

Creating Healthy Communities: Public Health and Public Housing

Dr. Kathleen Burgoyne, Comprehensive Health Education Foundation, Diana Vergis Vinh, Steps and the Healthy Rainier Valley Coalition, Public Health – Seattle & King County, Anel Mercado, Children’s Health Promotor Program Coordinator, Public Health – Seattle & King County, Elizabeth Westburg, King County Housing Authority

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Abstract: Public Health and Public Housing share common interests. Public Health seeks ways to prevent chronic diseases in communities with large concentrations of low-income, disproportionately obese, unhealthy populations. Public Housing Authorities seek ways to promote their very low incomes residents’ self sufficiency. Housing Authorities understand that diabetes, hypertension, asthma complications, and limited physical mobility are barriers self-sufficiency.

Despite this common interest partnerships between public health and public housing are unusual and can be challenging. It is easy for professionals from both disciplines to misunderstand one another given differences in their focus, perspective, and professional training, jargon and rules. The goal of this presentation is to begin to close this gap by giving public health professionals an inside view of public housing and information on how to build fruitful health and housing collaborations. Our objectives are to:

- Identify common interests and priorities between public health and public housing
- Increase understanding of each other’s respective missions, activities, and resources
- Identify common pitfalls in public health / public housing collaborations
- Describe what it takes to build a successful health / housing collaborations

We will conclude by describing how chronic diseases can be prevented by establishing public housing developments as model healthy communities where is it the norm for people to be physically active, eat healthy, know and connect with their neighbors, and advocate for change in the systems and policies that affect their community.