

Organization of Public Health Systems

ABSTRACT

Public health consists of a complex of activities of public and private organizations working to protect and promote the health of the population, within laws, regulations, legal precedents, and ethics to ensure individual rights as well as those of society. Elected governments in unitary or federal states have legislative, executive, and judicial functions with taxing and enforcement powers. Unitary countries have two levels of government: national and local; federal states have three: federal, state, and local. Each level has official public health responsibilities. Interaction with governmental, non-governmental, and professional organizations, and the public is vital to successful public health. Higher levels of government have greater tax resources, so cost sharing from state and national levels is essential. Low-income countries generally allocate low levels of funding to health and have weak public health infrastructures. Linkages among prevention, health promotion, and medical care are essential to meet population and individual health targets.

SUPPORT MATERIAL

Student Competencies: Transferable Knowledge and Skills

The following are points of emphasis highlighting key principles that public health graduates are expected to understand and apply into practice. The key points arise from this chapter and other studies in specialized courses, seminars, readings during public health education, and continuing education. The selected skills and knowledge are divided into two parts. The first consists of core questions pertaining to immediate student requirements, while the second refers to competencies essential for successful public health practitioners. These include competencies recommended by the American Public Health Association in 2007, as well as those of the European Association of Schools of Public Health and the Public Health Agency of Canada's 2008 Report on Core Competencies. For more detailed competencies please consult the Association of Schools of Public Health website at: <http://www.asph.org/document.cfm?page=851>

Part I: Core Questions

1. Which public health responsibilities are divided between the federal, state, and local levels of government?
2. What are the principal sources of financing at each level of government?

3. How can federal, state, city, or county health departments promote public health through interacting with other agencies in the following ways:
 - (a) regulatory
 - (b) advocacy
 - (c) financial
 - (d) coordinative
 - (e) direct service?
4. How can governments enhance the role of non-governmental organizations, such as universities or care providers, or professional licensing bodies, in raising health care and training standards?
5. How are federal, state, and local public health authorities organized and what are the linkages between them to achieve common population health objectives?
6. Discuss the potential for collaboration between clinical medicine and public health.
7. How can public health agencies promote the principles of the New Public Health?

Part II: Knowledge and Skills

1. Understand organizational structures of public health systems at the national, state, and local levels of government and their respective functions.
2. Awareness of accreditation procedures by government and professional organizations to maintain and raise standards of care and efficient methods of protecting and promoting health.
3. Critically evaluate past responses to public health disasters in order to recognize opportunities for improvement of current disaster management protocols.
4. Understand the interaction between hospital-based and community-based services when planning public health interventions.
5. Understand the role of the hospital from varied perspectives, including medicine, economics, health policy, and management.

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