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Enhancing public health infrastructure and workforce through a community-centered academic health department

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A community-centered model of an academic health department builds on the strengths of a partnership between a local public health department and academic institutions with a primary focus on addressing local public health priorities. In contrast to the more common university-centered model, the health department with a community-centered academic health department builds relationships with multiple colleges and universities to enhance both the public health system and workforce development. The Duval County Health Department, a well developed community-centered model, enhances core public health functions of assessment, assurance and policy development through collaboration with academic institutions and is expanding the partnership to more effectively enhance workforce development.

Workforce development within this model includes a rich environment for field experiences for hundreds of students per year, for a wide range of public health activities. This model, with an extensive system of primary care centers, also provides clinical experiences for pediatric, family practice and infectious disease graduate medical education. Other professional education includes nursing, pharmacy and dentistry. This model is being expanded to work with aspiring graduate public health Schools and Programs. Of greatest significance is collaboration with a community college to address employee and prospective public health workforce "pipeline" training and education needs. The newly emerging collaboration with the community college is also facilitating unique opportunities to build the local public health system and address the needs of high risk populations. Description of the model, its structure and illustrations of the practices provides important implications for the policy and systems of public health.

Learning Objectives:

1. Describe Academic Health Department
2. Recognize implications of different models of an Academic Health Department
3. Explain workforce pipeline issues and implications for academic-agency partnerships