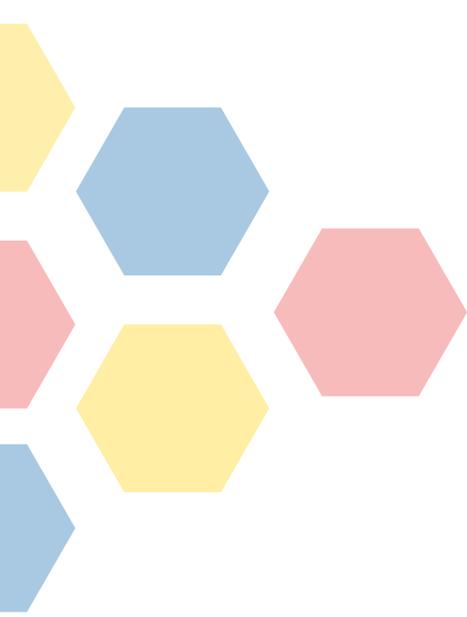


Bringing Public Health and Public Libraries Together



Collaboration Toolkit

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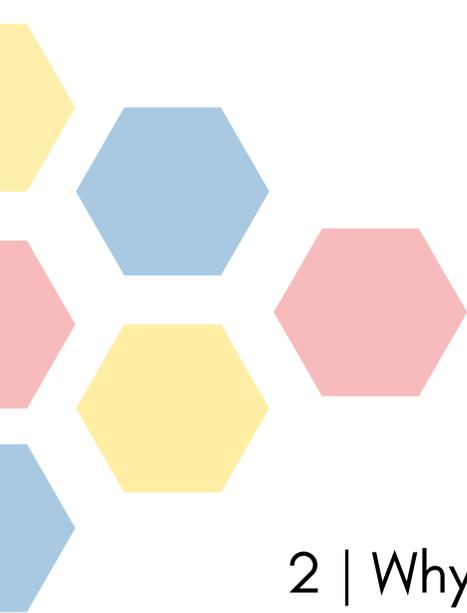
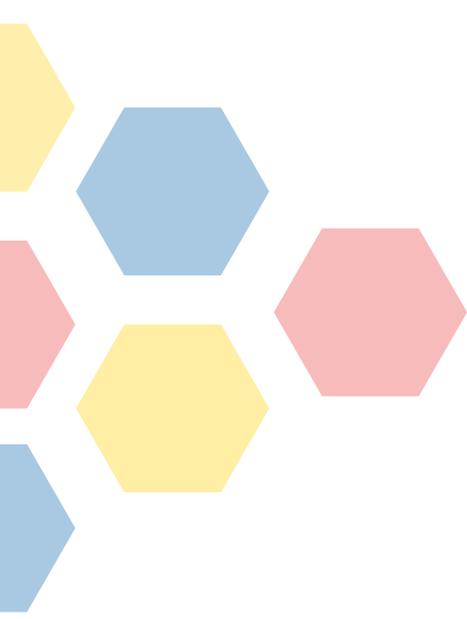


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Why Public Libraries and Public Health?

Public libraries and public health departments are a natural fit for collaboration. Focusing on health aligns well with the core values of librarianship, which include access, diversity, supporting the public good, and social responsibility.

Public libraries are critically important to reaching lower-income individuals and those who are members of communities of color, who use the library at a high rate compared to other community spaces, and report that libraries provide significant help with learning new technologies, employment, and discerning what information is trustworthy. From the opioid crisis to telehealth to health literacy, libraries are well-positioned to cost-effectively collaborate to build healthier communities.

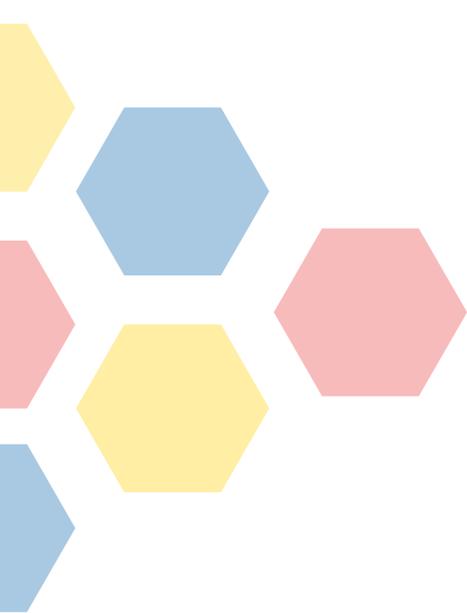


Public Libraries

The U.S. has just over 9,000 public library systems, operating out of nearly 17,000 buildings. Libraries range in size from large, urban systems with dozens of branches to small libraries, with roughly one-third of all U.S. public library buildings having only 1-2 staff serving populations of 2,500 or fewer.

