YEAR IN REVIEW
2014

The Network
for Public Health Law
The Network for Public Health Law is becoming a leading source for legal information, resources and training for the public health community. In 2014, the nation’s opioid epidemic and the global Ebola crisis were two major public health challenges that demonstrated the critical need for the Network. In addition to providing timely legal technical support, resources and training to local, state and federal health agencies on overdose prevention and public health emergency legal preparedness and response, the Network provided visionary leadership in raising broader awareness of the role of law in protecting the public’s health, and building the field of public health law.

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Dear Friends,

There’s little doubt that 2014 was an eventful year for public health. While we saw progress — less people smoking, more people with access to health care, the federal government’s emphasis on food safety and environmental health — there were also a number of major hurdles for the field. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention called 2014 an “unprecedented” year for public health challenges. To those of us in public health law, these issues illustrated the crucial need for understanding the role that law plays in protecting and advancing population health.

Heroin and prescription drug abuse was a priority for many local and state public health agencies in 2014, and the Network received more legal technical assistance requests related to drug overdose prevention than any other issue. We were able to help practitioners understand how legal interventions such as Good Samaritan and naloxone access laws can help mitigate the incidences of overdose mortality in their communities.

In the summer of 2014, the Ebola virus spread throughout West Africa and made its way onto U.S. soil when infected American aid workers were brought home for treatment. In the months that followed, four people in this country were diagnosed with the disease. As those in public health made preparations to protect our communities, the Network assisted practitioners by providing timely information, training and resources related to screening, quarantine and other legal preparedness and response measures.

Throughout the year, the Network helped those in public health navigate the complexities of numerous legal challenges related to emerging issues. Additionally, we launched an initiative to examine legal and policy options to increase access to oral health — an area where much work remains to be done — releasing a 50-state resource on dental workforce scope of practice laws. We also continued to provide leadership in health information and data sharing, providing training on HIPAA compliance and other regulations to health agencies and attorneys.

As we head into a new year, the Network will continue and build upon our accomplishments, which are highlighted in the following pages, and move forward with our work to examine laws and policies related to access to care, transportation, education, safe housing, and other social determinants that affect health. Laws can change behaviors, improve the environment we live in, change social norms, prevent sickness and harm, and support health equity. Effective application and implementation of law is essential to protecting and promoting health.

We look forward to ongoing collaboration with our current partners and colleagues on innovative initiatives. For those new to the Network, I hope you will join us as we advance law as a tool to improve public health.

Donna E. Levin
National Director
Meet the Network

The Network for Public Health Law is comprised of public health attorneys and practitioners at a national coordinating center and five regional offices – Northern, Eastern, Mid-States, Southeastern and Western – housed at respected academic institutions. This network of experts provides leadership to the field and support to local, tribal state and federal officials; public health practitioners; attorneys; policy-makers and advocates across the country.

National Coordinating Center and Northern Region
The Network’s National Coordinating Center (NCC) and Northern Region office are located at the Public Health Law Center at William Mitchell College of Law in St. Paul, MN. The NCC provides public health law training through webinars and national conferences. The Northern Region provides expert assistance on tobacco control, rural health, mental health, and scope of practice. In 2014, the Northern Region was instrumental in conducting legal research to support the Network’s access to oral health care initiative.

Eastern Region
Located at the University of Maryland School of Law and working with Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, the Eastern Region provides expertise on injury prevention, including youth sports concussion laws and driver safety, as well as environmental public health and food safety. In the past year, Eastern Region lead the Network’s initiative on access to oral health care, and provided valuable resources to health agencies on the Food Safety Modernization Act, as well as youth sport concussions and other injury prevention issues.
Mid-States Region
Mid-States Region, located at the University of Michigan School of Public Health, provides knowledge and leadership on health information data sharing, as well as newborn screening, immunization laws, and public health statutes and regulatory information. In 2014, Mid-States partnered with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to provide training and resources on the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and other health data issues impacting public health agencies.

Southeastern Region
Located jointly at the North Carolina Institute for Public Health at the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health and the National Health Law Program, the Southeastern Region provides expertise in health reform, including the Affordable Care Act, as well as drug overdose prevention and maternal and child health. In 2014, the Southeastern Region assisted health officials to address the country’s heroin and prescription drug epidemic by providing information and resources on legal interventions to overdose mortality.

Western Region
The Western Region, located at the Sandra Day O’Connor College of Law at Arizona State University, leads Network efforts in public health emergency legal preparedness and response, as well as Tribal public health. In 2014, the Western Region provided critical assistance and resources to health agencies concerned with screening, quarantine and other preparedness and response measures related to the Ebola virus.

“I had many things to be thankful for... One of those things was knowing that you and your organization are lending support to my small rural health department. You do not know the way I felt basically being hung out alone. I cannot thank you enough.”
– Director of a County Health Department
Practical Assistance

The Network for public health law provides free legal technical assistance to individuals and organization on a wide variety of topics. In 2014, the Network helped those grappling with emergency legal preparedness and response related to the Ebola virus, heroin and prescription drug overdose, health data privacy, food safety and a host of other issues. Network attorneys addressed 576 technical assistance requests, providing useful information and resources to state and local governments.

