



## State Report

**State:** Connecticut

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### Connecticut 2010 State Report for Public Health Nurses

The Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) Virtual Office of Public Health Nurses' (VOPHN) vision is to promote the health of populations in Connecticut by supporting excellence in public health nursing practice. To achieve our vision through a "virtual" office, DPH efforts continue to focus on:

- Collaborations with professional organizations, academia, and local health partners
- Public health nurse workforce professional development
- Expanding information exchange networks with nurses working in public health, community partners, and affiliated professional organizations

### Projects/Issues Addressed This Year:

- **Collaborations with:**
  - Connecticut Nursing Collaborative:
    - To lay the groundwork for a strategic plan for nursing in Connecticut, the CT Nurses Collaborative is working with a graduate level-nursing student from Yale School of Nursing to develop a framework.
  - - The VOPHN was represented and participated in a panel presentation at the CT Nurses Association 2009 annual convention, where information was shared about this nursing collaborative.
  - **Professional Organizations:** A member of the VOPHN leadership team has continued to participate in convention planning committees with the Connecticut Nurses Association, Connecticut Association of Public Health Nurses, and the Connecticut Public Health Association. Presentations highlighting public health nursing initiatives and practice were included in each organization's convention.
  - **ASTDN:** Connecticut participated in a tri-state promotional campaign with New York and New Jersey that Johnson and Johnson developed for public health nursing.

- **Public Health Nursing Workforce Development:**
  - Continuing Education:
    - The VOPHN staff continued to work with the DPH Workforce and Professional Development office to promote education opportunities focusing on nurses and integration with the TRAIN Connecticut on-line services. Continuing Education Units were provided as part of the annual conference.
    - The VOPHN convened a conference, *Public Health Nurses 2010: Community Needs and Creating Opportunities Through Networks*, on April 15, 2010 in collaboration with the CT Association of Public Health Nurses and the CT Participation for Workforce Development. Attendance included more than 175 individuals, who were nurses working in health departments (state and local), home health agencies, academia, other state agencies, and nursing students.
  - Hartford High School Nursing Academy:
    - A member of the VOPHN is active on the Hartford Public High School Nursing Academy Advisory Committee, which provides oversight for the public high school's program curriculum and activities.
    - A member of the VOPHN coordinated speakers (nurses and other health professions) for presentations for the Nursing Academy students.
    - A member of the VOPHN developed a pilot public health internship program for the Nursing Academy students. Two high school students will participate in the internship every semester, (i.e., two times a year) at the DPH. VOPHN members provided an overview of public health nursing.
  - Facilitating Collaborations to Identify Funding to Support Profession Development: A member of the VOPHN leadership team convened two meetings to bring together stakeholders (i.e., academia, service, philanthropic entities) to discuss collaborating on grant application for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Partners Investing in Nursing. Subsequently, the New Haven community submitted a proposal and they are scheduled for a site visit later this spring. The VOPHN member was invited to participate on the New Haven PIN Advisory Committee.
- **Information Exchange:** Facilitating the timely exchange of information is one of the main areas that the VOPHN has been able to be a viable link and asset for nurses across the agency, academia, the local public health nurses and community partners. The VOPHN Web page is under revision to streamline the information and improve user-friendliness. Below is a link to the web site <http://www.ct.gov/dph/cwp/view.asp?a=3136&q=413026>
- **Updates on some of the Public Health Initiatives led by Public Health Nurses:**
  - Sickle Cell Disease Awareness: A member of the VOPHN leadership team participated in the Sickle Cell Emergency Department Committee who is developing protocols for addressing pain management for affected individuals when they present in emergency departments. It is estimated that if the protocols are adopted and consistently applied across all emergency departments in the state, and the number of inpatient admissions are decreased by 5% annually, over a 5-year period, \$4.1 million in hospitalizations costs can be saved.
  - Maternal Child Health Programs: A member of the VOPHN leadership team attended the Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs Annual meeting and participated in the poster presentations. The poster was title, "From Data to Action" and focused on the sickle cell media campaign that was developed to raise public awareness about the disease and trait.
  - Standards of Care in Statewide Emergencies: DPH nurse leaders helped to convene a group of stakeholders to develop a white paper of guiding principles for healthcare institutions in statewide emergencies that result in shortages of personnel, equipment and supplies. Based on the scenario of pandemic influenza, guiding ethical principles, based on the Canadian (SARS) model, various waivers of state laws and regulations, and principles for allocation of scarce resources

have been developed. The white paper was presented to a statewide conference of hospitals in February and then to five regional forums of multiple types of health care providers. The next step is engagement with the public via community and faith based leaders.

- Public Health Nursing Orientation Guide: As part of the graduate nursing students' preceptorship, two groups have worked on a special project and drafted practice guidance materials for nurses new to local health. The guidance describes the various public health nursing roles utilizing the 10 essential public health services (NPHPS 2005) framework and integrating the public health core competencies, and the Public Health Nurses Scope and Standards of Practice (ANA 2007). This project is a collaborative effort with the CT Association of Public Health Nurses and some of the local health departments/districts, who are critiquing and finalizing the materials for a Connecticut guide.
- DPH Nightingale Award for Excellence in Nursing: In honor of National Nurses Week, the DPH sponsored its first annual DPH *Nightingale Awards for Excellence in Nursing*, the nominee was eligible for the 8th annual Hartford regional award. The Nightingale award is a program developed by the Visiting Nurse Association of South Central Connecticut to be a collaborative effort to acknowledge outstanding nurses and elevate the nursing profession. The goals of the program are to encourage retention, inspire future nurses, focus public attention, and recognize the breadth and scope of nursing practice. Since inception, the program has grown to include Eastern Connecticut, Fairfield County, Hartford, along with the original program in New Haven.

### **Projects/Issues Pending:**

- The VOPHN submitted a grant application for HRSA to support an Internship and Mentoring Program for Public Health Nurses in Connecticut. Award announcements are pending.
- A quarterly newsletter to promote public health nursing activities, to facilitate timely updates regarding hot topics, and provide program updates.

### **Issues & Special Concerns for Public Health Nursing ... in Connecticut:**

- Shrinking funds in relation to the current economic strain with competing priorities for the limited resources provide challenge to sustain current services, as well as gaining support for building infrastructure
- Aging workforce with concerns for public health nursing capacity as nurses retire
- Nursing shortage and lack of incentives (i.e., neither financial, advancement, or recognition) for nurse to pursue continued or advanced academic preparation or certification in public/community health nursing
- Need for increase diversity of the nursing workforce
- Lack of standardized provision of public health services and programs in health departments (i.e., State and Local)
- Implications of potential reorganization of Connecticut's local health services under discussion at the state legislature
- Continued differences in capacity of Connecticut's local health infrastructure to carry out services and support for staff/ resources in municipalities and health districts
- Challenges with clearly defining the relationship of the public health nurses' impact with providing preventives services for community activities (i.e., need for data to clarify impact, distinguish influence)