Grantee Product: 71266GPMeeting_02
Presenter Name: Jennifer Ibrahim, PhD, MPH
Presenter Title: Associate Professor, Department of Health Services Administration and Policy, Temple University
Title of Presentation: “Building Access and Understanding of Law in Public Health Practice in Nebraska”
Name of Meeting: PHSSSR Keeneland Conference
Host of Meeting: Public Health Systems and Services Research NPO
Date of Meeting: April 2014
Place of Meeting: Lexington, KY
Building Access and Understanding of Law in Public Health Practice in Nebraska

Jennifer K. Ibrahim, PhD, MPH and Sarah Happy, JD Temple University
Darrell Klein, JD, Colleen Svoboda, MPH and Charlie Gail Hendrix, JD, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services

Background
- Public health law can be an effective and useful tool to promote population health, but also to facilitate the work of health departments.
- There is very little research regarding the awareness and knowledge of law or the conscious use of law among the public health workforce.
- Both the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) and the National Association of City and County Health Officials (NACCHO) collect information on legal counsel and services provided, but not a measure of how law is used in routine practice.

Questions from PHSSR Research Agenda
- Public Health Agency Organization and Governance – How do the legal powers and duties of governmental public health agencies influence the effectiveness, efficiency, and outcomes of public health strategies delivered at local and state levels?
- Public Health Workforce Competencies – How do the skills and competencies of the public health workforce impact the effectiveness, efficiency, and outcomes of public health strategies delivered by this workforce?

Data Collection
- The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services has a collection of public health laws that govern agency authority to act that serves as the starting point of data collection. We are building upon this wealth of information through a systematic search process in Westlaw and LexisNexis.
- Using the LawAtlas policy surveillance system (lawatlas.org), we are systematically coding key provisions of each law including date of enactment, effective date, enforcement, exemptions, penalties and fines, and other provisions related to specific areas of law.
- The laws are being double coded, with inter-rater reliability checks to ensure quality.
- The coding process creates a research-ready legal dataset that will facilitate legal evaluations of public health agency performance as well as population health outcomes.

Implications for Practice
- By making the laws more accessible, the public health workforce can more easily become knowledgeable about their authority to act, which can facilitate the delivery of essential health services.
- By improving the delivery of health services, we hope to see improvements in population health outcomes, both in terms of behavioral and environmental changes.
- The current study will also help to advance our knowledge regarding the legal consciousness of public health practitioners.

Contact Information & Acknowledgements
Funding for this project was provided by the National Network of Public Health Institutes and the National Coordinating Center for Public Health Services and Systems Research, Grant ID # 270411.
Project PI: Jennifer Ibrahim, PhD, MPH – jibrahim@temple.edu