According to Institute of Museum and Library Services data, virtually all libraries offer free public Wi-Fi access, basic digital literacy training, and summer learning programs for children; about three-quarters of libraries assist patrons in using online government programs and services, and provide support to people looking for employment; and more than one-third provide literacy, GED prep, STEAM and afterschool programs.

Libraries connect people with authoritative information, technology access and training, community-aware guidance toward obtaining relevant services, and lifelong learning related to strengthening health and wellness. Libraries are critical access points, providing access to authoritative, relevant health and wellness information to all community members, at no charge and with no consideration of health insurance status or income.



Public Health

When people think of Public Health, topics such as vaccinations, infectious diseases, and county health departments may come to mind. While those things are integral to ensuring the health of communities, Public Health 3.0 calls upon people from all sectors to work together to meet the health challenges of the 21st century.

Public Health professionals work across all sectors including community-based organizations, non-profits, government agencies, and more. Day-to-day work can vary greatly, but all public health work is informed and guided by the [10 essential services of public health](#).

Health equity is central to public health work and is essential in ensuring that all individuals are able to achieve their fullest expression of health. Public health works to ensure individuals are able to achieve their fullest expression of health through shaping the environments where people work, live, and play.



Public Libraries and Public Health in Action

Pima County, Arizona

Pima County Public Library in Arizona partnered with the local public health department to employ a public health nurse who provided basic health services such as physical assessments, first aid, and influenza vaccines.

Baltimore, Maryland

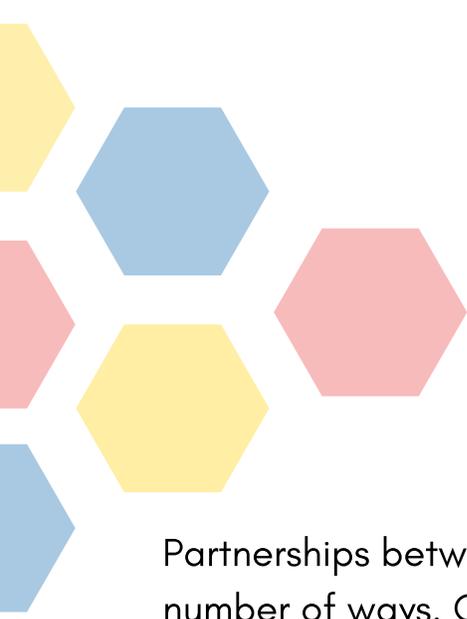
Baltimore's Health Department launched the Virtual Supermarket Project, allowing library patrons can order groceries online (and can also pay with SNAP benefits) and then pick them up from their local library.

Salt Lake County, Utah

- Public Libraries in Salt Lake County provide immunization information at story times.
 - Public Libraries provide free Naloxone in partnership with the Utah state health department and an area non-profit.
 - Public Libraries distribute free gun locks through a state-funded grant.
-

Perry, Iowa

In Perry, Iowa, library visitors can check out bikes, and the library partners with a local food rescue organization to make high-quality food available for anyone who visits the library to take home.

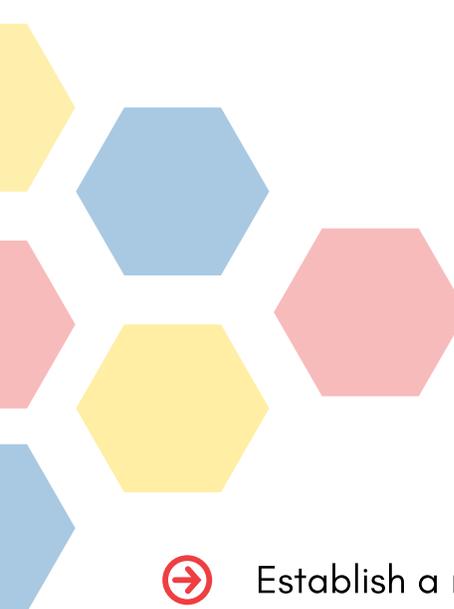


Getting Started

Partnerships between community-based organizations may start in any number of ways. One way to facilitate a partnership is to come together with a common goal in mind. Recognizing a shared vision and mission between organizations can also help facilitate relationships. In the case of public libraries and public health departments, there are many shared goals in the day-to-day work including improved health literacy, ensuring access to resources, and thriving communities.

