

TITLE: Public Health Professional Workforce Development Activities in Oregon

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STUDENT SUBMISSION: No

TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE: Local and state policy makers, county public health and administrative staff, and academic institutions preparing the future public health workforce.

ABSTRACT: The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of a stable local public health infrastructure, yet there are no public statewide attempts to describe Oregon's local public health workforce or explore local staffing challenges. CLHO conducted semi-structured interviews with leaders at 30 local health departments to: capture the number of FTEs working in Oregon local public health, collect data on pay scales for key positions, and to gather qualitative data on challenges and successes with hiring and recruiting staff. Participating departments reported 1905 FTEs working in local public health departments, and approximately 40% of these FTEs were hired after March 2020. The average starting wage across all counties that provided pay data was \$29.36 per hour for public health nurses. Local leaders reported multiple, complex challenges to recruiting, hiring, and retaining staff, including having a limited pool of applicants, restrictive county protocols, inability to offer competitive pay, a heavy burden of training new staff, the lack of upward mobility within the department, and burnout among staff. Local leaders provided a variety of recommendations for addressing these challenges that will require a coordinated effort from local and state health officials, county governments, state policy makers, and academia.
