



Institute for Community Health

A collaboration of the Cambridge Health Alliance, Mount Auburn Hospital, and Partners Healthcare

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Academic health department: Partnership to improve delivery of local public health services.

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Boston University School of Public Health (BUSPH) and a regional coalition of 27 local health departments around Boston have established an Academic Health Department (AHD) to combine the resources of academia and local health toward building public health practice capacity. The AHD joins local and regional staff with BUSPH faculty, staff, and students to promote collaborative practice and workforce training and education. The AHD is designed: 1) to share expertise among faculty and practitioners (e.g., technical assistance, speakers' bureaus, consulting/expertise database, classroom presentations); 2) to educate and train the workforce and BUSPH students through face-to-face and distance-based learning; and 3) to expand services and expertise in the region served by the coalition through the Regional Epidemiologic Services Center (Center), an innovative model to augment local practice resources through the centralization of epidemiologic services. A process and outcome evaluation of the AHD is being conducted by BUSPH faculty and students. The Academic Health Department model addresses a limitation of Massachusetts and other home-rule states that rely on local municipality-based health agencies with limited capacity and few formal relationships that allow sharing of resources and expertise. The presentation will focus on mutually-beneficial activities that can be undertaken collaboratively and on lessons learned in the development of our local health/academic partnership. We will discuss the steps taken to create a framework for the Academic Health Department and identify barriers to collaboration, as well as strategies for overcoming these barriers.

Learning Objectives:

Describe potential avenues for collaboration between academic and practice communities.

Identify barriers to development of Academic Health Departments and strategies for overcoming these barriers.

Describe how combining academic and local practice resources can improve delivery of public health services to local communities.