

MCH Leadership and Legacy Community of Practice and the Life Course of Us As Professionals

Est. July 2011

Life Course: What is it? Key Questions?

- A Theory or perspective that seeks to understand, explain, and improve health and disease patterns across population groups.
- Life Course Focuses on the Following Questions:
 - Why do health disparities exist and persist across population groups?
 - What are the factors that influence the capacity of individuals or populations to reach their full potential for health and well-being?

Life Course Applied to Us as MCH Professionals?

- What about the Life Course of Us as MCH Professionals?
- What are the factors that influence us to reach our full potential for health and wellbeing?
- Why does this even matter?
 - There is a body of research that highlights the need especially for those of us in the helping professions to focus on our own wellbeing so that we can care for others more effectively, without burn out, (without burnout there is more room for passion and innovation).
 - Wellbeing research
 - 5 aspects of Wellbeing: Career, Social, Financial, Physical, Community
 - Well Professionals: fewer sick days, more likely to give their best effort/more engaged at work/new ideas, more productive, less healthcare costs
 - In some thinking about leadership development, wellbeing plays a central role. The wellbeing of those working in an organization is critical to achieving an organization's goals and fulfilling its mission.

Our Effort to Address the Life Course Needs of MCH Professionals?

- Develop an MCH Leadership and Legacy Community of Practice that specifically addresses the needs of MCH professionals.
- How do we identify the needs of MCH professionals? We conducted a survey of a small group of MCH professionals (potential members of this Community) who attended our MCH Leadership Retreat in July 2011.
- We asked potential members of this community what they wanted to focus on in this community.
 - What are the major factors that will impact your organization / community over the next two to three years?
 - What are the top three challenges or issues you are or will face as a leader in the next two to three years?
 - What matters most to you?
 - What leadership skills and capabilities will you need to develop to respond to the challenges ahead?
 - What topics could we explore together that would be compelling enough to have you engage?

CoP Defined?

“Groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems or a passion about a topic and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis...

Over time, they develop a unique perspective on their topic as well as a body of common knowledge, practices and approaches. They also develop personal relationships and established ways of interacting.”

From Cultivating Communities of Practice by Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott and William M. Snyder

Key CoP Elements

- **Domain: Shared purpose**
 - This is the scope or territory of the Community of Practice. It must be broad enough to hold shared value and relevance over time and specific enough to enable participants to identify the value in participating. (In this case, the domain is Developing Leadership)
- **Shared Practice: Body of shared knowledge & skill**
 - This is the content and practice undertaken by the community. It includes the community building efforts, the learning agenda and the practice and application of knowledge & skill emerging from the community.
- **Community: The social fabric of learning**
 - Fosters trusted and respectful relationships, inquiry, sustains a safe and challenging learning environment / Creates leadership culture of co-ownership and co-responsibility.

* Adapted from Cultivating Communities of Practice by Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott and William M. Snyder

CoP History/Background

- Communities of Practice are as old as the first group of humans who taught each other to make fire.
- The term was first coined by Etienne Wenger and Jean Lave in the early 1990s while studying apprenticeship as a learning model.
- Since then, CoP's have become widely used in organizations, government, and international development.
- The emergence of social media has enabled them to grow beyond geographic boundaries.
- They take many forms – technical experts working on innovation, artists seeking new forms of expression, students creating distinct study groups, crafts people developing their craft, leaders developing their awareness and skill.

What is the MCH Leadership and Legacy CoP?

The MCH Leadership and Legacy CoP is a Community of diverse MCH Professionals from across the country who are committed to addressing their own personal/professional life course needs through a wide range of professional development efforts.

“We are a group of committed individuals working together to address the needs and interests of MCH professionals. We focus on enhancing our ability to become and remain public health leaders currently as well as mentors for the next generation.”

-Dr. Arden Handler

Our Community Agreements

- Have fun together
- Speak freely and by choice
- All voices are valued
- Honor our gifts and be aware of our challenges
- Treat each other with respect
- Directly face challenging issues with an open mind
- Be open and flexible
- Strive for a shared vision that enables everyone to contribute
- Foster each other's development through trust and support
- Be transparent and accepting about different levels of participation
- Be completely present when together
- Be good and ardent listeners
- Respect confidentiality
- Support a culture of positivity
- Look for points of commonality

Our CoP Components

- Committed Core – small group of members who meet monthly to discuss the CoP. Right now our focus is on keeping the CoP alive and moving forward.
- Actively Engaged – a relatively large group of members who are actively following CoP activities and participating on CoP calls.
- Interested but not actively engaged – monitoring CoP activities but not actively participating.
- NOTE: members can easily and freely move in and out of any of these components. New members are welcome at any time. The direction the CoP takes depends on the extent to which members feel compelled to move a particular learning agenda item forward.

