

# Communicable Disease Center Training Program in Housing

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Housing improvement is recognized as one of the most fundamental conditions of social reform. It is quite obvious that bad housing has tended to result in demoralization, in social unrest, and in high rates of mortality and disease. The increase in morbidity and mortality rates associated with poor housing has become one of the critical problems of today. The Surgeon General of the Public Health Service has said, "Underlying every ... (action) ... to improve the quality of housing is the recognition that the home environment plays a significant role in determining the health status of the individual, the family, and the community," and "that in our efforts for higher levels of national health, an aggressive program for improving the quality of housing is a necessary adjunct to the provision of better health services."<sup>(1)</sup>

The American Public Health Association through its Committee on the Hygiene of Housing has done extensive research on the basic principles of healthful housing. This Committee developed an appraisal method for measuring the quality of housing by applying these basic principles. This method is a tool for evaluating a very complex problem so that laymen can understand the basic essentials necessary to formulate plans for action.

Following the development of the appraisal technique, the American Public Health Association was consultant in the field of housing hygiene. The Public Health Service began work in this field in early 1948. The American Public Health Association released its rights and privileges of the Appraisal Technique to the Public Health Service at this time, and training in housing sanitation was begun in the Training Services of the Communicable Disease Center.

Field training in the use of the American Public Health Association Appraisal Technique for evaluating housing is now being given at two established Housing Sanitation Training Centers, in Atlanta, Ga., and Syracuse, N. Y. In carrying on this work, the Training Services has had the co-

operation of Dr. James F. Hackney, Director of Public Health, and Mr. Stafford W. Graydon, Public Health Engineer of the Atlanta Health Department, and Dr. C. A. Sargent, Commissioner of Health of Syracuse. With the facilities of these two local health departments, it is possible to conduct the courses in the atmosphere of an active housing program.

In the 2½ years of training operation, 41 trainees have completed training in the Appraisal Technique. These trainees represent 25 cities, 5 States, and 2 Public Health Service Regions. In addition to these, there has been a large number of people who have taken short courses in housing sanitation. Persons given orientation in housing in these short courses have included Public Health Service regional engineers, local directors of health, State health department personnel, planning commission personnel, and other persons from local governmental departments. The demand for training in housing sanitation has spread beyond the boundaries of the United States, and many foreign trainees coming to the Training Services spend time seeking information as to how they may attack housing problems in their own countries.

The demand for training in housing has required some decentralized work. In addition to the 1-week and 5-week courses in Atlanta and Syracuse, Training Services has participated in seminars given in other localities. These seminars have been orientation classes and workshops to acquaint interested officials with the real problems that face them. In October and November, a 4-week training course in housing was given in Oakland, Calif., in order that many cities in that area might take advantage of housing training. Persons taking the course included personnel from the Public Health Service, State and local health departments, and local planning commissions.

The 5-week training course in housing is given at both of the Housing Training Centers. It is conducted at these two locations because of the very

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Trainee receiving field experience in dwelling appraisal.

active housing programs that are presently under way. The trainee has the opportunity of working in the field where he is confronted with the real problems, almost identical with those of his locality. In addition to the dwelling appraisal in the field, a certain amount of time is spent in a city planning office where problems of planning the dwelling environment are solved. The results of the field appraisal are summarized in the office and the analysis made. The analysis is then used as a basis for determining what action is necessary to improve the conditions of housing (2).

Although we depend on the "educational approach" to carry out a program, it is very necessary that equitable, strong, and constitutional laws be

developed in order to rehabilitate blighted areas of a community. Regulatory laws on structures, environment, and rehabilitation are complex and a general code applicable throughout the country is not feasible. Each trainee is briefed on certain fundamental points which must be considered when discussing these laws.

Candidates for housing training need not be engineers, but they should have some background of experience in environmental sanitation, statistics, or city planning. These persons should be well acquainted with their local problems because part of the training period will be given to a discussion and consideration of their local needs. Candidates who meet these requirements may be supervisory personnel of State and local health departments, city planners, or rehabilitation commissioners.

New subject matter is being added to the general subject of housing sanitation and new training aid films are being made in cooperation with the Audio-Visual Production Services. In addition to training aid films, kits for the use of field representatives are being developed to meet the needs for reference material on the subject of housing. With the aid of this new material, it is hoped that the training program in housing may assist State and local agencies in meeting the needs and demands from the entire country.

#### REFERENCES

- (1) Scheele, Leonard A.: Presented in hearings before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Banking and Currency, United States Senate, Eighty-first Congress (February 11, 1949).
- (2) Bulletin of Field Training Programs: Federal Security Agency, Public Health Service, Communicable Disease Center (1951).

## *Expansion of Housing Training by Establishing a New Regional Center*

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A center for the training of personnel in the hygiene of housing has been established at Syracuse, N. Y., as a joint effort of the Syracuse Health Department and Training Services of the

Communicable Disease Center. It is hoped that this Center in cooperation with State and local agencies will satisfy the growing needs for training in this increasingly important aspect of housing activity

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