"Many thanks for your well-researched and insightful analysis. I really appreciate your having taken this thoughtful look at this issue .... You have educated me, and this will be quite helpful in reviewing strategic issues with some of our state and local decision-makers who are thinking about whether or how to take action in this area.” — Director of a Public Health Organization
Tools and Resources

The Network made numerous tools and resources available in 2014, covering immunization requirements, safe driving, medical marijuana, and other critical topics. A few are highlighted here.

**Legal Interventions to Reduce Overdose Morality**
Fatal drug overdose has increased more than six-fold in the past three decades, and now claims the lives of over 36,000 Americans every year. It is estimated that 15,000 of those deaths are caused by opioids, and the actual number is likely higher. This resource examines legal interventions — such as Good Samaritan and naloxone access laws — that have the potential to save lives.

**Primer: Emergency Legal Preparedness Concerning Ebola Virus Disease**
The primer provides an overview of the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, and examines emergency legal preparedness and response issues in the U.S. as federal, state and local health officials consider measures to protect the public’s health.

**Dental Auxiliary Scope of Practice Laws**
Oral health is integral to overall health, yet for many communities across America limited access to oral health services remains a persistent issue. The Network identified potential legal and policy options to increase access to care. These fact sheets for 50 states and the District of Columbia provide data on oral health in each state and describe the laws governing the respective services provided by members of the dental workforce.

**Food Safety Modernization Act Primers**
With its focus on preventing foodborne illness, the Food Safety Modernization Act has major impact on public health. The Network developed this series of primers to help state and local governments better understand the new responsibilities, opportunities and resources required and provided by the FSMA. The primers also address questions about specific FSMA regulations.

**Checklist for Data Collection, Access and Sharing**
With all the information encountered in the day-to-day practice of public health, it’s sometimes difficult to know if health information is being shared appropriately and in compliance with the law. This tool provides a checklist to assist public health practitioners in providing relevant factual information to resolve questions about proposed data collection, access and sharing.

We’re fortunate to have [the Network] working on our behalf. They’re a great resource for us all in Public Health. — Director of a Public Health Association
Training and Connecting: Webinars

The Network partners with Public Health Law Research and the American Society of Law, Medicine & Ethics to produce the monthly Public Health Law Webinar series to provide relevant training on current public health issues.

In addition to the Public Health Law Series webinars, the Network partnered with the CDC’s Public Health Law Program (PHLP) on a series of webinars that covered topics like Ebola and Public Health Emergency Preparedness, HIPAA Privacy Rule, Tribal Public Health Law, Community Health Needs Assessments, and Medicaid Waivers.

2014 Webinar Attendees by Role

Webinar Attendees by Year

“I really appreciate the time and thought that went into the presentations. Speakers were excellent and well-prepared and raised interesting legal and ethical issues that can arise in the context of a public health emergency or the lead-up to it.” — Webinar Attendee
Most Highly Attended Webinars in 2014

1. Ebola and the Law: What You Need to Know
2. HIPAA and Public Health — Recent Developments
3. Community Health Needs Assessments Aligning Hospital Investments and Public Health Outcomes
4. Medicaid 1115 Waivers: How Are They Transforming the Health System?
5. Bed Bugs: Legal Remedies and Limitations to Eliminating a Community Health Problem

All Webinars in 2014

- Ebola and the Law: What You Need to Know
- HIPAA and Public Health — Recent Developments
- Community Health Needs Assessments Aligning Hospital Investments and Public Health Outcomes
- Medicaid 1115 Waivers: How Are They Transforming the Health System?
- Bed Bugs: Legal Remedies and Limitations to Eliminating a Community Health Problem
- Public Health Emergency Law: Emergency Use of Property and Supplies
- The Ebola Crisis and Global Health Law
- Affordable Care Act: Litigation and Implementation Update
- Fracking, Water Quality and Public Health: Examining Current Laws and Regulations
- Legal and Policy Tools in Drug Overdose Prevention
- Immunization Laws: Impact of Non-Medical Exemptions
- Alcohol Law and Policy: Lessons Learned from the Field
- Crisis Standards of Care: Public Health Ethics in the Light of Evolving Mandates
- Exploring and Understanding the Role of Public Health Law Research
- Taking on Tobacco Regulation: An Overview of New York City’s Tobacco Control Laws
Training and Connecting: National Public Health Law Conference

The 2014 Public Health Law Conference convened over 500 experts and researchers, state health officials, local health department staff, and representatives from the CDC among many others. The conference featured over 40 sessions on injury prevention, health reform, tobacco control, emergency preparedness and other critical topics, as well as pre-conference workshops on public health informatics and newborn screening.

