

Workforce Development and Capacity Building

Thought Leader Round Table



**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
CHRONIC DISEASE DIRECTORS**

Promoting Health. Preventing Disease.

Executive Summary

The National Association of Chronic Disease Directors' April 2022 Thought Leader Round Table on Workforce Development and Capacity Building brought together 28 experts from 17 state and national organizations, academia, and departments of public health to a) explore the current state of public health workforce participation and practice among state chronic disease professionals and b) identify strategies and opportunities to build and sustain the state chronic disease prevention and health promotion workforce. The question "What are realistic goals for Chronic Disease Directors to achieve desired workforce capacity and sustainability?" guided the discussion.

Project Overview

This Thought Leader Round Table met virtually on April 25, 27, and 28, 2022. In his opening remarks, NACDD's CEO, John Robitscher, noted: The largely invisible but critical work of public health and state health departments was forced onto the national stage by what we hope will be a once-in-a-generation pandemic. Results from a recent CDC survey of states and chronic disease units found that Chronic Disease Directors, their staff, and other areas of public health are managing administrative challenges such as staff turnover and hiring freezes as well as provision of clinical and preventive services.

Recent data from key resources highlight challenges and opportunities with the public health workforce, including the impact from COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, data from the 2021 Public Health Workforce Interests and Needs Survey, a nationally representative survey of state and local government employees in the United States, identified that nearly one-third (32%) of state and local public health employees indicated they are considering leaving their organization in the next year, with 39% who said it was the result of the pandemic. High levels of stress, burnout, as well as the intent to leave emerged as key factors that impact the governmental public health workforce. Survey findings also highlighted training needs for senior staff and executives, including policy engagement and topics related to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. In addition, data from National Association of Chronic Disease Directors Survey of States and All-Member Survey, also found that professional well-being has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the capacity to accomplish some core functions compared to 12 months prior to the survey decreased, such as workforce development, external partners engagement, and planning and implementation of evidence-based public health interventions. Opportunities to build the capacity of NACDD members and chronic disease directors, require elevating professional development through training on specific topics, such as managing through change and root causes of health,

Thought Leaders explored the state of the public health workforce, discussed gaps and barriers to workforce development and capacity building, and shared best practices and thoughts on strategies and opportunities to advance recruitment of a skilled, diverse chronic disease workforce. Among others, topics included hiring and retention in governmental public health, including revamping state hiring processes and job classifications; the changing work environment, i.e., remote/hybrid; the changing workforce, i.e., retirees and younger employees;

benefits of partnering; developing a diverse workforce; necessary technical skills; federal and state responsibilities and needs; and funding

Recommendations

Thought Leaders defined three top priorities that will inform the President’s Challenge for NACDD’s 2022–2023 board of directors as well as the organization’s five-year strategic plan.

Top Three Priorities That Should Inform the Next NACDD President’s Challenge

1. Leverage collaboration and partnerships
2. Build a growth culture and structure within an organization
3. Make public health more visible in a public light

Conclusion

The workforce is key to making significant gains in the reduction of chronic conditions. Whether recruiting the next generation of public health professionals or connecting with the public, it is important to be able to say, “This is public health.” A diverse workforce, skilled in many areas, can respond to future challenges in chronic disease prevention and health promotion, reflecting and meeting the needs of its constituents.

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The National Association of Chronic Disease Directors (NACDD) Thought Leader Round Table model is designed to facilitate discussion among Chronic Disease Directors and national partners on emerging public health issues and create opportunities to develop actionable steps to further progress in those areas.

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