

***Gutman Research Associates***

**Evaluation of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Public Health Law Initiative**

**Survey of State and Territorial Health Officials**

A web-based survey of state and territorial health officials (SHOs) was conducted by ASTHO in collaboration with Gutman Research Associates to help inform the evaluation of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Public Health Law Initiative. The initiative is a \$29.8 million, five-year effort to build the field of public health law practice and research mainly through two national programs – The Public Health Law Network and Public Health Law Research. ASTHO members were surveyed with a response rate of 63% (37/59).

Main findings from the survey were:

Need for Legal Expertise and Views of the PH Law Network

- Most (88%) SHOs knew of public health law as a concept and almost all of those (97%) had used it as a tool at least occasionally.
- Most SHOs reported that various types of legal technical assistance (TA) would be helpful to them with their work: providing training (e.g., webinars)(95%), creating user-friendly tools (87%), developing model ordinances (84%), offering one-to-one legal TA (84%), and providing legal research and writing (73%).
- The three public health areas of greatest need for legal TA were data sharing/public health information (57%), PH statutes and regulations (49%), and impact of health reform (43%).
- Most SHOs (87%) were aware of the Network, and among those at least half were aware of the Network's key products – the website (61%), webinars (57%), and E-newsletter (54%).
- Approximately half of SHOs were aware that the Network provides free individual legal TA, and among those two-thirds had used it, and found it easy to access and useful.

Need for Research Evidence and Views of PH Law Research Program

- SHOs seek research evidence regularly, with 73% of them seeking it daily, weekly or monthly. The most commonly used avenues to do so were professional journals (81%), colleagues (71%), and newsletters of professional organizations (68%).
- In addition to the PH areas mentioned above, more than one-fifth of all respondents also needed information on accreditation/regionalization (40%), obesity (29%), and emergency preparedness (23%).
- Approximately half (46%) of SHOs were aware of the PHLR program, and of those respondents who were aware of PHLR, many were aware of its website (53%) and E-newsletter (42%). Far fewer SHOs were aware of other products, such as evidence briefs (10%).

Further information on the survey and evaluation is available from: Marjorie A. Gutman, PhD, Gutman Research Associates, magutman1@aol.com.