The CoP Learning Agenda

1. Leading across generations
2. Self-Care
3. Leading with authenticity
4. Leveraging differences
5. Creating collaborative work environments
6. Leading in relationship
7. From scarcity to impact
8. Effective communication
9. Leadership impact

Leading Across Generations

- *What are the critical conversations we need to have to successfully pass the knowledge to the next generation and have fun at the same time?* [Energy of youth + Wisdom of elders ensuring sustainability]
 - Embracing and leveraging generational differences in the workplace.
 - Filling the talent gap.
 - Creating opportunities for leadership and mentorship.
 - Providing space and empowerment for younger colleagues.
 - Recruiting tomorrow's leaders.
 - Early retirements/brain drain.

Self-Care

- *What are the root causes or challenges to self-care and what do I need to change?*
 - Balancing work, school, family and personal needs.
 - Feeling secure in insecure times.
 - Staying level-headed in intense and hectic times.
 - Managing stress/stress relief.
 - Taking care of myself for the sake of stamina and optimism.
 - Managing in a high stress environment.
 - Setting personal boundaries/limits.
 - Preventing and recovering from burnout.

Leading with Authenticity

- *What does it look like to be an authentic and confident leader? Who am I when I am being an authentic and powerful leader?*
 - Developing confidence in myself and my leadership.
 - Self Trust.
 - Assertiveness in addressing unknown or unexpected situations.
 - Proving myself as a young professional.
 - Staying true to myself and what I believe.
 - Understanding my compelling and authentic leadership strengths.
 - Developing personal credibility.

Leveraging Differences

- *What am I doing that hinders a unified system and addresses diversity?*

Creating Collaborative Work Environments

- *When there is dysfunction within a team, how do you effect change?*
 - Creating trust.
 - Building effective teams.
 - Delegation and teamwork.
 - Dealing with a negative and critical workplace.
 - Dealing with undesirable staff behaviors.

Leading in Relationship

- *How do we find common ground?*
 - Creating influence.
 - Motivating others.
 - Leading up (dealing with a challenging boss).
 - Effective collaboration.
 - Embracing and leveraging differences.
 - Enrolling others in change.

From Scarcity to Impact

- *How do we move beyond saying ‘we don’t have the money?’*
 - Meeting client needs in an economic downturn.
 - Creating impact with less.
 - Advocating for support in a funding shortage.
 - Securing funding in an environment of funding cuts.
 - Keeping others motivated in a tough economy.
 - Motivating others in a tough economy, supporting others in the face of uncertainty.
 - Creating safety in the midst of financial insecurity.

Effective Communication

- *How do we develop our communication within the CoP to improve advocacy? How can we develop the MCH role in developing protective factors?*
 - Communicating my ideas to others.
 - The art of persuasion.
 - Improving advocacy skills.
 - Improving networking skills.
 - Facilitation and public speaking skills.
 - Effective advocacy.

Leadership Impact

- Effective execution
- Strategic thinking
- Decisiveness
- Organization and delegation
- Time management
- Project management

CoP Update: Aug 2011-March 2012

- Committed Core has met monthly since August 2011
- Whole CoP meets quarterly to discuss Learning Agenda Items and to brainstorm how to move forward.
- In between whole group CoP calls, other events/calls/etc. take place. These events/calls address the learning agenda.
- There are 3 CoP subgroups working on various parts of the learning agenda noted as being high priority by members
 - Self-Care -
 - *Contemplative Practices, Self-Care and Mindful Leadership*, Two-Call Series started March 28 and concludes April 25.
 - Leading with Authenticity –
 - *Will meet as a large community in May to discuss a TED.com talk on the Power of Vulnerability with Brene Brown*
 - Leading Across the Generations – in process
- New members welcome at any time.
- Members are encouraged to take a lead on any aspect of the Learning Agenda that feels compelling to them.
- CoP has an online presence at the CDC-sponsored phconnect.org website. (website housing a wide range of public health related CoPs).
- Recordings of all calls are available. Please contact Kris Risley at kyrisley@uic.edu

CoP Challenges

- Building membership
- Finding time to devote to the CoP given busy, full work schedules (for all members)

CoP Next Steps

- Continue to build membership and awareness about the CoP
- Meet with Leadership Across the Generations subgroup to determine next steps
- Determine self-care next steps
- Follow-up with Leading with Authenticity subgroup