

# Public Health Nurse Learning Labs

August 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025

## Session 2– Evidence-Based Recruitment and Retention Strategies in Public Health Nursing

### What we know about PHN recruitment and retention:

- Shortage of 78,610 full-time RNs, 2022 HRSA estimate.
- Factors RNs leave the workforce: Stress, Burnout, Workload, Understaffing, Unsatisfactory Compensation, and Workplace Violence. Need a varied approach to address all these issues.
- Strong Recruitment Factors for RNS: Slide on PowerPoint
- Need to empower RNs

### Retention

- What retains RNs in the workforce?
  - Specific duties and responsibilities, job security, and identifying with the mission of the organization.
- Knowing the culture of your organization is essential. Review exit interviews, host brown bag lunches, and learning opportunities about their work and what they value.
- Slido results:
  - What drew you to PH Nursing?
    - Answers: job duties and responsibilities, identifying with the mission, and flexibility in work schedule.
  - What keeps you in PN Nursing?
    - Flexible work schedule, specific job duties and responsibilities, identifying with the mission.

### Wisconsin PH Nurse Recruitment and Retention Strategies Presentation

- Working on these strategies for the past few years.
- Wisconsin has 450 PH Nursing working in their jurisdictions.
- Collaborate with external partners.
- May of 2022, reassessed internal and external conditions.
- Submitted our request to PHIG in July 2024 to address the retention issues. Obtained support from ASTHO and resources.
- Goals: improve communications with the PH Nurses.
  - Strategy: state-wide network launched in July 2023:
  - Shared email inbox to provide support and provide best practices. About 18 emails a month. Workforce hiring, policies and procedures to connect with DPH, grant contract administrators.

- Created a guide to public health nursing program document, a webpage, and guide for hiring nursing in health departments. Made a flow chart that breakdowns if they qualify to be a PH nurse for hiring practices.
- Job descriptions
- A non-U.S. applicant education outside the U.S. if it applies
- Ongoing efforts: gaps in how they fulfill their PH nursing goals. Developing a program specific to Wisconsin.
- Bring subject matter experts to present at the monthly PH nurse meeting
- Support grad student practicums to address retention
- Promoting the field in high schools
- Build relationships with tribal community health connections
- Listen to Wisconsin PH nursing board meetings to better advocate for the needs of PH nurses across the state.
- Challenges: getting bachelor's degree applicants for PHN roles. It is a requirement for the position. Limitations in the hiring pool.

#### Other Key themes from the Zoom Chat:

- **PHN Roles & Requirements:** Participants compared differences across states, including Wisconsin's decentralized model and requiring only BSN-prepared nurses, contrasted with California's PHN certificate requirement.
- **Workforce Models:** Discussion included the minimum requirement of at least one PHN per health department, delegation of population-level work to PHNs versus RNs, and examples like Ohio's model where nursing leadership is embedded in statute.
- **Policy & Advocacy:** Questions arose about strategies to gain legislative support for PHN staffing requirements. Suggestions included engaging nursing associations, advisory councils, and educating policymakers rather than only lobbying. Ex: Nurses day at the capital event.
- **Funding Challenges:** Concerns were raised about sustaining funding for PHN programs, particularly considering workforce cuts and shifting federal support. Presenters acknowledged this is a "wait and see" challenge.
- **Nursing Leadership & Scope:** Participants emphasized the importance of nurses practicing to full scope, taking leadership roles, and integrating into emergency preparedness and population health initiatives.

#### Closing Sentiments:

- Attendees expressed strong appreciation for the presentation, highlighting it as informative and inspiring. Several noted the importance of collaboration, networking, and continued advocacy to strengthen the PHN workforce.