MANAGING THE PUBLIC HEALTH WORKFORCE: AN EXAMINATION OF EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE REVIEW PROCESSES IN LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENTS

Marta Koelling

Master of Public Health

Medical College of Wisconsin

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Faculty Advisor: Dr. Seth Foldy

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Employee Performance Reviews

- Benefits
  - Engage employees in their career development
  - Clarify expectations
  - Establish and monitor achievement of goals
  - Establish the importance of two-way communication (Armstrong, 2010)
  - Assist organization in determining salaries, promotions, terminations, gaps in organizational skill and knowledge (Shi & Johnson, 2014)

- Supported by Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) in accreditation of governing health departments (Brownson, et. al., 2014)

Purpose

- Identify best practices for employee performance evaluations through a literature review

- Determine prevalent employee performance evaluation practices in PHAB accredited local health departments, through the use of a survey

- Based on the identified list of best practices and prevalent practices, provide recommendations on employee performance evaluations and the supporting processes for local health departments

Literature Review

- Determined current practices and recommendations for employee performance evaluations in public health

- Utilized PubMed, Ovid, Public Health Foundation (PHF), National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), American Public Health Association (APHA), Public Health Services and Systems Research Practice-Based Research Networks

- Previous research on employee performance evaluations in public health limited

- Literature identified focusing on the evidence base supporting the use of employee performance evaluations, the assurance of an accurate tool, competencies and skills to be assessed, the use of motivational tools and incentives, and evaluating supervisors or using a 360-degree review process

Literature Review
Evidence-Based Practice: Employee Performance Evaluations

- Employee performance evaluations are considered evidence-based practice in public health (Brownson, et. al., 2014)

- Limited information is available regarding implementation practices in local public health (Brownson, et. al., 2014)

Literature Review
Evaluation Tool and Analytic Methods

- Safeguards commonly used to ensure validity of tool
  - Defined rating criteria
  - Verification of rating by more than one individual
  - Statistical normalization of ratings across departments and raters
  - Regular trainings on the tool used (Armstrong, 2010)

- However, safeguards not proven to be adequate to ensure validity
  - Example: The distribution of performance evaluation data is often non-normal, thus data characteristics should be analyzed, and non-parametric statistics may be needed (Park, 2014)

Literature Review
Deployment of Evaluation Instrument

- Rater motivation may affect the accuracy and legitimacy of employee performance evaluations and may be influenced by:
  - Felt accountability-the perception of being held responsible for one's evaluation determinations by both subordinate and supervisor
  - Incentive structures-rewarding accurate ratings
  - Public service motivation-motivation to perform one's work related duties more effectively in a public service setting (Park, 2014)

- The culture of an agency clearly has an impact on the reliability of ratings (Park, 2014)

Literature Review
Competency and Skill Assessment

- In addition to proficiency in responsibilities specific to their role, a competent public health worker may be defined as one who is competent in all eight domains of the 2014 revised Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals (Mayer, 2003)

- In order to assure a flexible workforce focused on learning and continuous improvement, it is recommended that selected new skills, competencies, and expectations be incorporated into the performance evaluation system and job descriptions as they are identified (Holtzhauer, et. a., 2001)

Literature Review
Motivation and Incentive for Employee Performance

- Extrinsic motivators-frequently used for employee motivation, easy to control
  - Monetary incentives
  - Promotions
  - Privileges

- Intrinsic motivators-stronger predictor of improvement
  - Committing to a meaningful purpose
  - Choosing the best way to fulfill that purpose
  - Making sure that one is performing work activities competently
  - Making sure that one is making progress to achieve the purpose (Thomas, 2009)

Literature Review
Evaluating Supervisors and 360-Degree Reviews

- 360-degree feedback system
  - Allows employees to evaluate themselves and receive feedback from their supervisors, peers, and subordinates
  - May focus more on employee development than employee performance
  - Can be instituted in tandem with a formal, top-down, evaluation system (Swain, et. al., 2004)
  - Allows staff and leaders to receive more comprehensive feedback on their performance development (Motivate-Motivating Supervisors)

Methods

- Survey Development
  - Email survey with standard set of questions to all potential respondents
  - Branching logic used to ask different questions of agencies currently with an employee performance evaluation process in place and those without

- Sample
  - 57 PHAB accredited local health departments contacted
  - 19 actual respondents, representing 13 different states

- Data Collection
  - Survey questions sent during week of September 12, 2016
  - Survey population provided option to respond to questions via email or schedule a phone conversation

Results
Table 1-Location Data for Responding Health Departments (N=19)

	Rural Setting	Urban Setting
Health departments with a formal evaluation process in place	42%	52%
Health departments without a formal evaluation process in place	0%	5%

Results
Table 2-Dichotomous Survey Question Responses of Sample with a Process in Place (N=18)

Question	% of sample answering yes
My agency does include an evaluation of managers/supervisors by subordinates and/or peers	5%
The evaluation process is tied to monetary increases	67%
The process does include an evaluation of PH Core Competencies	61%

Results
Table 3-Follow Up Question Responses (N=18)

Question	% of sample answering yes
The evaluation process includes an employee self-evaluation	44%
The evaluation process includes goal setting	72%
The evaluation process takes place at least annually	67%

Results
Table 4-Frequency of Benefits Noted (N=18)

Benefit	% of sample noting benefit
Two-way communication	27%
Keeping job descriptions up to date	17%
Better legal protection	11%
Greater staff buy in	11%
Alignment with agency goals	17%
Objective evaluations	33%
Data-driven evaluations	27%
Greater accomplishment of the 10 essential services	17%
Better service to the community	27%

Results
Table 5-Frequency of Barriers Noted (N=18)

Barrier	% of sample noting barrier
Amount of time it takes to complete the evaluation	44%
Staff completing evolution incorrectly	27%
Inflated ratings from both staff and supervisors to ensure wage increases and decrease conflict	17%
Need to modify the needs and processes of the agency evaluation in order to fit into those of the governing entity evaluation	27%
Resistance from managers and/or staff	11%

Discussion

- Evidence supports the use of employee performance evaluations in regular department operations

- Recommend use of a standard rating tool and allow staff the opportunity to fully provide justification for performance and expected results
  - Benefits
    - Better justification for ratings
    - Trackable metrics
    - Facilitate open communication and feedback for employee

- Recommend assessment of Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals and more tailored agency specific evaluation criteria
  - Benefits
    - Tailored evaluation criteria based on current needs and goals of agency
    - Core Competencies are standard across all health departments
    - Core Competencies can advise public health specific training needs

Discussion continued

- Recommend use of self-assessment
  - Benefits
    - Staff are able to share where they think they are in their training, work contributions, and professional development
    - Improves intrinsic motivation

- Recommend use of 360-degree feedback system
  - Use with evaluation of supervisors
  - Focus on skill development and training opportunities

- Recommend annual goal setting by employees
  - Benefits
    - Provides enhanced knowledge of expectations
    - Greater staff accountability throughout year

Conclusion

- Literature supports the use of employee evaluation processes but little is published about implementation of the them in local health departments

- Recommendations for implementation were made based on research of public health practices, practices in other types of organizations, and outreach to PHAB accredited health departments

- Empirical evaluations should follow implementation of recommendations to validate their value in local health department settings

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Resources

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