leadership program for mid-career EH professionals. This program will be utilized to provide professional development opportunities so future EH leaders can be identified early, mentored and trained to take those leadership positions.
   - Goal # 5: Develop the Workforce
     - Final approval and implementation of the workforce development plan outlined in this report supports this goal. A competent workforce is required to provide the innovative and contemporary EH service required in these modern times.

3. Environmental Health Competency Project: Recommendation for Core Competencies for Local Environmental Health Practitioners

A. Assessment
   - A competent EH workforce can properly assess problems through research, data analysis, interpretation and evaluation to ensure the correct solution is applied to the situation.

B. Management
   - A competent workforce supports the following competencies by having the ability to solve complex problems, training and confidence to ensure economic and political issues are handled correctly and longevity of staff to obtain organizational knowledge and behavior. In addition, the competent EHS has the ability to manage their work and the work of others, ability to provide proper documentation and record keeping and the capacity to partner with other agencies to resolve complex issues.

C. Communication
   - A major goal of this project is to ensure a competent workforce that can educate prior to regulating, communicate effectively, resolve conflicts, and market the environmental health profession as a necessary service in their community.
LOGIC MODEL  Goal: To develop a comprehensive workforce development plan for environmental health professionals in the State of Georgia

Resources/Inputs
- Funding
  - State appropriations
  - Local county contributions and fees
- Research
  - Peer reviewed articles
  - Publications
  - Internet
- Partners
  - District/Local Health Departments
  - Georgia Department of Community Health
  - Georgia Environmental Health Association
  - Georgia Public Health Association
  - CDC
  - EPHLI

Activities
- Program Design and Development
  - Select and Engage team members
  - Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment
  - Develop project objectives
  - Identify Stakeholders
  - Survey Stakeholders for salaries and training opportunities and incentives
  - Assign tasks to team
  - Hold periodic meetings via conference call and WebEx.
  - Debate on requirements of REHS/RS
- Training
  - Introduce system thinking concepts
  - Introduce EnvPHPS and 10 essential EH services with workforce development being # 8
  - Identify priorities and gaps in workforce development plan
- Teamwork and Collaborative Projects
  - Individuals present task assignments
  - Teams receive feedback on tasks
  - Develop working draft of comprehensive career ladder and workforce plan

Outputs
- # of meetings
- Results of needs assessment
- Survey results
- Stakeholder engagement
- Training and workforce development needs
- Objectives developed
- Strategies developed
- Lists of priorities and gaps
- Better understanding of EnvPHPS and 10 Essential services.
- # and focus of tasks
- Draft career ladder and workforce plan

Short & Long Term Outcomes, Impacts.
- Development and approval of workforce development plan that includes a comprehensive career ladder with incentives for training and registration
- Increased training opportunities
- Decrease costs of continual training to replace EHS
- Increased training and knowledge among EHS
- Increased ability to assess training needs as needs change.
- Improved delivery of services and staff retention.
- Increased ability to match learning needs with training curriculum.
- Increased number of leaders trained.
- Improve moral
- Learning needs are correlated to core PH competencies
- Assessment of State EH Program utilizing EnvPHPS and 10 essential EH services so a plan can be presented to leadership and resources obtained based on priorities
- Continuously identify gaps and needs with the workforce and implement solutions

Behavior
- Increased competency and leadership capacity of Environmental Health Specialist’s
- Confidant in ability to perform as an EHS

Results
- Better trained and more competent workforce
- Retention of EH staff
- Continuity and consistency
- Improved health of the community
- Leadership Succession planning

2009–2010 Fellow Project  National Environmental Public Health Leadership Institute
PROJECT OBJECTIVES/DESCRIPTION/DELIVERABLES:

Program Goal: To develop a comprehensive EH workforce development plan that includes an improved career ladder. This plan will be used to retain and recruit the best candidates for EH positions by enhancing EHS careers through professional development opportunities, increase salaries, incentives for obtaining credentials and training, and improve the morale of the EH workforce in the State of Georgia. This plan will be part of a larger public health workforce development plan supported by the Georgia Department of Community Health.

