

# *The Amazing Training: West Virginia's Innovative Approach to Staff Training*

---

In 2010, the West Virginia Division of Health Promotion and Chronic Disease (HPCD) initiated the process of moving from categorically funded programs to a structure that reflects four functional domains: Epidemiology and Surveillance, Community Mobilization, Health Systems, and Policy Development. While the transformation was daunting, HPCD was presented with a unique opportunity to grow as a Division by strengthening core competencies and increasing knowledge within the four functional domains.

When applying for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Coordinated Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Program grant, HPCD both created and developed a four-part training plan titled, *The Amazing Training*. Using a format that resembles the popular television show, "The Amazing Race," *The Amazing Training* was fashioned to enhance team-building skills, communication, integration, and competition. The plan, which was divided into four phases and held during monthly staff meetings, consisted of clues, instructions, reading materials, and various training segments. Using results from a staff self-evaluation, goals and achievements were developed into "check-points" that were used to mark the finish of each phase.

Phase Three of *The Amazing Training* focused around health systems. During this phase, trainings focused on strengthening employee knowledge about systems thinking, how health systems operate, linking smaller systems to larger, more complex systems, and how these processes might differ.

Based on the three health systems that comprise HPCD's sister divisions (Primary Care, Local Health, and Rural Health), destinations were selected in advance and prepared for teams to conduct an onsite visit. During "Check Point Three," a review session on health systems, teams were brought together to report on their assigned system and to identify the strengths, weaknesses and gaps in the systems as well as the challenges and barriers faced when addressing chronic disease. "Check Point Three" allowed for the exploration of HPCD's role in connecting the systems or assisting with improved quality of care measures.

The final step of the plan was using the experiences, discussions and participant knowledge to explore linkages between health systems and the communities, how the systems are connected and how these connections form an even larger health system, gaps within the linkage system and the impact of these gaps, and how the linkages may be strengthened. At the conclusion of

this exercise, participants reflected on the definition of “community” as they answered the questions pertaining to clinic - community linkages.

Participants identified ideas under each domain for supporting community health systems as they strive to improve health outcomes in terms of chronic disease. Many of the ideas and concepts captured are being used to drive the new organization direction of this Division. The evaluation results showed an increase in knowledge regarding health systems and linkages, and identified potential roles for HPCD within those systems.

Overall, the twelve-month training experience has assisted with the transformation of HPCD by creating a more unified, knowledgeable workforce. HPCD is now prepared to identify the challenges, accept the tasks and act as a team to address chronic disease in West Virginia.