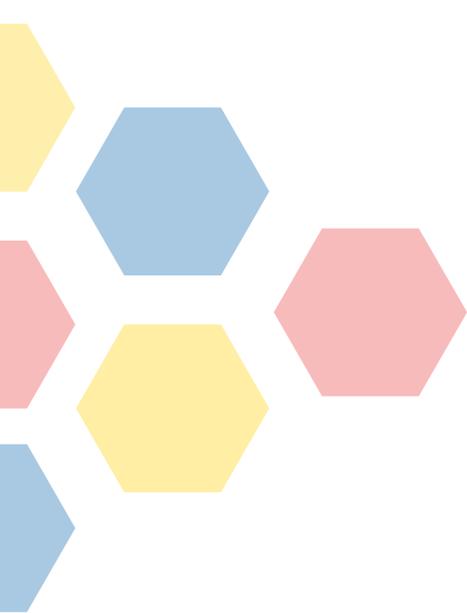
The needs of the communities where partnerships are formed will drive the collaborations and work being done. In certain instances, needs will bring organizations together and in other instances, organizations will form relationships in anticipation of emerging needs.

Libraries are welcoming community spaces where patrons feel safe and respected, and public health departments often have staff members who are health educators. Getting started can sometimes be the hardest part of forming partnerships. Choosing a low-stakes environment to initiate contact such as a cross-sector networking session or co-hosting a health fair is a great opportunity to spark relationships between organizations.



Keys to Successful Partnerships

- ➔ Establish a memorandum of understanding or another formal agreement between organizations. This helps to establish expectations and formalize partnerships.
- ➔ Build relationships between whole institutions, including support from administrators, directors, or others in leadership positions, rather than one on one partnerships. involvement from entire organizations helps to ensure partnerships are sustainable.
- ➔ Trust and commitment built over time between organizations helps to fortify relationships and expand impact.
- ➔ Gaining buy-in from the community provides validation for the partnership and involves additional stakeholders.
- ➔ Lack of engagement from individuals in leadership positions can inhibit success in partnerships. Presenting proposals for partnerships to managers for feedback prior to starting a project can help ensure buy-in and support from leaders.
- ➔ Being realistic with expectations between organizations and participating staff members will help ensure partnerships are sustainable and mutually beneficial.



Evaluating Partnerships

Bringing stakeholders together to complete an evaluation has numerous benefits for the organizations involved, and is an essential step to maximizing partnerships. Evaluations identify partnership strengths and areas for improvement in operating processes, structure, planning, and activity implementation.

[Evaluation](#) is a process that is used to assess whether partnership goals have been met and identify accomplishments to be supported and replicated. It can also be used to promote the partnership to community members. A partnership with a positive public image may find it easier to recruit new members, retain existing members, secure additional resources, gain access to needed data, etc.

Podcasts

A [podcast](#) mini-series exploring the benefits of strong partnerships between public health departments and public libraries.

Episode 1 | **Library Partnerships: Brooklyn Public Library**

Hear from Eva Raison with the Brooklyn Public Library about the different health focus initiatives they are working on in partnership with local community organizations.

Episode 2 | **The Role of Libraries in Advancing Health Equity**

Explore the public health impacts of library fines and fees with Jill Krueger, J.D., with the Network for Public Health Law.