Problem: The EnvPHPS assessment tool revealed that the State of Georgia needs improvement in the area of workforce development. The current career ladder does not offer a consistent platform to move up in one's career and the starting salary does not entice our best graduates to consider EH as a career or stay in the profession. In addition, the turnover rate for environmental health specialists in Georgia is currently around 25% and the next five years will lead to a mass exodus of senior EHS as they retire, which will result in a massive EH “brain drain”. In addition, the profession lacks a marketing campaign aimed at high schools and universities to showcase the profession. These problems have resulted in inconsistencies among inspections, low morale, increased training costs and not meeting inspection mandates as established by the legislatures.

Outcome Objective: By July 1, 2010, the Georgia Division of Public Health will implement a comprehensive EH workforce development plan that focuses on recruitment and retention and reduction of the turnover rate.

Determinant: Approval of the plan by the Commissioner of the Department of Community Health and the State Personnel Administration for implementation.

Impact Objective: By January 2010, a draft comprehensive workforce development plan will be developed and presented to the 18 District EH directors as well as the state public health leadership team.

Contributing Factors:
1. Lack of support from previous state leadership
2. High turnover rate and future retirement of EH professionals.
3. National data and trends show the future need of PH professionals at 250,000.
4. Lack of funding and resources.
5. Lack of qualified candidates for EHS positions.
6. Invisible profession

METHODOLOGY:

Process Objectives:

1. By February 1, 2009, workforce development committee members identified and invite sent
Event: Meeting and objectives developed
Activities:
- Discuss results of EnvPHPS assessment
- Explain how EnvPHPS assessment will gauge capacity to perform the 10 essential EH services
- Discuss needs assessment and survey to obtain workforce data
- Review current EH career ladder and discuss and assign tasks of developing and bringing back ideas on improvements

2. By April 1, 2009, members report back to group via email on needs assessment and career ladder ideas.

Event: Webex Meeting
Activities:
- Discussion of needs assessment
- Review of career ladder ideas and draft development
- Discussion of training opportunities and incentives for moving up the ladder
- Discussion and debate of career ladder and REHS/RS registration requirements

3. By June 2009, District EH directors and State EH program directors get formal training on EnvPHPS and 10 essential EH Services.

Event: Training and Meeting
Activities:
- Workforce development plan highlighted by State EH Director
- Explain how EnvPHPS and 10 essential EH service relates to the overall mission of PH and how performing statewide assessment can be used to secure additional resources to achieve the mission
- Have informal discussion with District EH Director on workforce development needs in their districts

4. By August 2009, work with State PH workforce group to develop a document supporting workforce development plan with citations.

Event: Meeting and collaboration
Activities:
- Research current body of literature for data on current state of PH workforce
- Develop supporting document for the workforce development plan
- Collaborate with other disciplines to share ideas

5. By September 12, 2009, comprehensive workforce development plan working draft to present to the 18 District EH directors at EH retreat.

Event: Write plan and 1st official presentation of plan
Activities:
• Survey districts for starting salary and promotion incentive and salary increases
• Present plan to State EH Director for feedback and approval prior to the meeting
• Review plan to ensure it meets state personnel administration rules
• Present plan to District EH Directors for feedback and support from their county EHS
• Review feedback and revise plan

6. By March 1, 2010, present revised plan to the District EH Directors and DCH Commissioner for approval

   **Event:** Revised plan sent out for approval
   **Activities:**
   • Incorporate revised plan into overall PH workforce development plan
   • Request funding to support career ladder

7. By July 1, 2010, implement new environmental public health workforce development plan in the State of Georgia

   **Event:** Implementation
   **Activities:**
   • Incorporation by state personnel administration so all 18 district health offices implement the same plan consistently
   • Provide additional funding to the districts for EH workforce
   • Presentation so universities to recruit best and brightest students for careers in EH

8. By July 1, 2013, evaluate the workforce development plan to determine effectiveness

   **Event:** Evaluation
   **Activities:**
   • Survey the districts each year and calculate retention rates
   • Satisfaction survey of EH professionals for feedback on workforce development plan.
   • Survey districts for salary information

**RESULTS:**

The scope and complexity of this project was too large and complex to have a completed workforce development plan in the 1-year time-frame of EPHLI. However, substantial progress has been made in accomplishing the project goals. To date the following has been accomplished:

1. EH workforce committee met several times to revise the current career ladder and developed a working career ladder draft with recommendations for the State to review.
   • Discussed the needs of the EH program in Georgia and how to obtain the data.
The committee discussed the results of the EnvPHPS assessment conducted in Chatham County and how this assessment tool could be used to obtain current workforce data.

