
Introduction

About This Handbook

The authors started on this journey quite a while ago. Yet this handbook includes only the first steps of this challenging expedition. The handbook represents one way to get started, and experience will modify how an organization actually goes about strengthening its public health culture and developing the competencies to optimize its performance. This approach will need to be revisited continually to ensure that it is consistent with the focus, strategies, and principles of public health as it evolves to meet population health challenges.

The objectives contained in Chapter 23 (Public Health Infrastructure) of *Healthy People 2010* should energize us to enhance the competencies of the public health workforce engaged in providing the Essential Public Health Services. As experience and insight into institutionalizing lifelong learning for the workforce are gained, more creative ways to design organizational and community systems that support such efforts will certainly be developed.

Your organization, as a component of the local public health system, is going to be challenged to meet the performance standards related to delivery of the Essential Public Health Services. Making an organizational commitment to these competency development approaches and institutionalizing these efforts as an integral part of your quality improvement process will significantly contribute to rebuilding the public health infrastructure in this country and achieving the *Healthy People 2010* goals.