

PREPARING LEADERS FOR THE NEXT PANDEMIC: ADVANCED PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING (APHN)

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BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic illuminated gaps in public health (PH) systems that contributed to health inequities. PH departments across the nation were challenged with a scarcity of nursing expertise, limited resources, misinformation, public mistrust, and partisan divisiveness. PH nurses were instrumental in the overall Pandemic response, but their impact was hindered by diminishing numbers, inadequate leadership skills and limited occupation of positions of authority.

RESULTS/FINDINGS

The resulting White Paper, approved by the ACHNE BOD on November 6, 2023, addresses: need for nurses with APHN preparation and experience; educational preparation; competencies; certification and credentialing; and recommendations for increasing numbers of APHNs in leadership roles.

PURPOSE

A Task Force of experienced APHN educators and practitioners were commissioned by ACHNE (Association of Community Health Nursing Educators) to develop a plan for increasing numbers, competency training and leadership expertise of APHNs to improve systems, address future crises and improve health outcomes.

PROCESS

The Task Force reviewed the literature on PH and nursing workforce needs and educational priorities and presented findings and recommendations on enhancing the APHN role.

LIMITATIONS

Limitations include a lack of national workforce data on roles, credentials and demographics of the current APHN workforce.

CONCLUSIONS

The value of APHNs has been demonstrated in efforts to enhance health equity, but the role has received little support in nursing and PH communities.

Recommendations to enhance nursing's contributions to PH include:

- convening of stakeholders to plan for leadership, training and professional development;
- health services research to document areas of maximum impact on population health outcomes;
- collaboration between PH agencies and educational institutions for ongoing professional development opportunities;
- recruitment and retention initiatives, with a focus on promoting diversity in the field;
- further development of standardized assessments of PH nursing competencies across educational and practice settings; and
- public funding to support graduate study, certification and badges in APHN.

APHNs provide an important addition to the PH workforce critical to improving health for all, and investment is needed to enhance the APHN workforce and improve population outcomes.