

WISCONSIN PUBLIC HEALTH COUNCIL

Assure safe and healthy people by monitoring progress on the state health plan and on the readiness for public health emergencies.



October 4, 2024

Resolution Requesting the Optimization of the Public Health Nurse Role for Improved Population Health Outcomes

Whereas Public health nursing is a specialty practice ^{1,2} that is uniquely skilled in prevention by assessing populations, analyzing data, identifying emerging health trends, providing education, developing policy, engaging in coalition building and administering health services while integrating the social determinants of health from individuals to populations in order to improve the health of communities and populations ^{1,2,3} and,

Whereas Public Health Nurses (PHNs) demonstrate specialized knowledge and promote holistic health in the community ³ both on the frontline and as the safety net to protect the health and well-being of all communities. PHNs impact health outcomes positively ⁴ through disease and other prevention initiatives such as providing comprehensive family and support services,⁵ communicable disease surveillance, investigation and response, and harm reduction interventions which have been shown to have a positive societal and economic impact and,

Whereas PHNs are on the first line of defense against disease outbreaks and other health threats as demonstrated by the COVID-19 pandemic which highlighted the critical role of public health nurses in communicable disease surveillance, management and clinical interventions ⁶ and,

Whereas clear, accurate, and accessible documentation is an essential element of safe, quality, evidence-based nursing practice, and as licensed professionals, PHNs are bound legally by the documentation of their day-to-day practice. The lack of interoperability between charting systems limits PHNs clinical ability to access, aggregate, and analyze data to leverage nursing assessments and interventions to provide comprehensive evidence-based care at individual, family and community levels and,

Whereas PHNs assure evidenced-based care and lead clinical care coordination ⁷ by providing consultation and recommendations between public health and health care services across the health care continuum including acute, primary, community and long-term supports ^{3,7,8} and,

Whereas the shifting needs of the community, climate change, and an aging population coupled with the public health nursing workforce shortage ⁹ magnifies the need for investing in public health nursing workforce ^{2,4,10} and overall public health infrastructure to safeguard the health for Wisconsinites¹¹ and,

Therefore, be it resolved, to optimize the role of the public health nurse for improved population health outcomes, the Wisconsin Public Health Council, acting in its statutorily defined role as advisory body to the Department of Health Services, the Governor and Legislature recommends funding for public health nursing be taken into consideration, prioritized, budgeted and,

Be it further resolved that the Public Health Council supports new approaches, strategies, and data sharing to bridge gaps between population health needs and public health prevention strategies including an assessment of existing technology, infrastructure of statewide shared databases for collaborative real-time data sharing, interoperability for enhanced public health nursing assessment, surveillance, and interventions to achieve population health goals¹² and,

Be it further resolved that the Public Health Council advises that data and documentation needs of PHNs are included in DHS and other statewide data modernization efforts and,

Be it further resolved the Public Health Council recommends agencies (e.g. hospital, clinics, State, local and Tribal health departments, etc.) with responsibilities of population health improvement to optimize the role of public health nursing across the life span through multi-sector collaboration and partnerships focused on the collective impact of community health improvement.

Lastly, be it resolved that copies of this resolution will be shared with the Secretary of the Department of Health Services, the Governor, and the Legislature.

In addition, the following organizations and others will be invited for collaborative discussions to advance and support this resolution over the next year:

- the Wisconsin Association of Local Health Departments and Boards
- the Wisconsin Public Health Association, PHN Section
- the leaders of Wisconsin's Federally-recognized American Indian Tribes and Bands
- Administrators of Nursing Education (ANEW) of Wisconsin Nursing
- Public Health Emergency Preparedness Advisory Committee (PHEP AC)
- Wisconsin Hospital Association
- Wisconsin Emergency Management
- Wisconsin Counties Association
- The Wisconsin Nurses Association and its Organizational Affiliates
- Wisconsin Center of Nursing

References

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