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Academic Health Collaborative of Worcester

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Worcester Division of Public Health

Et al.

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Academic Health Collaborative of Worcester

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Background

In the Spring of 2014, the Worcester Division of Public Health entered into a formal Memorandum of Understanding with Clark University to establish the Center for Public Health Practice (CPHP). Similar MOUs were extended to Worcester State University and The University of Massachusetts Medical School. The Center, now known as the Academic Health Collaborative of Worcester (AHC) addresses identified needs of the WDPH and key community stakeholders to build capacity and ultimately improve the health of the community.

Faculty and their students work directly with WDPH staff and community partners to advance the work of the Division. To allow for knowledge to be used and built upon, and to minimize research fatigue, this unique model is designed to respond to public health needs efficiently, collaboratively and in a sustained manner. The AHC aims to increase the public's awareness on health and wellness, and increase participation in the work of all of WDPH's service areas.

Student engagement and experiences are tailored to address identified WDPH needs including community health, emergency preparedness, environmental health, grant and programmatic needs, thereby ensuring that essential elements and domains of the Division's Strategic Plan are addressed and implemented. Division staff and key community stakeholders, in concert with area academic faculty, serve as the foundation for the AHC and foster an academic environment for lecture, research, practice and sharing.

Goals

The Academic Health Collaborative aims to accomplish these 5 goals while using an overarching lens of community voice and inclusion in all of the work.

1. Address public health issues
2. Improve public health education
3. Retain local public health talent
4. Produce and disseminate useful knowledge
5. Create a model for public health, academic, and medical institution partnership



Get involved:

Visit the AHC online at www.academic.healthycentralma.com or reach out to the Academic Health Collaborative at ahcworchester@gmail.com for more information about getting involved!

A special thank you to AHC funders: City of Worcester, University of Massachusetts Memorial Medical Center, Clark University, and Fairlawn Foundation.

The Model



WORCESTER
STATE
UNIVERSITY



CLARK
UNIVERSITY
MOSAKOWSKI INSTITUTE
FOR PUBLIC ENTERPRISE



Learning Opportunities

- Classroom based, faculty led projects
- Campus based engagement
- Faculty led research
- Internships
- Clerkships
- Assistantships
- Consultancies
- Capstone projects
- Practicums
- Service learning
- One-time events
- Research



Dissemination

Akindele, K., Arsenault, S., et al. (2016, March). *Improving Community Health through an Innovative Collaborative between Academics and Practitioners through the Worcester Academic Health Department*. Presented at the University of Massachusetts 2016 Community Engagement and Research Symposia, Worcester, MA.

Amos, K., & Stockwell, A. (2017, July). *Local Health Departments Championing Collaboration through Successful Academic Health Department Partnerships*. Video presented at the annual meeting of the National Association of County and City Health Officials, Pittsburg, PA.

CHA & CHIP

Every 3 years the WDPH partners with local healthcare systems to conduct a Community Health Assessment. This comprehensive assessment informs the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The CHIP is used as a roadmap for health improvement over a 3-5 year period and guides the investment of resources of not only the health department, hospitals, and health plans, but of all organizations that have a stake in improving health for the residents of Worcester and the surrounding communities.

The 2016-2020 CHIP includes 9 priority areas, 31 objectives, and over 100 strategies all with an overarching lens of health equity. The priority areas include: Access to Care, Cultural Responsiveness, Mental Health, Access to Healthy Food, Economic Opportunity, Physical Activity, Racism and Discrimination, Substance Abuse, and Safety. Previous AHC projects relating to the CHIP have included GIS mapping, research, community outreach to hard to reach populations, and planning and executing health education events and campaigns.

Next Steps

The Academic Health Collaborative recently concluded a year long consultancy that was initiated to provide structure and enhance capacity of the AHC. The consultant produced many useful materials, including standard operating procedures, evaluation tools, and an environmental scan, which all serve to increase the capacity. The AHC will be able to support an additional 2-4 academic partners as well as foster meaningful engagement across campuses. It is the vision of current Academic Health Collaborative members to work together to address substance use as a topic area over an 18-24 month period beginning in May 2018 with interested faculty from campuses across the city of Worcester.