



#HealthierMO

Transforming the Future of Public Health in Missouri

Public Health Heartbeat Focus Groups Summary

Logistics

As a follow up to the Public Health Heartbeat digital survey completed in March/April 2019, five focus groups were held in May 2019: Kansas City, St. Charles, Jefferson City, and two virtual groups.

Participants included 20 local public health agency employees, 19 DHSS employees, and one representative of Missouri's universities.

The focus groups were facilitated by the following members of the Communications Committee:

- Carol Cox, Truman University
- Ray Dlugolecki, Jackson County Health Department
- Denise Strehlow, BJC School Outreach and Youth Development
- Jaci McReynolds, #HealthierMO Initiative

Key values identified during the focus groups included:

- People
- Service
- Health
- Equity/access

Key motivators identified during the focus groups included:

- Customer service (kindness, empathy, listening, asking what people need)
- Making a difference (want to see outcomes, what to help)
- Passionate about their field/work
- Real people's stories

During the focus groups, participants responded in the following ways when asked what **they need to thrive** locally and in Missouri:

Empowerment:

- To know their role in larger public health system
- More autonomy to do their jobs as subject matter experts, with trust from leadership and the public
- Recognition (valued; public health prioritized as an important field; thought of as "experts"; affirmation that work being done is worthwhile)

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- Opportunities to participate in decision-making/planning
- Opportunities to advocate for public health (with public, community partners and policymakers)

Process Change / Change Management:

- Simplified/streamlined processes (reduce fragmentation; reduce bureaucracy; reduce paperwork and reporting burden)
- New ways of thinking (current, innovative, cross-generational, visionary – more than just basic needs)
- Opportunity to do more outreach, face-to-face in community; less focus on paperwork
- More collaboration (bridge building, partnerships, teamwork)

Communication:

- Better communication (internal and external; marketing campaigns)
- For everyone (public, policymakers, leadership) to understand their “public health story”

Resources:

- More resources (money, time, staff, timely data, marketing tools)
- Data to identify gaps and focus work
- Evaluation measures that demonstrate value of work
- Flexibility with funding (more discretionary decision-making with public health funds)

Next steps

The Communications Committee meets May 31, 2019 to review focus group outcomes and data from the Public Health Heartbeat digital survey conducted in April/May 2019. These data will be used to inform development of resources to support public health employees as they act as ambassadors for public health. Additional opportunities for stakeholders to provide input, particularly through virtual platforms, are recommended.