Discussed how the assessment would gauge the capacity of the Georgia EH program to perform the 10 essential EH services

Discussed and debated essential training needed for EH staff and incorporated this in the draft

Debated whether Georgia should require REHS/RS credential for all EH staff

2. All 18 District EH Directors and State EH Program Directors received formal training from EPHLI instructors and the CDC on the ten essential EH services and associated EnvPHPS.

The workforce development plan was highlighted by the State EH Director as an initiative for the State.

Had informal discussions with the District EH Directors on the plan proposal and discussed their issues and concerns.

3. Collaborated with the State Public Health workforce committee to revise their workforce development supporting document to include the EH discipline.

Included factual research supporting EH workforce development

State EH Director reviewed and provided feedback for revisions

4. Collaborated with State and District EH staff and developed a draft comprehensive plan that includes: a) Supporting documents, b) Enhanced career ladder outlining additional EH positions with training and credentialing requirements (Appendix A), c) Draft document of proposed management/leadership training courses, d) Entry level salary recommendations with spreadsheet that calculates salaries for all positions, and e) Updated marketing factsheets

Districts were surveyed for starting salaries and promotion policies

Plan has been reviewed by the State EH Director and feedback provided and revisions

Researched Bureau of Labor Statistics for salary comparisons

Due to time constraints and budget concerns, the State did not sponsor a District EH Directors retreat. At this point, the plan has not been presented to the District EH Directors for review and feedback.

Next Steps:
The proposed workforce development plan for environmental health specialists in Georgia will assist with building capacity and providing a competent workforce to handle current and future environmental health issues. The following next steps are required to complete this project, but a specific timeline can not be predicted due to current economic conditions:

1. Incorporate the State EH positions in the draft.
2. Present the full draft plan to District and County EH staff for review and comment in early 2010.
3. Develop a detailed budget to implement the plan, 2010.
4. Present the plan to the Georgia Environmental Health Association and Georgia Public Health Association for support, 2010.
5. Present the plan to the 18 District Health Directors for feedback and support.
6. Incorporate the plan into the final Public Health workforce development plan.
7. Present the plan to the Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH) for final approval, 2010.
8. Work with DCH to identify dedicated funding for implementation of the plan.
9. Collaborate with universities to market the profession. Provide marketing material to county EH staff for presenting at meetings and school career day events, 2010.

Appendix A

PROPOSED HIRING AND CLASSIFICATION POLICY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Environmental Health Specialist I

- Completion of a Bachelor of Science degree from an accredited college or university with 27 semester hours (40 quarter hours) of laboratory science.
- No experience required

Preferred qualifications:
  - Completion of a B.S. degree in Environmental Health Science; or
  - Completion of an internship in a county or state environmental health program

Environmental Health Specialist II

- Completion of a bachelor’s degree in Environmental Health from an accredited college or university, or a bachelor of science degree, which included at least, 27 semester hours (40 quarter hours) of laboratory science
- Minimum of 1 year experience as or equivalent to an EHS I**
- Level I and II OSSM certification
- Successful completion of foodservice pre-standardization requirements

Preferred qualifications:
  - Attendance and completion of the Georgia Environmental Health Training Program
  - Successful completion of a certification in an environmental health program; such as certified pool operator; certification in indoor air quality, radon or mold; certified lead paint inspector/risk assessor

Environmental Health Specialist III

- Completion of a bachelor of science degree in Environmental Health from an accredited college or university, or a bachelor of science degree, which included at least 27 semester hours (40 quarter hours) of laboratory science
- Minimum of 1 year experience as or equivalent to an EHS II**
- Attendance and completion of the Georgia Environmental Health Training Program
- Completion of NIMS courses 100, 200, 700, 800
- Completion of Standardization on the FDA or Georgia Food Code

