

Academic Health Department: A Primer

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GILLINGS SCHOOL OF
GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH

AHD Definition

“a formalized relationship ‘between an academic institution and a governmental public health agency which provides mutual benefits in teaching, research, and service, with academia informing the practice of public health, and the governmental public health agency informing the academic program.’”

Public Health Reports/July-August 2015 p. 630 (Erwin, Harris, Wong, Plepys, Brownson)

Journal of Public Health Management and Practice 2014;20:2707 (Erwin and Keck)

What's the work or activities?

- Assistance with program, policy and/or system design, implementation, and evaluation, including grant writing
- Trainings and workforce development
- Technical assistance, literature reviews, best practice finding
- Guest lecturing and faculty appointments
- Practice-based research
- Service delivery, rapid response teams, surge capacity
- And more...

How is the work accomplished?

Through:

- practica, internships, capstone projects, class projects
- faculty and staff/health department employee in-residence at the other's institution
- lunch and learns, workshops, system design collaborations
- In-community work
- Consultations, serving on boards, coalitions, committees
- And more...

Formalized Relationship



- Can be documented with a memorandum of understanding, affiliation agreement, contract, letter outlining a partnership, etc.
 - Some might need legal review—this is a consideration for which route you may want to go.
- OK to start with a handshake agreement to get started, but ultimately ideal to have a written document.

Resource for agreements:

http://www.phf.org/resourcestools/Pages/AHD_Partnership_Agreements.aspx

Why create an AHD?

- Enhance capacity and capabilities to address community health needs
 - Better prepare students for public health careers and support recruitment
 - Provide workforce training
 - Build and use practice-based evidence
 - Meet accreditation standards for both entities
- Benchmark 25: The local health department shall build relationships with entities that conduct education or research to enrich public health practice.*
- Strengthen public health systems and improve community health

Learning Community

- National community with ~1,600 members

www.phf.org/AHDLC

Webinars and virtual meetings, online discussions, listserv, resource and tool kits, technical assistance, and profiles of member. To join: contact Kathleen Amos (kamos@phf.org)

- NCPHA has an academic/practice-based research section

intended to stimulate and support practice-based research that is driven by questions developed by local public health practitioners in North Carolina. The NC PH-PBRN also provides a forum through which researchers and practitioners statewide can interact and work together to improve population health.