“From a big-picture perspective, the partnership with the health department has been an opportunity to make our research agenda more real, more responsive.”

– Shannon Frattaroli, JHCIRP

RESEARCH & PRACTICE

WHAT RESEARCH BROUGHT TO THE TABLE
JHCIRP provides MDHMH with expertise regarding current injury research that inform how MDHMH selects its interventions, as well as perspectives that help to shape future research. JHCIRP partners regularly offer feedback about developing research questions and project activities from a research perspective, complementing the programmatic perspective from MDHMH. This helps MDHMH measure the effect of their program, as asking the right questions is critical to achieving a meaningful evaluation. As a supplement to the practitioners’ deep understanding of state and local needs, culture, and resources, the researchers’ knowledge of the implications of implementing evidence-based versus promising practices helps shape new interventions. MDHMH’s longstanding partnership with JHCIRP on various projects has resulted in a truly collegial relationship in which MDHMH staff view JHCIRP researchers as colleagues who can provide perspective and consultation on a day-to-day basis, outside of formal contractual partnerships.

WHAT PRACTICE BROUGHT TO THE TABLE
MDHMH professionals’ extensive knowledge of state and local injury prevention activities and priorities creates the backdrop against which JHCIRP researchers make program recommendations. They are attuned to the needs of their community and can select interventions most appropriate for those needs. This “on the ground” perspective provides entry points into practical considerations for injury prevention research and influences subsequent study design. JHCIRP’s research agenda is therefore more responsive to the needs of their partners, ultimately resulting in a more grounded, well-rounded research portfolio. Additionally, access to the state health department is of clear benefit to Johns Hopkins public health students as they translate their research into actionable strategies for practitioners.
LESSONS LEARNED

WORKING ACROSS AGENCIES

• To operate as effectively as possible, partners must gain an understanding of each other’s business processes and requirements. Understanding these processes facilitates the partnership while meeting each organization’s respective needs. A trusting relationship between partners combined with honesty about potential roadblocks will help navigate the challenges that operational realities may impose.

• Similarly, partners must be aware of the time required to work through each organization’s approval process, accounting for it in the project’s timeline if necessary. MDHMH’s procedures for launching a new project generally involve multiple layers of signatures, forms, and several different state offices. Time must also be built in for publication and product clearance, as well as institutional review board (IRB) approval from both agencies, if applicable.

FOSTERING STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

• Engaging with partners around common interests and their contributions to the field prior to a formal collaboration can forge a stronger relationship than reaching out when assistance is needed for a funding opportunity. Developing the relationship from a standpoint of mutual interest will help to build personal and organizational relationships that will ultimately be fruitful when funding opportunities are presented.

• Potential partners should maintain a big-picture perspective instead of pursuing collaborations based only on expertise in, for example, evaluation. These relationships can be sustained by frequent communication and involvement with partners on their broader compendium of projects. JHCIRP partners with MDHMH on initiatives across its portfolio to provide access to updated, relevant research to inform project design.

• Attending each other’s trainings, webinars, and other events can sustain involvement with one another not only on a personal level; learning about the partner’s other projects may spark ideas for future collaboration. This has helped JHCIRP and MDHMH develop a trusting relationship and greater understanding of each other’s work.

“We have this group of experts, this wealth of knowledge…and skill sets that really meld well with the ones that we have here.”
– Genevieve Polk, MDHMH

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“Since we’ve been working so closely, we understand the value of research, how important it is, how they complement our day-to-day work.”
– Jade Leung, MDHMH