Reviewer's report

Title: Considerations for Increasing the Competencies and Capacities of the Public Health Workforce: Assessing the Training Needs of Public Health Workers in Texas

Version: 1 Date: 27 July 2005

Reviewer: Gail Bellamy

Reviewer's report:

General
The article is interesting. Not really clear what it adds to what is known about the educational needs of the public health workforce. I think the article would benefit from more description of what was done, how and why, and less (if there is a space/word limitation) on Texas, unless the author can speak to the relevance of this State-specific information for a national readership.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
None

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
Author hasn’t clarified what his study adds to what is currently known---what gap does it fill.

Detailed description of the public health system in Texas is included in the methods section, should be moved to introduction. Actual methods, specifically sampling, are not sufficiently detailed. Unclear whether initial tallies of workforce (page 9, para 1) reflects what was received at the time of their solicitation (pg 9 para 3).

Page 10 para 1 speaks to database received from central and regional offices “pared down .....for sampling,” but doesn’t then speak to sample size.

Procedures and Measures describes mailing survey to each worker in the database and following-up with postcard. Then proceeds to mail a second wave to “900 additional workers.” Are these actually additional workers or a second wave mailing to 900 that did not respond to the first wave of questionnaires, a second mailing??

This section would benefit by referring the reader to Table 3 earlier.

Tables 2 and 3 are reversed.

Author would benefit from some editing of language, e.g., “The majority of questionnaires were completed by females (70%)” [Page 12 para 1] to “The majority of respondents were female (70%)...”

Some of the confusion in reading may also be addressed through editing to provide greater clarity. For example, page 12 para 2, “After some preliminary analysis within each of the 10 essential public health categories, the data appeared to be highly correlated within each of the groups.” I was unclear whether the author is referring to groups of staff or groups of questions?
I think the article would benefit from more description of what was done, how and why, and less (if there is a space/word limitation) on Texas, unless the author can speak to the relevance of this State-specific information for a national readership.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

**What next?:** Accept after minor essential revisions

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests