

A PREVIEW OF FIELD TRAINING FOR HEALTH EDUCATORS



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Whether we are interested in learning about one specific program of field training for health educators, or whether we are interested in planning toward such a program in a new area, the essential features involved will include the "five W's" — WHY, WHO, WHEN, WHERE, and WHAT

If we analyze these five features, we might start with the phase WHY, and ask: Why is field training essential for professionally trained public health educators?

Professionally trained health educators complete 9 months of academic training in a school of public health. During this period of graduate study, they take such courses as public health administration, sanitation, nutrition, parasitology, mental hygiene, epidemiology, sociology, education, statistics, school health and health education, history, philosophy, and techniques.

It is considered essential for a medical doctor to complete an internship, during which time the new physician has the opportunity to put into practice the skills and information acquired in medical school. Furthermore, the interne is supervised during the internship training-period by well-trained and experienced physicians. Most persons would not consider a medical doctor completely qualified to practice medicine until he has completed the internship.

If we carry the same philosophy into public health education, then this period of field training should provide an opportunity for the health educator to put into practice the information and techniques that he has learned in a school of public health.

Many of these schools consider field training so important that they do not grant the Master's degree in Public Health to health educators until they have satisfactorily completed 10 to 12 weeks of field training.

The second consideration of field training — WHO — has some particularly important phases:

1. Who should be given field training?

Only those who evidence aptitude for this career by successfully completing such academic classes as are required by the school of public health in which they are enrolled, and are considered emotionally and physically qualified for this profession.

2. Who should supervise such training?

The supervisors must be as well trained as the trainees they are to guide. This means that the field-training supervisor should have a graduate degree in public health from a university school of public health that is accredited to train health educators. I would also recommend that

the supervisor should have completed at least 1 year of experience at the local level before beginning supervisory activities.

Occasional visitation of trainees by State-level personnel should not qualify as *adequate* supervision during the field training period. It is therefore essential that the supervisor be working in the same department to which the trainees are assigned, thus avoiding supervision by "remote control."

It is also highly desirable that the training supervisor be working in the field-training center at least 6 months prior to the arrival of the trainees. This will give the supervisor, as well as the trainees, a better opportunity to develop a personal sense of security and satisfaction as they progress through the field-training program.

WHEN should field training be scheduled?

The schedule will of necessity be planned jointly between the schools of public health and the staff of the field-training center.

Health-education students attending the University of North Carolina and North Carolina College are assigned to field-training centers from March through May (their spring quarter), after which they return to their schools for an additional 3-month period.

The other schools of public health usually assign students for field training during the summer months, and always after they have completed all their academic training. One of these latter schools brings its students back to the university for a brief conference, 2 to 3 days, during which time they give oral reports of their field-training activities.

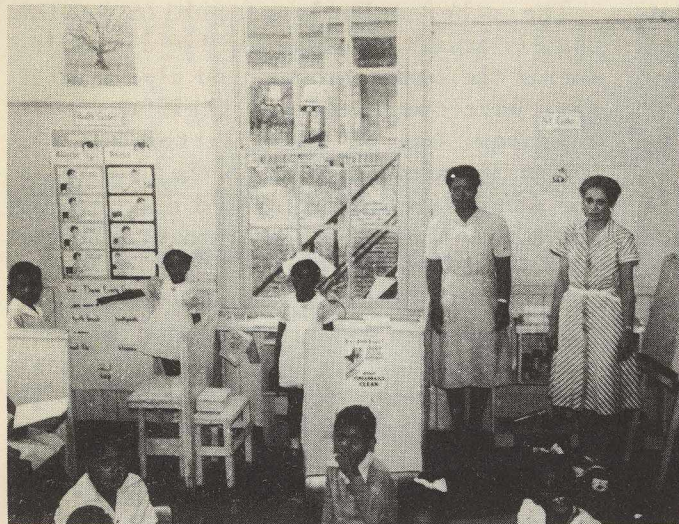
WHERE should field training be given?

Most trainees will receive the greatest benefit if they are assigned to a local health department for field training. If they know that their future position is to be at the State level, local adjustment of the content of the training program can be made to help prepare them for such a position.

The local health department should meet certain qualifications if it is to set up a field-training program: (1) It is reasonable to assume that the supervisory and administrative personnel (health officer, nursing director, sanitation director, and health educator) should be well qualified in their respective fields. This would include adequate training in a school of public health. (2) It is also anticipated that the supervisory and administrative personnel will all work as a team in planning and developing the field-training program for health educators.



Public health nurse, school principal, and health club officers work with trainees in development of school health education programs.



(LEFT) Trainees work with teachers, nurses, and pupils on school health educational programs.

(RIGHT) Trainees help nurses with clinic education programs. This nurse is demonstrating baby clothing to a class of mothers.



In addition to a well-trained staff, the field-training center should provide office space and equipment for the trainees. This would preferably include a room with office desks, or tables — one per trainee. This permits concentration on field-training activities without too much interruption. If the supervisor has only one trainee at a time, the trainee might best be placed in the same office with the health-education supervisor.

A film projector and screen are additional essentials for a training center. Some stenographic assistance should be made available to the trainees, such as necessary business correspondence that may arise in the training program, cutting stencils, and mimeographic materials that are developed.

Any health department that is interested in becoming a field training center should do cooperative planning with the schools of public health and with their State health department. Some State health departments have become interested in developing local field-training centers — it is *one* aid in the recruitment of personnel for employment within the State.

WHAT is the field training program?

Field training should be developed as an integral part of the local health work as it exists at the time of the training period.

The program has two phases: orientation and the development of health-education projects.

The orientation period includes local tours and discussions designed to give the

trainee a picture of the local community — schools, housing, government, together with an understanding of how the local area is attempting to solve its health problems. This might include a discussion regarding administration policy and financing of the health department; tours to the local water supply and purification system, sewerage and garbage disposal plants, and a major industry with health and safety programs; home and school visiting with the nurse; restaurant visits with the sanitarian; a visit to a voluntary health-agency; and a study of the records and statistics to learn the major causes of illness and death.

The projects should include such types of activities that require joint planning with other staff members, and with local school and community leaders. A sample set of projects (those for trainees assigned to Savannah, Ga., from March 21 to May 28, 1949) are: participation in community organization and planning activities that are now in progress in the area; work with teachers, parents, children, nurse, and principal on a health program in one

school; planning with the nurse for education activities in one public health clinic; planning with sanitation personnel for foodhandler classes; developing an annual report for the health department; evaluation of the trainees' personal effectiveness and of the field-training program.

The program just described has been developed through joint planning between the university schools of public health and the staff of the Savannah-Chatham County Health Department. Some of the schools of public health send a faculty member to visit the training center while their students are in Savannah. This practice is most commendable and shows keen interest on the part of these universities in the quality of field training given and the degree of achievement of their students.

More and better field-training centers are urgently needed, *but* they should be carefully planned to provide the public health educator with an opportunity and a real challenge to meet the needs that are required of this profession.

Trainees help plan and participate in in-service training programs. This is a Health Department Staff Conference on Restaurant Sanitation.