Preferred qualifications:
  - Complete a food-borne outbreak training course
  - Attend customer service training course
  - Current Registration as a Registered Environmental Health Specialist/Sanitarian by the National Environmental Health Association or a recognized credentialing board

Environmental Health Specialist IV

- Completion of a bachelor of science degree in Environmental Health from an accredited college or university, or a bachelor of science degree, which included at least 27 semester hours (40 quarter hours) of laboratory science.
- Minimum 2 years experience as or equivalent to an EHS III**
• Must meet at least one of the following: a). Sole environmental health specialist providing environmental health program services in a single or multi-county area; b). Supervise one or more environmental health specialists as a lead worker in a large program within a county environmental health program

Preferred qualifications:
  o Current registration as a Registered Environmental Health Specialist or Sanitarian by the National Environmental Health Association or a recognized credentialing board
  o Attendance and completion of a certificate of supervisory practice or leadership program such as the CDC Environmental Public Health Leadership Institute
  o Masters degree in related field
  o Completion of NIMS courses 100, 200, 300, 400, 700, 800

Environmental Health Specialist V (New Position)

• Completion of a bachelor of science degree in Environmental Health from an accredited college or university, or a bachelor of science degree, which included at least 27 semester hours (40 quarter hours) of laboratory science
• 2 years experience as or equivalent to an EHS IV**
• Supervisory/training responsibilities for at least 1 person within an environmental health program
• Current registration as a Registered Environmental Health Specialist or Sanitarian by the National Environmental Health Association or a recognized credentialing board
• Completion of NIMS courses 100, 200, 300, 400, 700, 800

Preferred qualifications:
  o Masters degree in related field
  o Attendance and completion of an approved course in supervisory practice (Course includes management styles, budgeting, performance evaluation, hiring/termination, public speaking etc…)
  o Attendance and Completion of a leadership program such as the CDC Environmental Public Health Leadership Institute

Environmental Health County Manager

• Completion of a bachelor of science degree in Environmental Health from an accredited college or university, or a bachelor of science degree, which included at least 27 semester hours (40 quarter hours) of laboratory science
• Minimum 2 years of experience or equivalent as an EHS IV or 1 year of experience as or equivalent to an EHS V**
• Supervise at least two (2) professional Environmental Health Specialists
• Current standardization of the FDA or Georgia Food Code
• Current certification as level I and II in the onsite sewage management systems program
• Completion of NIMS 100, 200, 300, 400, 700, 800

Preferred qualifications:
  □ Masters degree in related field
  □ Current registration as a Registered Environmental Health Specialist or Sanitarian by the National Environmental Health Association or a recognized credentialing board
  □ Completion of an approved Leadership Program, such as the CDC Environmental Public Health Leadership Institute

Environmental Health County Manager II (New Position)

• Completion of a bachelor of science degree in Environmental Health from an accredited college or university, or a bachelor of science degree, which included at least 27 semester hours (40 quarter hours) of laboratory science
• Minimum 2 years of experience or equivalent as an EHS County Manager
• Current registration as a Registered Environmental Health Specialist or Sanitarian by the National Environmental Health Association or a recognized credentialing board
• Completion of an approved leadership program

Preferred qualifications:
  o Masters degree in Environmental health or Public Health

Deputy Environmental Health District Director (New Position)
• Completion of a bachelor of science degree in Environmental Health from an accredited college or university, or a bachelor of science degree, which included at least 27 semester hours (40 quarter hours) of laboratory science
• Completion of an approved course in Supervisory Practice
• Five years of full time professional level experience equivalent to an EHS 3, in which 2 years experience as a lead worker or supervisory level**

Preferred qualifications:
- Masters degree in related field
- Current registration as Registered Environmental Health Specialist or Sanitarian by the National Environmental Health Association or a recognized credentialing board
- Experience with rural and urban environmental health issues
- EH County Manager Experience

Environmental Health District Director

• Completion of a bachelor of science degree in Environmental Health from an accredited college or university, or a bachelor of science degree, which included at least 27 semester hours (40 quarter hours) of laboratory science
• 4 years of full time professional level experience equivalent to an EHS 4, in which 2 years were at a lead worker or supervisory level; or 3 years as an environmental health county manager; or 2 years as a deputy EH district director, 2 years of which were a lead worker or supervisory level**
• Completion of a certificate of supervisory practice
• Completion of NIMS courses 100, 200, 275, 300, 400, 700, 800

