

Skills Online:

Maintaining Quality, Demonstrating Impact

PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY *of* CANADA
AGENCE DE SANTÉ PUBLIQUE *du* CANADA

*Community Health Nurses of Canada
Conference June 2010*



Public Health
Agency of Canada

Agence de santé
publique du Canada

Canada 

Objectives

- Increase awareness of the *Skills Online* program.
- Increase knowledge about the individual and organizational benefits of *Skills Online*.
- Gain an increased understanding of the challenges experienced by learners, and attributes of organizations that support *Skills Online* learning.

Outline

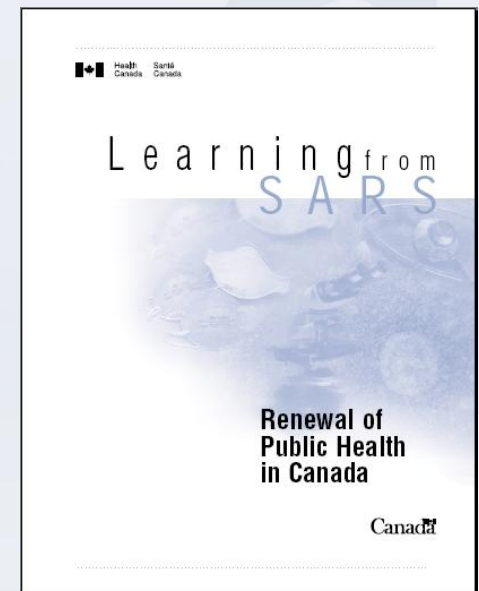
- *Skills Online* – Program Overview
- Program Evaluation - overview
- Benefits
- Challenges
- Success – how?



Skills Online – Program Overview

The Need to Strengthen the Public Health Workforce

- Public health events, such as SARS, emphasized the need to re-examine public health
- Public health priorities:
 - Strengthen the public health system
 - Develop a competent public health workforce



National Response to Strengthen the Public Health Workforce

Building the Public Health Workforce for the 21st Century

A Pan-Canadian Framework for Public Health Human Resources Planning

The Joint Task Group on Public Health Human Resources

Advisory Committee on Health Delivery and Human Resources

Advisory Committee on Population Health and Health Security



October 2005

Federal/Provincial/Territorial Advisory Groups develop pan-Canadian strategies to strengthen public health capacity

- ✓ Disseminate public health core competencies common to all public health professionals
- ✓ Enhance knowledge & skills throughout the public health workforce

Core Competencies for Public Health in Canada: Release 1.0

Develop orientation programs for new or existing staff

Facilitate collaboration, shared goals & interdisciplinary work

Support the development of other complimentary sets of competencies (discipline-specific, program-specific)



Provide rationale for consistent job descriptions & performance assessments

Identify staff development & training needs

Inform curriculum development

Support the recruitment & retention of staff, ensuring the right number & mix

How do we meet the Core Competencies?

The role of continuing education....

Skills Online



What is *Skills Online*?

- Internet-based continuing professional development program for front line public health practitioners
- Facilitated modules in English & French
- Offered at no cost to public health professionals since 2002
- Just over 8,000 modules have been completed
- Close to 4,000 individual learners
 - (40 -50 % are PHNs)



Recognition, Endorsement & Support

- Certificate from Public Health Agency of Canada & the Institut national de santé publique du Québec after successful completion of each module
- Endorsed by professional organizations & associations
- Support from provinces, territories & local organizations
- University recognition, e.g. Master of Public Health programs



Skills Online Modules

MODULES AVAILABLE

- Basic Epidemiological Concepts
- Introduction to Surveillance
- Measurement of Health Status
- Communicating Data Effectively
- Epidemiologic Methods
- Introduction to Biostatistics
- Outbreak Investigation & Management
- Epidemiology of Chronic Diseases
- Applied Epidemiology: Injuries
- Intro to Surveillance

MODULES COMING Very SOON

- Intro to Public Health
- Intro to Literature Searching

MODULES COMING SOON

- Evidence-based Public Health
- Planning for Public Health

MODULES In-DEVELOPMENT

- Survey Methods
- Privacy & Confidentiality for Public Health

Program Evaluations

The background features a light blue and white color scheme. On the right side, there is a stylized human figure in a light blue color, with its arms raised. To the left of the figure is a white crown-like shape. The overall design is clean and professional.

Skills Online **Evaluation Activity**

- University pilots x2
- Pilot module on epidemiology (2001)
- PAHO international learners' survey (2009)
- Post-module survey analysis (2009)
- Attrition studies (2008-09)
- Northern learners pilots x2 (2009 & 2010)
- Case studies (2008 & 2010)

Benefits

The background features a light blue and white color scheme. On the right side, there is a stylized silhouette of a person with arms raised, set against a circular shape. In the center, there is a large, faint crown graphic. The overall design is clean and modern.

Benefits Learning Experience



Benefits

- Facilitators a critical element; rated high for skills, timeliness & quality of feedback
- Access & technical problems not overwhelming, except for international learners
- Content relevant & applicable to day-to-day work
- Helps meet the Core Competencies for PH
- Most learners would take another module &/or recommend *Skills Online* to their colleagues

Case Study Evaluation: Methodology

- Nova Scotia & Ontario – 2 pilot sites (2008)
 - Online survey (54 *Skills Online* learners & 142 other front line staff)
 - Focus groups & individual interviews with learners (practitioners & managers)
- Ontario (Algoma & Peel) & BC – 3 additional sites (2010)
 - Online survey (62/19 managers + 458/81 practitioners/staff)
 - Focus groups with learners (practitioners & managers)

Benefits

Case Study Evaluation

At the individual level, Practitioners & Managers reported that they:

- *Acquired* knowledge (and terminology)
- *Developed* Core Competencies
- Were able (or plan) to *apply* new learning
- *Shared* or discussed new learning with colleagues
- Gained an *improved understanding* of and appreciation for the role and work of public health
- *Increased their understanding/appreciation* for data collection, data use & surveillance
- Gained *enhanced* critical thinking & computer skills
- Became professionally stimulated – dynamic learning

Progression of Change:

New knowledge and confidence obtained

Participants develop a new & shared terminology

Increases capacity for critical thinking

And an appreciation of data

Informs their practice and aids in developing a

platform in which teams and the organization
can have more effective communication



Benefits

Case Study Evaluation

Teams:

- Increased understanding of terminology & surveillance
- Greater appreciation for, comfort with and understanding of data
- Increased staff confidence
- Improved communication within and across teams and programs
- Willingness to collaborate with others
- Staff have a greater desire/confidence to pursue further education
- Enhanced appreciation for the breadth of work within ph that extends beyond individual, day to day work

Benefits

Case Study Evaluation

Organizations:

- Greater confidence & competence of staff
- Improved cohesiveness within the organization ...leads to a stronger organization
- Changes to hiring practices
- Better trained employees equipped with public health tools = decision-making & planning abilities
- Provides consistent & common baseline understanding of public health principles
- *Skills Online* supports health standards & mandatory programs

Challenges/Barriers/Limitations



Success – how?



Success – How?

- Managerial encouragement to take *Skills Online* modules
- Champions and peer support (buddy system)
- Learning/study groups
- Registration date reminders
- Time at work to complete or time off in lieu
- Recognition – verbal, certificate, performance appraisal
- Use of organizational technology

Next Steps

- Share case study methodology and findings
- Program/Module Revisions & Development
 - Revise the post-module survey
 - Revise registration page
 - Content review
- Organizational Support
- Future Evaluations

Skills Online **So What?**

- Do we need it?
- Do we like it?
- Will it make a difference?