The Council on Linkages Between Academia and Public Health Practice

Academic Health Department Learning Community Meeting

January 26, 2011

SUMMARY

Overview of Academic Health Department (AHD) Learning Community Initiative

➢ The Council on Linkages Between Academia and Public Health Practice (Council on Linkages) aims to strengthen the connection between public health academia and practice. It has been involved in a variety of activities that further this aim, including work on the Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals, the Community Preventive Services Guide, workforce issues, and public health systems and services research. It has long been interested in the AHD concept and recently received funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to approach the topic of AHDs.

➢ The Council on Linkages' typical approach to a new topic is to create a workgroup and the AHD Workgroup was recently established. The "product" of this workgroup will be the development of the AHD Learning Community. The AHD Workgroup is composed of Learning Community members who meet between Learning Community meetings to work out the details of the Learning Community. The AHD Workgroup is chaired by C. William Keck of the Northeastern Ohio Universities Colleges of Medicine and Pharmacy.

➢ The Council on Linkages hopes that the Learning Community will help shed light on the AHD concept and provide support for those working to develop AHDs.

➢ The Learning Community is growing steadily and currently has more than 60 members.

➢ Learning Community meetings will occur approximately quarterly by conference call and will run for 90 minutes.

➢ The possibility of holding an in-person meeting at the APHA Annual Meeting in Washington, DC this fall is being explored. PHF will have a display at the NACCHO Annual Conference in Hartford, CT this July that can include AHD information. Submission of a proposal for an AHD session at the NACCHO Annual Conference will also be considered.

➢ Connections may be possible between the AHD Learning Community initiative and the practice-based research initiative.

➢ The AHD Learning Community webpage is located at http://www.phf.org/programs/AHDLC/Pages/Academic_Health_Department_Learning_Community.aspx.

➢ Additional AHD materials are available on the web:
  o AHD resources: http://www.phf.org/resourcestools/Pages/default.aspx?showResources=false&tag=Academic Health Department
  o C. William Keck's blog post on AHDs: http://www.phf.org/phfpulse/Pages/CWK_Academic_Health_Departments.aspx
  o AHD Learning Community Meeting Materials for Jan 26, 2011: http://phf.org/events/Pages/AHD_Learning_Community_January_2011_Meeting_Materials.aspx

➢ Any questions, comments, or concerns can be sent to Kathleen at kamos@phf.org.

Learning Community Profile
➢ The Council on Linkages would like to develop personal profiles of Learning Community members and make them available online. These profiles will enable Learning Community members to provide information about themselves and their institutions to others in the Learning Community and will give the Council on Linkages initial information about AHDs and AHD-related activities that can be used to guide Learning Community development.
➢ To create a profile, each Learning Community member will be asked to answer a series of questions developed with input from the AHD Workgroup. These questions will be emailed to Learning Community members; please complete the questionnaire and return it to Kathleen.
➢ An example of a completed profile appears on page 2 of the meeting materials.

Defining the Academic Health Department
➢ The draft "Academic Health Departments: Core Concepts" paper provided in the meeting materials (pages 3-4) was discussed. This concept paper was created in December and recently revised based on feedback from the AHD Workgroup.
➢ There is no definitive definition of an AHD; this paper is meant as a starting point. It provides a broad overview of the topic without addressing specific details of building AHD partnerships.
➢ Learning Community members have begun sharing this concept paper with others and receiving feedback. Please feel free to continue to share the paper.
➢ Learning Community members expressed a desire for materials that cover a variety of topics and that can be used for different purposes.
  o Topics included:
    ▪ Considerations involved in AHD implementation
    ▪ Direction on the details of, or best practices in, creating AHDs
    ▪ Public policy and how to translate research into policy change
    ▪ Training function of health departments in AHD relationships
    ▪ Leadership and governance provided by boards of health
    ▪ Risks involved in AHD relationships
    ▪ Benefits of AHDs for practitioners
  o Purposes included:
    ▪ To provide an overview of the concept or broad principles of AHDs
    ▪ To guide the implementation of the AHD model
    ▪ To market the AHD model
➢ There can be a great deal of variety in how people define AHDs and the goal of the concept paper is to help solidify the concept. Having the concept and working out the details may be two separate issues.
➢ The term academic health department may not be familiar to people. Also, it may not make explicit the reciprocal nature of the relationship between a health department and a school.
➢ Specific suggestions for the concept paper included to consider:
  o Adding a section on considerations or risks
  o Using categories in the Benefits section rather than a single long list
  o Referencing back to the essential public health services
  o Adding an introductory or rationale section
➢ The concept paper should be kept simple enough to serve its original purpose. Staff will review feedback, consider how to present the information most effectively, and start developing additional materials as appropriate. This will begin with the creation of a separate paper to be used for marketing or discussion. This paper should be short, simple, and catchy.
➢ Depth can be added to the concept paper with accompanying materials, such as memoranda of understanding or partnership agreements, to the extent that Learning Community members have and are able to share them. These can serve as templates or sources of ideas for others. Staff will compile and make available the materials people are willing to share. A request for materials will be emailed to Learning Community members.

