

**June 10, 2008 ASTPHND Annual Meeting  
Critical Issues in Public Health Nutrition Leadership  
Succession Management and Developing Your Leadership Pipeline  
Interactive Session**

This resource was developed from the notes and discussion that occurred at the 2008 Annual Meeting Session. Each state present examined the challenges, opportunities and next steps associated with succession management. The following compiles the thoughts and suggestions that were shared. Please note that succession planning, succession management, and leadership development are used somewhat interchangeably.

**Challenges with Succession Management in State Service**

Participants identified a number of challenges associated with succession management. Often public health roles may not seem desirable to well trained nutrition professionals. State systems may not pay well and often do not offer flexible environments that support and nurture creativity, especially valued by new professionals. State rule, such as those that limit training, can be barriers to recruiting and keeping personnel. Staff with leadership skills may not choose to be managers, especially when they are required to lead and manage programs. Also, when professional positions pay greater than management or if salary is marginally larger, people may not be interested in moving up. However, this issue must be addressed as several participants indicated that they and many of their staff are not far from retirement.

**Opportunities for Succession Management and Leadership Development**

Begin by learning about the impact of retirements in your own state. Talk with the human resources office about any reports and current initiatives. Request a study for your department to determine how many people are nearing retirement. Look at the Survey of the Public Health Nutrition Workforce: 2006-2007 to estimate the potential for retirements in your state.

Become involved if your state is already engaged in succession management. If your state is not involved in succession planning and a need exists, advocate with department leadership that it be addressed. If possible, work jointly with department leadership and peers to develop succession/leadership plans; fund training opportunities; and share current resources such as job appreciation programs.

Implement a training needs assessment and use it to develop a succession and mentoring plan tailored to your department. Adapt existing succession/leadership plans (South Carolina) for your program tailored to public health nutrition. Have other tools in place such as job laddering, comprehensive job descriptions (South Carolina) and leadership roadmaps that outline the training, experiences and skills needed to become eligible for each position (South Carolina).

Partner with other programs that hire or train nutritionists such as WIC, the Child Nutrition programs, universities and the state dietetic association. Be aware of existing leadership training programs in your state or the Public Health Leadership Institutes (<http://www.phls.org/home/section/5-48/>). Use resources from WIC and the American Dietetic Association. Provide training via e-learning and traditional methods. You may choose to develop your own leadership program for nutritionists based upon an existing

state model or adapt the Wisconsin Leadership Program (add link). Secure and use government resources that support education and staff training.

Participate in training and mentoring of the emerging workforce. Be involved in training and internship activities for students at all levels of education. Provide an orientation to public health nutrition and state service for students. Incorporate supervised practice for students into public health nutrition settings such as community health centers, Head Start, Cooperative Extension, etc.

Identify potential leaders who want to be groomed at the state and community levels. Consider both the needs of public health nutritionists at the community and those at the state level. Know your management and leadership needs and consider how to match the person with the right skills to the right job.

For your department, use survey tools to identify leadership skill and competencies that staff need/want. Increase “stretch assignments” that help develop new skills. Include staff in upper management processes. Discuss leadership development and assign projects as part of the annual evaluation process.

Finally, evaluate and assess the impact your leadership development work has made. Make course corrections to be more successful. Share materials and what worked and didn't with other ASTPHND members using chimp mail.