

Abstract

Adapting a federal research-to-policy collaboration model to improve state health: The Texas rpc project

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APHA's 2020 VIRTUAL Annual Meeting and Expo (Oct. 24 - 28)

Introduction to Issue

To increase the enactment of evidence-based policy, it is essential to build trusting relationships between public health researchers and policymakers. Researchers and policymakers have different timelines, priorities, and values, which necessitates a process that includes training and development of a non-partisan network. The Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration (TX RPC) aims to develop and support partnerships between child health researchers and policymakers, using learnings from a similar federal model.

Description of Evidence to Inform Program

This presentation describes the adaptation of the federal RPC model to the Texas legislative process, and present initial data on recruitment, training, and planned evaluation. This project uses a framework rooted in Agenda Setting Theory, with a focus on translational methods.

Program Activities

The RPC model was modified to align with the Texas legislative cycle and to prioritize child health legislation and state-level research. Adaptation of project tools was informed by an advisory committee, community partners, and prior research with legislators to reflect state policymaking values and protocols. Researchers were recruited through University announcements, collaborative organizations, and community partners, as well as through targeted outreach. To date, 38 researchers have been enrolled as members of the network and completed baseline surveys; 50% attended an in-person training which emphasized communication strategies, an overview of the state legislative process, and role play activities. Legislators were recruited through an event at the Texas Capitol and advisory committee contacts. Sixteen legislators and/or staff members have participated in the baseline interview and policy identification needs assessment. Initial feedback indicates legislators "wish they had this project before", "need experts in the field to support creative approaches to existing health problems", and would value having data during the legislative session to move policy forward. Metrics for evaluating program success include the number of researcher-legislator partnerships, legislative requests, and legislative actions (e.g., bills written/filed) during the 2021 Texas Legislative session.

Conclusions

Initial recruitment and project activities indicate a need for training researchers, and providing data and related support to legislators.

Recommendations for Practice

Developing public health researcher-policymaker partnerships at the state level can be an effective model to implement evidence-based policy.

Advocacy for health and health education Public health or related public policy Public health or related research

