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Community Health Nursing Service Learning

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“What we have to learn to do, we learn by doing” - Aristotle, Greek Philosopher

### Background
- **Service Learning Course**
  College of Nursing and Health Sciences, RN-BS Online Program, Senior Level Course, Community Health for RN's, NU 461, 6 credits

- **Student Body**
  Registered Nurses (70-105 each semester) throughout the state seeking to obtain a Bachelor in Science of Nursing. The Institute of Medicine, Future of Nursing Report recommends increasing the proportion of nurses with a baccalaureate degree to 80% by 2020.

- **Instructional Aim**
  Students obtain a better understanding of public health and nursing theory and practice as they further develop their professional and civic identities through meaningful service to their communities.

- **Service Learning Requirement**
  Develop a service learning portfolio including a sustained service experience (60 hours), two short-term community activities, three journal reflections, and a written report based on a service project conducted within the context of the sustained experience.

### Partners
A range of community-based health and social service organizations throughout the Boston metro area and state:
- Chelsea Board of Health
- Arlington Council of Aging
- Boston Public School District
- Lowell House
- Ester R. Sanger Center for Compassion
- Bridge Over Troubled Waters

### Community Impact
- "She provided professional expertise so we could survey our clients on healthcare [access and quality]"
- "[Provided] assistance with patient assessments, which include evaluation of health care coverage and alternative methods of payment"
- "Assisted in hearing, vision and growth screenings to help accomplish our goal of having screening done by December"
- "Patient safety is an organization focus right now. [Name] project helped provide our patients with safety information that will be useful to them in the future."

### Projects and Populations
Partners and students jointly develop a range of population-based health projects linked to Healthy People 2020 national objectives:
- Fall Prevention in Community Dwelling Elders
- Surveillance of Latent TB Cases
- Mental Health Service Access for Homeless
- Medication Compliance in Diabetics
- Safe Needle Disposal Policy for Visiting Nurses
- Screening & Referral (BMI) in School Aged Children

### Student Impact
**Improved Practice**
Particularly in immunizations, communicable disease prevention, and group health education techniques.

**Increased Awareness**
"Eye-opening" experiences about scope of public health essential services and the governmental role in protecting and promoting health

**Professional Development**
Expanded network of professional contacts and future employment opportunities

**Civic Participation**
Continuation of service to community after course requirements completed

### Ongoing Development
- Implement web-based survey to systematically assess community impact
- Develop course blog for journal reflections
- Maintain and mature relationships with community partners
- Promote evidence-based student projects

### Challenges
- Integration of service learning in discipline where education is traditionally based on clinical instruction
- Oversight and quality assurance with variation in sites, locations, projects, and populations in an online instructional environment

### Reference and Contact
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