WHAT IT WAS LIKE WORKING DURING COVID-19

As part of PH Wins, 5,169 public health employees shared their thoughts and experiences working through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Seven in ten employees (71%) were part of the COVID-19 response.

76% among those who participated in the response.

The response spanned 63 program areas, at the peak of the pandemic, COVID-19 response took between 44% and 66% of employees' time.

1. **Pride in Public Health Work and/or Mission**

   "I always feel proud to be working in a field that helps to protect others from sickness."

   "I’ve never been happier to be a public health worker."

   "I’ve been proud to work in public health but it was difficult working the extra hours, and getting to work even earlier than I normally do."

   **Recommendation:** Foster workplace culture that values teamwork and a mindset of shared responsibility to acknowledge contributions during a hard time.

   "We have been surprised to find a balance between not being overburdened with work and being in control of our work environment and the lack of opportunity for rest."**

   **Recommendation:** Prioritize employee wellness during normal operations, knowing some burnout and stress may be unavoidable during an emergency response.

   "We ideally need staff that we can do the job and still get home and see our families."**

   **Recommendation:** Learn from employees’ experiences with teleworking and task sharing to create more equitable guidelines to better prepare agencies for future challenges.

   "Develop plans or reserve funds to provide overtime compensation during future emergencies."

   "We need more help and I don’t think the public realizes how many people are working behind the scenes."

   **Recommendation:** Low public support.

   "We need more support from the public. They need to better understand how hard this is and how much it impacts the mental health of our employees."

   "The public does not value the work that we do. It is something that we take for granted."

   **Other Themes Identified**

   "Public health workforce shortages."

   "Strain on care responsibilities."

   "Emergency response protocols."

Now is the time to invest in the public health workforce.

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PH Wins
Public Health Workforce Interests and Needs Survey
PHWins.org