



# Quad Council

## of Public Health Nursing Organizations

Advocating for excellence in public health nursing education, practice, leadership, and research.

### ***Strategic Priority: Research in PHN Practice***

**Public Health Nursing** is challenged by the lack of research evidence documenting the effects of Public Health Nursing interventions on population-focused health outcomes.

### **Key Issues...**

- Public health nurses comprise only about 2% of the general nursing workforce, yet are the largest professional workgroup in public health
- Recent and dramatic downsizing of funding of the Public Health Nursing (PHN) workforce
- The interdisciplinary and trans-systems practice of public health nurses historically has precluded documenting the specific or unique contribution of PHN interventions on population health
- The Affordable Care Act and the National Prevention Strategies highlight the critical need for evidence-based practice and prevention
- Standardization of terms and measures is needed across public health practice settings and research
- Use of empirical data in practice is hampered by the educational backgrounds of many PHNs (i.e. less than baccalaureate prepared) and the lack of access to full text, online peer reviewed journals in public health settings
- Nurse researchers who lack public health education or experience and are involved in community-based research may not have the training and skills to address population-focused outcomes
- The uncertainty concerning the educational preparation of Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) prepared nurses in approaching population-focused research

### **Key Facts...**

- Public Health Systems and Services Research has emerged as a new discipline within the past 10 years
- Overlapping research agendas exist for nursing, PHN, and public health as set out by various organizations and groups<sup>1-7</sup>
- Decreasing funds for research in general is compounded by the challenges in making PHN topics fit within existing research priorities
- Few nursing doctoral programs (PhD or DNP) emphasize the preparation of PHN researchers
- PHN researchers have limited opportunities to gain updates and advanced training in rigorous methodological methods
- PHN, as a nursing specialty, has a history of theory development, but few theories at the practice level<sup>8</sup>
- Multiple data systems across public health systems (within and across states) result in inconsistent data elements, complicating comparative research efforts



American Nurses Association  
Congress on Nursing Practice & Economics



American Public Health Association  
Public Health Nursing Section



Association of Community Health  
Nursing Educators



Association of State and Territorial  
Directors of Nursing

## **Key Facts (continued)...**

- PHN practice has no consistent quality indicators that parallel the National Database of Nursing Quality Indicators for inpatient care
- PHN research has tended to address a wide variety of topics, involve small samples sizes, and use only descriptive methods<sup>1</sup>

## **Key Actions...**

- Ensure the education of the current and future PHN research workforce
  - Offer or disseminate availability of existing advanced analytic and methods workshops
  - Create and offer events/sessions to discuss PHN research opportunities to researchers in PHN and other disciplines
  - Inclusion of essential research skills needed for PHN and population-focused nursing research, such as Community-Based Participatory Research approaches and systems methodologies
  - Articulate the value added of PHN involvement in multidisciplinary scientific teams
  - Facilitate the involvement of public health nurse researchers on multidisciplinary scientific teams
  - Support post-doctoral fellowships or other mentored advanced training for public health nurse researchers within Schools of Nursing and Schools of Public Health
- Advocate for funding for PHN research
  - Collaborate with professional advocacy groups (e.g., APHA and ANA) in efforts to secure funding to address the existing public health/PHN research agendas<sup>1,2,3,5,7</sup>
  - Promote PHNs involvement on working groups that establish funding priorities for federal agencies and foundations
  - Increase funding opportunities offered by PHN professional organizations (e.g., ACHNE, ASTDN) and foundations (e.g., Robert Wood Johnson)
  - Promote PHN involvement on National Institute of Health and foundation study sections to ensure population-focused research is evaluated by experts in the field
- Standardize public health and PHN driven data
  - Identify PHN sensitive outcome indicators<sup>2</sup>
  - Promote PHN involvement on key working groups charged with selecting data elements to be included in local, state, national, and international surveys (e.g., PRAMS, BRFSS, or NHANES)
  - Determine data elements that are essential for a minimum data set that measures PHN practice and outcomes<sup>2</sup>

### References:

<sup>1</sup> Association of Community Health Nursing Educators Research Committee (2010). Research Priorities for Public Health Nursing. *Public Health Nursing*, 27 (1), 94-100

<sup>2</sup>Issel, M., Bekemeier, B. & Kneipp, S. (in press). A Public Health Nursing Research Agenda. *Public Health Nursing*

<sup>3</sup>Ness, R.B. (2011) Public Health Research Priorities for the Future. *Public Health Reviews*, 33(1), 225-239.

<sup>4</sup>American Nurses Association Research Agenda (2011). <http://www.nursingworld.org/MainMenuCategories/ThePracticeofProfessionalNursing/Improving-Your-Practice/Research-Toolkit/ANA-Research-Agenda>

<sup>5</sup>Public health framing document (2011). Robert Woods Johnson Foundation. <http://www.rwjf.org/publichealth/fundingops.jsp>

<sup>6</sup>2010-2011 Research Priorities for School Nursing. National Association of School Nurses. <http://www.nasn.org/Research/ResearchPrioritiesforSchoolNursing>

<sup>7</sup>Public health services and systems research: Setting the research agenda. (2011). Center for Public Health Systems & Services Research. [http://www.publichealthsystems.org/cphssr/Research/PHSSR\\_Research\\_Agenda](http://www.publichealthsystems.org/cphssr/Research/PHSSR_Research_Agenda)

<sup>8</sup>Bigbee, J. & Issel, L.M. (in press). Conceptual Models for Population-focused Public Health Nursing Interventions and Outcomes: The State of the Art. *Public Health Nursing*.

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