

Virginia Tech Center for Public Health Practice and Research Fall 2016 Newsletter



Virginia Tech
Center for Public Health
Practice and Research

What we do. Who we serve.

The Center for Public Health Practice and Research (CPHPR) at Virginia Tech engages interdisciplinary faculty, staff, and community organizations to enhance public health practice and research in the region. The Center is housed in the Department of Population Health Sciences of the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine.

The Center supports community-based projects by collaborating with community partners to compete for and secure funding, as well as providing public health content and service-expertise such as research studies, external evaluations, needs assessments, and document writing.

Through the Public Health Network, the Center partners with faculty, staff, and students at Virginia Tech. The Center collaborates with university partners on grant writing, study design, implementation, and evaluation.

The overarching goal for the Center is to enhance public health practice and research, particularly in Southwest and Southside Virginia, Central Appalachia, and across the region.

Danville Photovoice Project

Students participating in the Youth Health Equity Leadership Initiative (YHELI) in Danville completed a Photovoice project.

Below is a selected picture a student took as a part of the project along with the student's response when asked "Why is this picture important for health?" For more information on YHELI Danville, see page 2.



"Take them down and don't sell them. No more smoking because it's not just killing you, it's killing others." -T

CHECK US OUT ONLINE!

The Center just launched a new website! A special thanks to Hannah Menefee, program coordinator, for all her work in developing the new site.

Keep up to date on Center happenings throughout the year:

www.cphpr.mph.vetmed.vt.edu

Ongoing Projects

Youth Health Education Leadership Institute (YHELI) Danville

The Center is evaluating the Youth Health Equity Leadership Institute in Danville, Virginia. The goal of YHELI is to increase graduation rates in high schools in Danville, Va. The Center will be monitoring a variety of indicators around risk behaviors, self-efficacy, and self-reported leadership.

USDA Balanced Living with Diabetes

Adult onset diabetes is a prevalent and increasing health issue. Rural communities are disproportionately suffering from the morbidity, mortality, and social and financial costs associated with this disease. In response, Cooperative Extension at Virginia Tech is implementing Balanced Living with Diabetes (BLD), which is being implemented in 16 rural counties in Virginia. Center staff travel across the state to evaluate the effectiveness of the BLD programs.

Family Wellness Initiative - Strengthening Families Program

The Strengthening Families Program (SFP) is a weekly 10-12 lesson parenting program that targets 6- to 11- year old children and their families at high risk for behavioral, emotional, academic, and social problems. The focus of SFP is on family attachment and bonding, family supervision, family communication of values, and substance abuse prevention. Interventions consist of parent, children, and family skills training. The Center is currently working on a process and outcome evaluation of the programs for three Community Services Boards.

Community Recovery Program

In June 2011, Piedmont Community Services received funding from The Harvest Foundation to implement the Community Recovery Program (CRP). The program is designed to reduce problems caused by substance abuse in the city of Martinsville and in Franklin and Henry Counties, Virginia. The CRP helps individuals who have achieved at least three to six months of initial substance abuse recovery to continue their path of recovery by addressing and offering assistance and supports in the areas of education, employment, finances, family, support/leisure, mental health, sobriety, spirituality, physical health, and housing. The Center is conducting a comprehensive evaluation of this program.

Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth Obesity Prevention Program in Pulaski County

The New River Health District has received funding from the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth to implement an obesity prevention initiative in Pulaski County. The goal of the initiative is to increase access to healthy foods and safe physical spaces for exercise. Project team members facilitate access to healthy foods and nutrition education programs and the Pulaski YMCA facilitates the "Healthy Family Home" program. The Center is conducting an evaluation of the program.

Partnerships for Success

The Partnerships for Success (PFS) grant is designed to prevent young adult heroin and prescription drug abuse as well as underage alcohol consumption. The Center worked with both Roanoke Valley and West Piedmont Community Service Boards to execute the needs assessment portion of the grant. Data were presented to community coalitions and specific issues were prioritized. A final needs assessment for each region was submitted in September 2016. The finished needs assessment marks the first year of the grant, in the next four years the CSBs will continue to assess the impact of drugs on the community and will develop strategies to prevent further use. The Center is developing an evaluation plan for PFS implementation.



Antonio Brown Jr. is a Baltimore native and a recent graduate of Morgan State University where he obtained a master's degree in public health. He is currently employed as a public health associate through a fellowship with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and assigned to the New River Academic Health Department. In this capacity, he works with the New River Health District and Virginia Tech to prevent Hepatitis C transmission and will develop a comprehensive Hepatitis C prevention plan for the New River. Welcome, Antonio!



Sophie Wenzel, Center Associate Director, presented a poster on the formation of the New River Academic Health Department at the American Public Health Association, which was held October 30th -November 5th in Denver, CO.



Alyson Scullin, second year VT MPH student, and Center Research Assistant, presented the results of the Partnerships for Success needs assessment at a Legislators Roundtable in Roanoke on November 10th.



Lisa Homa – Lisa is a recent graduate from the MPH program at Virginia Tech who began working on the 1422 grant as a graduate research assistant and then continued her involvement as the full time evaluation lead once she graduated.



Cody Anderson – Cody is a second year Master of Public Health student in the Public Health Education concentration. Cody serves as a graduate research assistant on the state evaluation of the 1422 grant.