➤ A bibliography of AHD-related materials is being developed and is available online at http://www.phf.org/resourcestools/Pages/AHD_Bibliography.aspx. The ASPH Demonstrating Excellence series was suggested as an addition. Please review the bibliography and suggest other items to include.
➤ Additional feedback, materials, and bibliography suggestions may be sent to Kathleen.

Is a Stepped Approach Beneficial in Developing, Growing, and Sustaining an Academic Health Department?
➤ The question of whether AHD development might involve a series of steps was posed. AHD Workgroup members, Amy Lee of the Northeastern Ohio Universities Colleges of Medicine and Pharmacy and Louise Kent of the Northern Kentucky Health Department, presented experiences from academic and practice perspectives, respectively. Both agreed that steps can and do exist. Outlines of their presentations can be found in the meeting materials (pages 5-6).
➤ The concept of a stepped approach to AHD development, perhaps connected to tiers of AHDs, was discussed, and the question of whether this discussion could lead to the development of guidance material was posed. Discussion points included:
   o The steps of AHD development are not necessarily linear, and one AHD may cycle through steps multiple times and in different orders.
   o Some implementation steps or strategies may work better in some environments than in others. Mechanisms that work well in public academic institutions may not work as well in private institutions and vice versa.
   o It may be useful to describe the benefits practitioners might receive from AHD involvement and how those benefits could be achieved. Benefits might include adjunct faculty status, paid or unpaid; the purchase of services from the health department by an academic institution; and the opportunity to rethink practices based on interaction with students. Difficulties can arise when there is no explicit structure or guidance for AHD activities.
   o Benefits exist for academics as well. Involvement with a health department offers a way to keep up with new practices and to apply new knowledge in practice.
   o It can be difficult to keep the academic and practice sides of the AHD aware and understanding of each other's activities. Having tools to do so could be helpful.
➤ There seemed to be general agreement that it could be useful to detail steps of AHD development along with potential problems that might be encountered and possible solutions. This "toolkit" could take the form of a web document that lists steps in the progression of AHD development, understanding that the steps are not linear, with links to real-world examples. The development of such a resource would be heavily dependent on materials provided by the Learning Community. This could develop into a database that would grow over time. A logic model illustrating activities and possible outcomes was also suggested.

Next Steps
➤ Learning Community members will receive a Learning Community Profile questionnaire by email. Please complete and return to Kathleen at kamos@phf.org to create a profile.
➤ Additional feedback on the draft AHD concept paper may be sent to Kathleen. Feedback was requested by February 9, 2011.
➤ Agreements, contracts, and other materials, as well as questions or suggestions may also be sent to Kathleen.
➤ Staff will work with the AHD Workgroup on revising and developing materials and distribute them to the Learning Community.
➤ Please encourage people to join the Learning Community. The more people involved, the greater the potential benefit for everybody.
➤ The conversation does not need to end here. Please visit the website, make comments on the blog, review the bibliography and other resources, and keep in touch by email.
➤ The next AHD Learning Community conference call will likely be held in April 2011.