

## **ENSURING A SKILLED WORKFORCE TO FIGHT CHRONIC DISEASE**

*Colorado health department applies skill-based competency tools to staff development*

### **Public Health Problem**

- Staff employed in Colorado chronic disease programs comes from a variety of training and experience backgrounds in part because the state and region did not have a School of Public Health to provide a core curriculum for public health workers until recently.
- Lack of a common knowledge base and skill-set among employees can make collaboration across programs and offices less effective.
- Developing, maintaining, and sustaining a capable public health workforce is of primary importance to the health of communities and the prevention and control of chronic diseases.

### **Program**

- The *Competencies for Chronic Disease Practice* developed by the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors (NACDD) along with related practical, skill-based tools for use in the workplace, define the skills and knowledge needed to lead and manage chronic disease programs, offer opportunities for assessment of current proficiency, and provide guidance for development of competency based human resource tools.
- The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment incorporates these competencies into position descriptions and staff evaluation in the Chronic Disease Prevention Branch.
- Employees rate themselves annually and are also rated by their direct supervisor using the competencies assessment tool to determine their level of proficiency. Employees and their supervisors identify the employee's professional development needs and use a biannual 'check-in' to assess progress.
- Resources for identifying training to upgrade staff skills and knowledge include an Assets Inventory developed by the NACDD and the state's roster of training offerings.

### **Impact**

- The Colorado Department of Health and Environment Chronic Disease Prevention Branch is developing a stronger, more capable public health workforce by setting specific, competency-based standards that provide a solid basis for employee professional development.
- Developing job descriptions based on the *Competencies* enables the Branch to more effectively recruit and hire staff based on the specific skills and experience needed.
- Use of job descriptions based on the *Competencies* enhances the value of the job description as the basis for ongoing staff evaluation.
- For the individual employee, the *Competencies* provide an unbiased framework for assessment and advancement in their job.
- Improvement in the capabilities of practitioners is expected to lead to improved outcomes in chronic disease programs and policy.

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