Annie Loyd – Annie is a second year Master of Public Health student in the Public Health Education concentration. Additionally, she is completing dietetics courses in order to become a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist. Annie serves as a graduate assistant on the local evaluation of the 1422 grant in West Piedmont Health District.

Ongoing Project Highlight: 1422 Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

The Virginia Department of Health received a five year grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to implement the Prevention and Public Health Fund: State and Local Public Health Actions to Prevention Obesity, Diabetes and Heart Disease and Stroke in five Local Health Districts (LHDs) in Virginia. These include Lord Fairfax, Prince William, Crater, Portsmouth and West Piedmont Health Districts. Grant Component 1 focuses on community based initiatives grant. Strategies include implementing nutrition and beverage standards, strengthening healthier food access and community promotion of physical activity, engaging a Community Action Network, implementing evidence based strategies such as the National Diabetes Prevention Program, and increasing coverage for lifestyle change programs. Component 2 focuses on initiatives at the health systems level. Strategies include increase EHR adoption, increasing the engagement of non-physician team members in hypertension management, increasing the use of self-measured blood pressure monitoring, implementing systems to facilitate identification of patients with undiagnosed hypertension and people with pre-diabetes and engaging Community Health Workers to promote linkages between health systems and community resources.

The Center works closely with the five LHDs, as well as the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) Central Office in Richmond. The Center provides technical assistance, develops evaluation tools, leads monthly evaluation work group meetings, conducts annual site visits to each health district, works with VDH to develop state and LHD evaluation plans, and produces an annual evaluation report to be submitted to CDC.

In West Piedmont Health District, the Center is evaluating local initiatives including policy and practice changes in food pantries and soup kitchens, wellness initiatives in faith-based organizations, walkability assessments, blood pressure screenings, and Community Health Worker programs to promote linkages between health systems and community resources.

Some of our Recently Completed Projects...

Pulaski County Farm to School

The Farm to School Initiative, implemented by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), helps public schools across the nation incorporate local fresh foods into their daily lunches and cafeteria food. A wide variety of activities are created to help teach children about nutrition, gardening, living a healthy lifestyle, and making smart choices when it comes to food. Pulaski County Public Schools was awarded a planning grant, given to those who are just beginning the incorporation of local foods into their public schools. Pulaski County Public Schools is working with community partners, parents and students to help develop and implement this program. The Center evaluated their efforts in developing the Farm to School program.

Piedmont Community Services Board Community Perceptions

The Center conducted surveys, focus groups, and key informant interviews in Martinsville/Henry County to assess community and agency perceptions of PCS' substance abuse prevention work. CPHPR collected and analyzed data and produced a comprehensive report.

VDH Obesity Prevention Initiative

Reversing the growing trends in obesity and reducing chronic diseases requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach that uses systems and environmental change strategies to transform communities into places that support and promote healthy lifestyle choices for all residents. Through funding from VDH, the town of Christiansburg has been implementing such strategies. The project focused on enhancing town infrastructure to support bicycling and walking. The town also worked to enhance community partnerships through the Healthy Citizens New River network in order to create a healthier Christiansburg. The Center evaluated the effectiveness of the project.

A Student Perspective...



Hello. My name is Shelbie Turner and I am a second-year MPH student who began working as the Center Graduate Assistant in January of 2016. During that time, I've learned quite a bit about the efforts to empower citizens in our region to take control of their health and the programs aimed to provide them with the means to do so. When I complete my work with the Center and venture onto other things, there are many lessons I will take away with me. I'd like to share one of those lessons with you.

For various Center projects I have been a part of focus groups—sometimes facilitating them, sometimes taking notes, and sometimes simply observing. I always knew diverse perspectives and experiences were vital in all aspects of life. Being present for so many focus groups, though, has shown me how rewarding it is to have many different people sitting around the table (literally).

You are probably thinking, “of course.” It’s a no brainer that a diverse focus group will likely elicit comprehensive data for an evaluation team to use. Indeed. But I have also witnessed a focus group be just as beneficial to the participants as it was beneficial to our evaluation team. There have, for example, been several instances where focus group participants did not know each other or were not aware of the organization or service each was representing. Ideas, interests, and even contact information were often shared with the thought that a partnership could be forged.

While a focus group is not designed or intended to be a “meet and greet,” bringing people together who represent diverse backgrounds, organizations, and disciplines but who have a shared common interest will result in meaningful exchanges.

Witnessing such meaningful exchanges is a reminder of the power behind connecting with other people. Both in my work with the Center and beyond, I plan to continually ask myself who else can we invite to sit around the table? I hope you will join me.

A note from the Director and Associate Director



Kathy Hosig, Ph.D., MPH, RD
Director, CPHPR

Thank you for catching up on CPHPR happenings. The Center is now five years old, and we are proud of its growth and accomplishments, many of which are highlighted above. None of this work would be possible without the support of our local and state partners, and we thank you for the continued trust and support. It is a pleasure working with all of you.

If you are interested in hearing from us or working with us, please contact us. We'd love to hear from you.

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A special thanks to Virginia Tech's Institute for Society, Culture and Environment (ISCE) for continued support!



Sophie Wenzel, MPH
Associate Director, CPHPR