

# UNDERSTANDING THE RURAL PUBLIC HFALTH WORKFORCE

## RURAL PUBLIC HEALTH PROFESSIONALS SERVE AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THEIR \*: \* COMMUNITIES \*:\*

- RUNTRADITIONAL HEALTH PROMOTION PROGRAMS
- PROVIDE CRITICAL CARE IN COMMUNITIES THEY SERVE (OFTEN THE ONLY PROVIDERS OF HEALTH SAFETY NET SERVICES)
- \*HAVE LESS FUNDING, FEWERSTAFF, AND LESS TRAINING

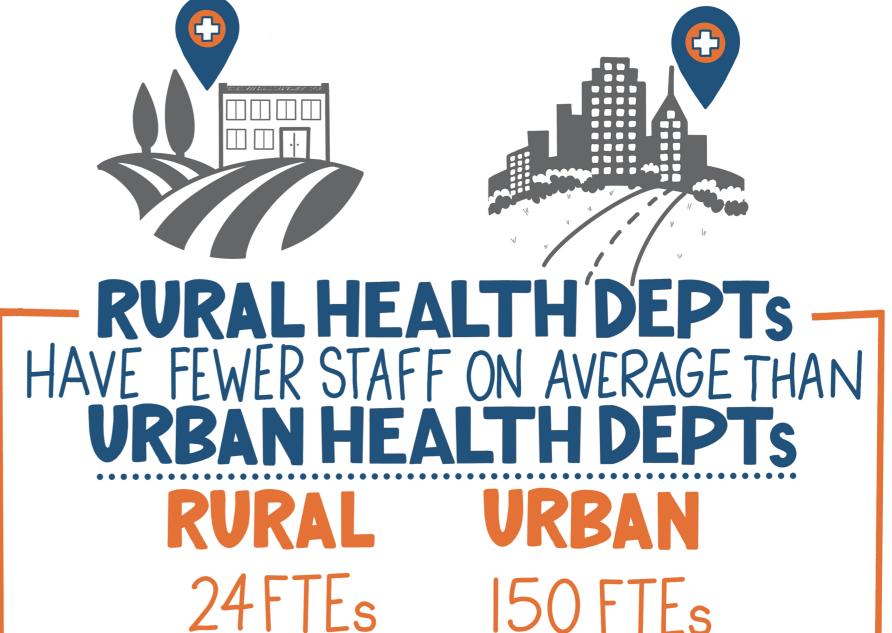
THAN THEIR URBAN COUNTERPARTS

### WHO ARE THEY?

- 83% IDENTIFY AS WOMEN
- 43% AGE 31-50
- 75% IDENTIFY AS WHITE
- 22% HAVE AN ADVANCED DEGREE
- 56% HAVE WORKED IN PUBLIC HEALTH FOR 5+ YEARS

AT A TIME WHEN RURAL COMMUNITIES ARE BECOMING MORE DIVERSE, RURAL HEALTH DEPT STAFF REPORTED **SKILL GAPS** AND NEED TRAINING IN DATA-BASED DECISION MAKING and JUSTICE, EQUITY DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (JEDI)

\*\* LACK OF PROFICIENCY IN THESE SKILLS, WHICH WERE CRUCIAL DURING PANDEMIC RESPONSE, MAY HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO STAFF STRESS AND BURNOUT IN RURAL COMMUNITIES, WHICH ULTIMATELY EXPERIENCED HIGHER RATES OF COVID-19



#### RURAL VS URBAN LOCAL HEALTH DEPT

COMPARED TO URBAN PUBLIC HEALTH STAFF, RURAL STAFF HAD GREATER PROFICIENCY IN:



CROSS-SECTORAL PARTNERSHIPS



★ HAVE BROAD RESPONSIBILITIES IN PROTECTING COMMUNITY HEALTH

WIDE-RANGING ROLES

HAVE DEVELOPED IMPORTANT SKILLS THAT OTHERS IN PUBLIC HEALTH CAN LEARN FROM

RURAL PUBLIC HEALTH
LEADERS KNOW HOW
IMPORTANT THESE SKILLS
ARE IN PROVIDING PUBLIC
HEALTH SERVICES. WHAT
SETS THE RURAL PUBLIC HEALTH
WORKFORCE APART IS THE WAY
THEY DEEPLY ENGAGE IN AND WITH
THEIR COMMUNITIES.

— Betty Bekemeier

UW SCHOOL of PUBLIC HEALTH

## CHALLENGES FOR RURAL PUBLIC HEALTH STAFF

- 22% EXPERIENCED BULLYING AND HARASSMENT FROM THOSE OUTSIDE THEIR HEALTH DEPARTMENT DURING COVID-19 RESPONSE
- DESPITE EXPERIENCING MORE HARASSMENT, 19% OF RURAL STAFF REPORTED AN INTENT TO LEAVE THEIR ORGANIZATION VS. 25% OF URBAN STAFF
- 17% OF RURAL STAFF SAID THE COVID-19 RESPONSE MADE THEM WANT TO LEAVE THEIR ORGANIZATION IN THE NEXT YEAR

# PUBLIC HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AND DECISION MAKERS SHOULD:

- LEARN FROM RURAL STAFF ABOUT HOW TO CONNECT EFFECTIVELY WITH POPULATIONS THAT MAY HAVE A NEGATIVE VIEW OF PUBLIC HEALTH
   DEVELOP TARGETED TRAININGS THAT HIGHLIGHT THE
- IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS IN DATA USE AND COMMUNICATION EFFORTS TO BUILD ON RURAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS' STRONG FOUNDATION IN CROSS-SECTORAL PARTNERSHIPS, SYSTEMS AND STRATEGIC THINKING, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

   HIGHLIGHT EXAMPLES OF EFFECTIVE RURAL CROSS-SECTOR
- PARTNERSHIPS IN SUPPORT OF COMMUNITY-LEVEL HEALTH PROMOTION TO INSPIRE OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING AND FOR DEVELOPING EVIDENCE-INFORMED STRATEGIES
- ALLOCATE RESOURCES TO ADDRESS SKILL GAPS IN DATA-BASED DECISION MAKING AND JEDI
- SUPPORT GROWTH OF A **MORE DIVERSE WORKFORCE** TO ENABLE RURAL STAFF TO EFFECTIVELY SERVE THEIR INCREASINGLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

KETT PM, BEKEMEIER B, PATTERSON DG, AND SCHAFFER K. (JUNE 2023). COMPETENCIES, TRAINING NEEDS, AND TURNOVER AMONG RURAL COMPARED WITH URBAN LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH PRACTITIONERS: 2021 PUBLIC HEALTH WORKFORCE INTERESTS AND NEEDS SURVEY. AJPH

