Health Education Specialist Practice Analysis II 2020 (HESPA II 2020) Validates and Reveals Eight Areas of Responsibility for Health Education Specialists

WHITEHALL, Pa. – The latest study by the National Commission for Health Education Credentialing, Inc. (NCHEC) and the Society for Public Health Education, Inc. (SOPHE) revealed new changes in the Responsibilities of health education specialists in the field during the last five years, that will have important implications for professional preparation and continuing education providers.

Based on the extensive data gathered and analyzed as part of the Health Education Specialist Practice Analysis II 2020 (HESPA II 2020), SOPHE and NCHEC have produced a new hierarchical model with 8 Areas of Responsibility, 35 Competencies, and 193 Sub-competencies. Some notable changes in HESPA II 2020 include the addition of an 8th Area of Responsibility, Ethics and Professionalism. Advocacy and Communication are now standalone Areas of Responsibility, with a variety of new Competencies and Sub-competencies reflecting the increasing role of social media. There was extensive work to decrease redundancy and increase utility in the Sub-competencies, therefore, HESPA II 2020 revealed a reduction in the Sub-competencies from 258 to 193.

“This comprehensive study is undertaken every five years by NCHEC and SOPHE to identify changes in health education practice, and to inform professional preparation and continuing education programs of these changes,” said Dr. Randy Cottrell, chair of HESPA II 2020. “This updated model builds on prior health education competency research and continues to promote a strong foundation for professional preparation and practice of health education specialists. Further, it is the basis of the national certification examinations in place since 1989.”

Of the Sub-competencies, 114 (59.17%) were validated as entry-level, which are generally expected of those with a baccalaureate degree in health education. 59 Sub-competencies (30.6 %) were validated as advanced 1-level, and 20 (10.4%) were validated as advanced 2-level. Professional preparation programs generally utilize the advanced level Sub-competencies in training graduate students. The overall knowledge base needed by all health education specialists within 10 conceptual topics areas and 145 knowledge topics were validated.

The 22-month multi-phased national study was conducted from October 2017-August 2019, guided by a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) consisting of chair Randy Cottrell, D.Ed., MCHES®; vice chair Adam P. Knowlden, MBA, PhD, CHES®; the HESPA I 2015 task force co-chair, James F. McKenzie, PhD, MCHES®; Kathleen Allison, PhD, MPH, MCHES®, coordinator of NCHEC’s Division Board for Certification of Health Education Specialists; the chief staff officers of NCHEC, Linda Lysoby, MS, MCHES, CAE and of SOPHE, M. Elaine Auld, MPH, MCHES®; and Cynthia Narh, MPH, MCHES®, NCHEC staff member. A diverse 17-member advisory panel representing all major work settings of health education specialists provided extensive input to the study, with technical guidance of Scantron, a global technology and services driven company...
The next phase of the HESPA II 2020 project is the dissemination of the results. SOPHE and NCHEC will publicize results through conference presentations, webinars, manuscripts, publications, and other avenues to inform professional preparation and practice of health education specialists working in all settings. In addition, work has begun to revise the Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES®) and the Master Certified Health Education Specialist (MCHES®) examinations based on the practice analysis findings for exam administration in 2021.