Preferred qualifications:
- Masters degree in related field
- Current registration as Registered Environmental Health Specialist or Sanitarian by the National Environmental Health Association or a recognized credentialing board
- Completion of an approved leadership course

Environmental Health District Director 2 (New Position)

• Completion of a bachelor of science degree in Environmental Health from an accredited college or university, or a bachelor of science degree, which included at least 27 semester hours (40 quarter hours) of laboratory science
• Two years experience as Environmental Health District Director**
• Masters Degree in related field required
• Completion of an approved supervisory practice and leadership program
• Current registration as Registered Environmental Health Specialist or Sanitarian by the National Environmental Health Association or a recognized credentialing board

Preferred qualifications:
- Masters degree in Environmental Health or Public Health

Listed below are criteria for pay increases that employees may achieve within any band:

• 10% Completion of an advanced degree in field relevant to position
• 5-10% Registered Environmental Health Specialist through the Georgia Board of Registered Environmental Health Professionals or the National Environmental Health Association. (must maintain CEU’s).
• 5% Other technical certifications deemed pertinent to EH program**

* Subject to availability of funds and performance review
** Or equivalent as determined by the District Director
*** Program must be approved by District Office
LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES:

R. Chris Rustin, B.S., M.T., REHS

I applied for the Environmental Public Health Leadership Institute (EPHLI) at the recommendation of my supervisor and because I wanted to learn new skills at becoming a stronger leader. At the very beginning, I knew this would be an experience like no other. The professionalism exhibited by the CDC staff, instructors and the St. Louis University crew was outstanding while the food and accommodations were exceptional. While I learned many things over the past year, learning how to analyze and solve problems utilizing a “Systems Thinking” approach was most important. My old mindset to problem solving was to determine the issue at hand and resolve that issue so we could get back to status quo. However, I have learned that if you view problems as part of a system and how the different parts of the system influence one another, you can get to the root of the problem and find a long term solution versus a quick fix.

The Myers Briggs Type Indicator allowed me to learn my own personality type and how that can influence people around me, positively and negatively. The skill scope was a humbling experience for me because your peers, boss and direct reports rate your leadership abilities. I designed my individual development plan to improve weaknesses outlined in my skill scope and have made improvements throughout the year that have benefited me tremendously. The structure of this program allowed me to take a huge project I was interested in and break it down to smaller more manageable parts. I was then able to work on the small parts of the project throughout the year and at the end put it all together to form my leadership project. I am appreciative of the assistance from my team and the instructors as I feel my project will improve EH in Georgia.

The relationships and networking opportunities I have gained from this program have been invaluable. Learning and sharing experiences on accomplishment and issues was beneficial. I look forward to staying in contact with my team and the rest of the 2009-2010 cohorts as we move forward in our career.
ABOUT THE EPHLI FELLOW(s)

Chris Rustin is Deputy Director of the Environmental Health Services Branch for the Georgia Department of Community Health, Division of Public Health. Mr. Rustin is responsible for assisting with the supervision and direction of the state programs including the food service, public pool, tourist accommodations, chemical hazards, land use, and lead poisoning prevention programs. In addition to these duties, Mr. Rustin serves as a lead for emergency preparedness and the liaison to the State’s eighteen District Environmental Health Directors.

Prior to becoming the State Deputy Director, Mr. Rustin was the Environmental Health Director for the Chatham County Health Department, a large urban health department in Savannah Georgia. Mr. Rustin began his career as an Environmental Health Specialist with the Evans County Health Department. From there he transferred to the Effingham County Health Department and was promoted to the Environmental Health County Manager.

Mr. Rustin holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology from Armstrong Atlantic State University and a Masters of Technology degree in Industrial Safety and Environmental Compliance from Georgia Southern University. In addition, he is a Registered Environmental Health Specialist with the Georgia Board of Registered Environmental Health Professionals and is pursuing his Doctorate in Public Health from Georgia Southern University. His professional affiliations include membership in the Georgia Environmental Health Association and the Georgia Public Health Association.
REFERENCES


