

Health Impacts of Climate Change - Introduction to a Public Health Workforce

Thurston County Public Health and Social Services Department
Olympia, Washington (2010)

NACCHO
Local Public Health
Capacity Building
GRANT

STEPS TO PUBLIC HEALTH STAFF ENGAGEMENT

SIGNS OF SUCCESS

“Climate change is an emerging public health issue.”

Agency Culture

- Plan initial training during all-staff meeting
- Adhere to meeting culture by integrating a participatory, light-hearted component
- Recognize stress due to recent budget cuts - avoid the perception of more work to do with less

Avoid the Debate

- Not focus on scientific justification of existence and causes
- Avoid mitigation issues
- Avoid jargon (e.g., “global warming,” “carbon footprint”)
- Use a public health preparedness approach

Focus on Health

- Highlight climate change factors impacting human health
- Describe events already occurring locally that will happen more often (e.g., flooding, extreme heat)
- Describe health impacts within an all hazards framework

A **Preparedness** person once said: *“If you are better prepared for a flood, it doesn’t matter why the flood occurred”*



Downtown Olympia, January 2010

Quiz Bowl
???????

- ★ 95% of health department staff agreed that connections exist between their work and climate change after participating in training and 79% of staff wanted more training on this topic.
- ★ Health Department management requested a work plan outlining priority climate change activities for funding consideration in 2011.
- ★ Three public health system partners (a local tribe, state health department, county health department) requested either a presentation or use of project educational materials.