Conference Attendees by Region

Conference Attendees by Role

“This was great and I would definitely attend again. I made so many great connections and have a wealth of information to bring back to my health department.” – Conference Attendee
Building a Community

The Network for Public Health Law reaches over 4,300 public health and legal professionals. In 2014, the number of Network Joiners grew by 73 percent. The Network’s social media communities are currently over 11,000 members strong and continue to grow.
Building Capacity

The 2014 Visiting Attorneys in Public Health Law Practice Fellowship program funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and administered by the Network was designed to develop skills and competencies in practice-based public health law to advance participating attorneys’ careers and prepare them for employment within public health organizations. The fellows, selected from a national pool of applicants, held yearlong residencies at local or state health agencies where they worked under the supervision of agency officials. Each fellow was mentored by Network attorneys.

**Jada Fehn, J.D.,** joined the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to examine whether wider distribution of naloxone, a drug that reverses overdose, impacts mortality rates in low income Black and Hispanic communities in New York City. Jada worked under Thomas Merrill, J.D., General Counsel, and was mentored by Kathleen Hoke, J.D., Director of the Network for Public Health Law – Eastern Region.

**Dawn Hunter, J.D., M.P.H.,** joined the New Mexico Department of Health to work on health reform and the development of legislation to address critical public health issues in the state. Dawn worked under Gabrielle Sanchez-Sandoval, J.D., General Counsel, and was mentored by Clifford M. Rees, J.D., Practice Director at the Network for Public Health Law – Western Region.

**Virginia Niehaus, J.D., M.P.H.,** joined the City of New Orleans to examine and evaluate the city’s public health ordinances. Virginia worked under Sharonda R. Williams, J.D., City Attorney, and was mentored by Gene W. Matthews, J.D., Director, and Corey Davis, J.D., M.S.P.H., Deputy Director at the Network for Public Health Law – Southeastern Region.

**Victor Richardson, J.D.,** joined the West Virginia State Privacy Office to work on state confidentiality laws and re-identification risk in environments not protected by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Victor worked under Sallie Milam, J.D., Chief Privacy Officer, and Denise Chrysler, J.D., Director of the Network for Public Health Law – Mid-States Region.

**Leah Silva, J.D.,** joined the Minnesota Department of Health to examine the implementation of Minnesota’s Safe Harbors Law, which allows the state to develop systems and programs to help child victims of sexual exploitation and sex trafficking. Leah worked under David Orren, J.D., Chief Legal Counsel, and was mentored by Jill Krueger, J.D., Senior Attorney at the Network for Public Health Law – Northern Region.

“This Fellowship has been an amazing step in my professional development. I was placed in an office that aligned perfectly with my career goals – I have always wanted to engage in public health policy, and the Fellowship has facilitated that. I have also been able to make valuable connections through travel, both in-state and out-of-state, through various meetings, conferences, and networking activities.” — Dawn Hunter, Visiting Attorney Fellow
Fostering a New Generation

In 2014 the Student Network continued to establish itself as the go-to resource for students and young professionals looking to learn more about the public health law field. The Student Network engaged over 300 individuals across the country with a mix of both in-person and online programming, significantly growing its members as well as the members of its mentorship program. Key Student Network activities in 2014 included:

- **Mentorship program:** Participation in the Student Network mentorship program increased 50 percent. Participants received access to valuable resources and personal feedback to support their career development and expand their professional networks.

- **Career training:** The Student Network provided online career training and education via three webinars that highlighted public health law careers. Additionally, a new online Public Health Law Career Tool was launched to allow users to explore careers paths in public health law.

- **Poster session:** Seven finalists were selected to present their research at the 2014 Public Health Law Conference in Atlanta. Research topics included anti-bullying legislation, juvenile curfew laws, insurance coverage and healthcare, and health equity.

- **Case Western Public Health Law Lab:** Two semester-long courses were offered in 2014 through this collaboration between the Student Network and faculty at Case Western University. Enrolled students gained practical public health law experience as they developed legal resources on a range of public health law issues, with guidance from professors and Network attorneys.

- **Pre-conference workshop:** In October 2014 the Student Network hosted its first in-person event—a pre-conference workshop held in conjunction with the 2014 Public Health Law Conference in Atlanta, Georgia. The workshop engaged 41 students and young professionals in panels that offered substantive discussion on the role of public health law, career and educational perspectives from practicing professionals and networking opportunities through a speed mentoring exercise.

In 2015, the Student Network will continue building relationships with students and young professionals across the United States, and aims to broaden its reach and engage a more diverse group of Joiners with fresh and timely resources, webinars, and other programing on a variety of topics, and opportunities for discussion and to connect to advance their career goals.

*This was such a great experience! I enjoyed it a great deal and I am so happy I had the chance to attend!* — Pre-Conference Workshop Attendee
Public health is heading into a new era where prevention starts with building a culture that enables all individuals to be healthy. Law is critical in providing the foundation for this culture.

In 2015, the Network will intensify our focus on the role of law in addressing issues impacting health equity. Research shows that where we live, our ethnicity, our income and education and a host of other social and environmental factors can affect our health. Beyond access to health care, health equity is impacted by whether a community has access to healthy foods, safe home and school environments, adequate transportation and other determinants.

The Network will work closely with current partners, and reach out to new partners to provide support, develop resources and training, and facilitate connections for those in public health and other sectors who are working to address health equity.

Join the Network in exploring how law can be used in innovative and practical ways to protect and promote population health.