Episode 3 | **Harnessing the Power of Public Libraries**

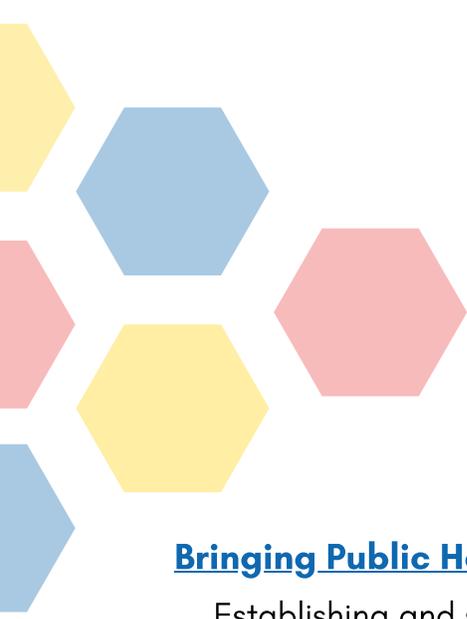
Learn how libraries are working to shape health in their communities with Noah Lenstra, Assistant Professor for Library and Information Science University of North Carolina Greensboro.

Episode 4 | **Partnerships in Action**

Listen in as professionals from the field discuss current initiatives in Iowa with Mary Murphy, Perry Public Library, Todd Simonson, Cedar Rapids Public Library, Abby Less & Angie Doyle-Scar, Iowa Department of Public Health.



SHARE PUBLIC HEALTH



Webinars

Bringing Public Health and Public Libraries Together

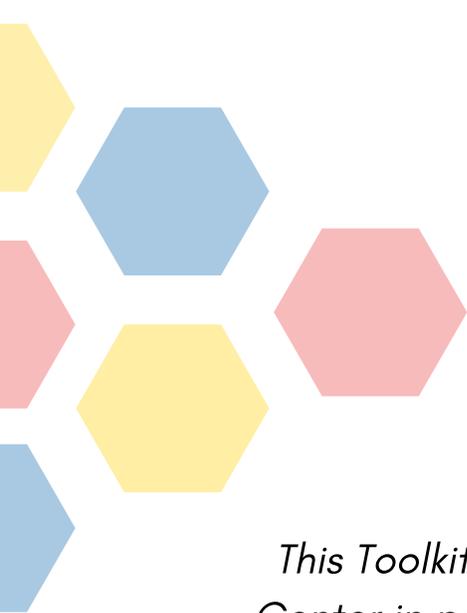
Establishing and sustaining collaborative partnerships between Public Libraries and Public Health departments presents opportunities to bring together existing networks and partnerships and further support the communities they serve. This webinar will discuss the benefits of strong partnerships between Public Libraries and Public Health departments. Opportunities and strategies for partnerships will also be discussed.

Pitching Public Health to Public Libraries: Finding Common Ground

As public health practice and public librarianship evolve to meet the current needs of communities, their goals and missions are converging, but we use different language. In this webinar, we'll discuss how to find common ground, establish shared language, and identify how libraries and public health departments can work together to promote the health of their communities.

The Power of Public Health-Public Library Collaborations: Examples from Iowa Libraries

Because public libraries and local public health agencies are at the heart of Iowa's communities, they are well-positioned to be partners in helping all people to have the opportunity to attain their highest possible level of health. The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) received a \$50,000 grant to fund the Harnessing the Power of Iowa's Libraries project, which offers public health tools, resources, and programs through public libraries. In partnership with local public health agencies, libraries built on existing health promotion efforts and expanded their offerings. Presenters will share best practices, success stories, and strategies for growth.



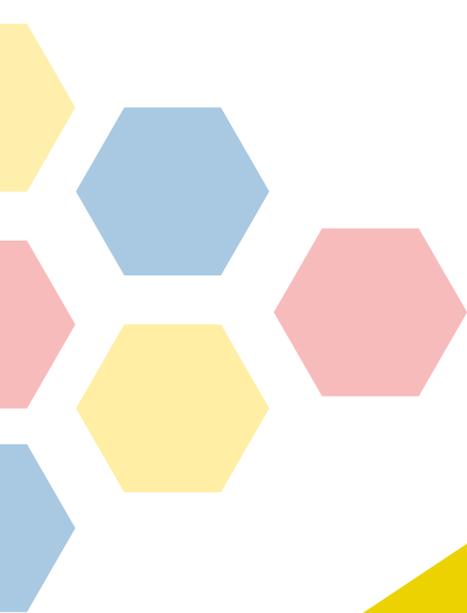
Acknowledgements

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