
On behalf of the Community Health Planning and Policy Development Section, welcome once again to the APHA Annual Meeting. We've undoubtedly omitted much very important information from this Guide; nonetheless, we hope you'll take time to participate in our Section's social, business, and policy sessions.

Please let us know how we can help make APHA an even better investment for you, and please tell us how we can best advise next year's visitors to the Annual Meeting.

for more information, visit our website at <http://www.chppd.org> and learn more about CHPPD, or after you get back home, contact:

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COMMUNITY HEALTH PLANNING
AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT SECTION

American Public Health Association

***A (SLIGHTLY IRREVERENT)
GUIDE TO
APHA ANNUAL MEETINGS***

*NINTH EDITION**
2006

** Someday this may be a collector's item just like the printed APHA program.*

Welcome to the APHA Annual Meeting! *(Always referred to with a capital “A” for “Annual” and capital “M” for “Meeting,” which would be a capital offense in many jurisdictions.)* If this is your first APHA get-together, or even if you’ve already survived a few, please heed the ancient warning from Hill Street Blues: “Let’s be careful out there.”

It’s useful to take an anthropological approach to these Annual Meetings. Consider yourself a tourist in a land with its own culture, language, subgroups, networks, rituals, and status symbols. *(Lest you think we exaggerate, check out the variety of badge stick-ons and who’s wearing which ribbons. The defense rests.)*

Experiencing this culture can be exhilarating, frustrating, overwhelming, and/or productive and fun *(some of these categories are not mutually exclusive)*. The keys to surviving the Meeting, at least the kind we can discuss here, are a little knowledge about the culture and a lot of planning on your part. *(We are, after all, the Community Health **Planning** and Policy Development Section.)*

Keeping in mind that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, here’s some information to get you started:

- The highlight of almost every meeting is the opening general session on Sunday starting at 12 noon. The keynote and presidential addresses are invariably worth hearing, and no other sessions compete in this time slot. This is one of the few sessions where all the APHA subgroups get together in a large dark room, and it provides a practical perspective on how diverse and far-flung the public health enterprise is. *(For sure.)*

check out new Public Health software. The exhibit also provides yet another opportunity to meet colleagues and share ideas and professional interests. Most important of all, this is where you’ll find the Community Health Planning and Policy Development Section booth *(along with all the other APHA Section booths as well)*, where you should make a point of dropping by, hanging out, and just generally getting acquainted with us fun planning types.

As an employer or prospective job hunter, you might also check out the APHA job placement service, known affectionately by us all as the CareerMart. The Service allows employers to list job openings, and job applicants to submit resumes in a convenient electronic system based on professional goals. A special message center allows job seekers and employers to arrange interviews. The system really works, and it’s worth stopping by *(if only to feel grateful that you don’t need to use it)*.

If you’re “Desperately Seeking Susan,” or anyone else, be sure to check the locator service. APHA always has a service so you can leave messages for other friends and colleagues. The service is upgraded as new technology develops. A message board, generally near the locator service, is another good place to leave/receive word of your whereabouts and plans. *(And to find out where you are supposed to be.)*

Finally if you are interested in how APHA makes public policy, you can attend and speak up at the resolution hearings (see program for specific times and locations), then observe Governing Council debate and vote on them all day Tuesday. Governing Council is light years ahead of your student government and much more entertaining.

We also begin to consider nominees to APHA-wide positions (*e.g., on boards and committees addressing public health issues*), as well as for Section committees, (*e.g., newsletter, communications, policy resolutions, Annual Meeting, strategic planning and many others*).

All Section meetings (*called “business meetings” — all Sections have them*) are open and you’re invited to participate (*and to bring your friends and relatives*). Included in the CHPPD Section meetings are a Sunday morning orientation to the section for new members and Monday evening awards and social hour. Please join us!

In addition to CHPPD Section activities, other good places to meet and greet (*come with me to the cash bar*) are the “APHA New Connections – All Sections Social Hour” on Sunday evening (*check your program for the time and place*), an intimate get-together for a few thousand people wearing different color badges and ribbons, the Monday night social hours, where Schools of Public Health renew acquaintances with their graduates just in time for the next fundraising campaign, the Tuesday evening “APHA Celebration”, and the week-long “hospitality suites” — the accounting profession’s clearest contribution to public health.

A sometimes-overlooked highlight of each Annual Meeting is the scientific and technical exhibition show. The exhibits feature the latest publications on all aspects of public health, highlight health services research activities, and allow you to bring home a bag filled with stuff you will never have time to get through. Other things you can do while in the vicinity are a bit of web surfing — including paying a visit to the APHA site, or

You leave the opening session filled with inspiration, and then REALITY (*otherwise known as panic*) hits. You open your program and find that it is filled with “poster”, “roundtable”, and “panel” sessions. “What mean these words?” you ask.

- Poster sessions are informal presentations, usually involving posted visuals or graphics. The Section sponsors about 10 poster sessions, each with seven boards. The presenters are stationed near their “posters” for the entire session, and participants move from poster to poster at their own pace. Often the rows of boards are near the snack food and provide an incentive to munch and meander. This format allows for more one-to-one talk than is possible in larger, formal presentations.
- Roundtable sessions have nine or 10 tables, each with one or two presenters, but are somewhat more structured. Presenters are seated at assigned tables, and those interested in particular topics can join the presenters at those tables. There is usually a brief introduction to the topic and the presenters discuss their work in the area, followed by discussion among the individuals at the table. Although some individuals do move from table to table during the sessions, the most satisfied participants tend to be those who limit their moves and pursue a few topics in greater detail. But, **chacun à son gout** (*whatever that means*).
- Panels are perhaps the most structured presentation format. They are generally built around a specific topic, either different aspects of a single program/study, or different programs/studies that cover related subject matter. Most panels comprise four to eight panelists plus

the all-important Moderator. Panelists each present and answer questions during their allotted 10-15 minutes. The Moderator wears the dual hats of “Host”, taking care of introductions and discussions, and “Cop”, keeping the session on schedule — sometimes even preventing you from asking your burning question. Don’t despair, because most panelists are happy to hang around and discuss their work after the session is over (*outside the room to avoid the next session*).

Once you’ve mastered the intricacies of the language, the best thing to do is plan your itinerary. Some people prefer to do this one session at a time, (e.g., deciding during the 12:00-2:00 p.m. session what they’ll do 2:00-4:00 p.m.). As planners, we recommend that you plan at least a day at a time. This has several advantages. APHA Annual Meetings are spread over several facilities. The choice of a particular session means that you may be in a location far from your preferred choice for the next slot.

If you plan your whole day, starting with the sessions you’re sure you don’t want to miss, you can avoid this often repeated scenario: You rush several blocks to your next session and arrive breathless and sweaty, only to find that the room is packed, no seats are available, and the speaker you had raced to hear just finished to a roaring ovation. If you whip out your USB flash drive, you might be able to copy the talk or PowerPoint presentation. Otherwise have your e-mail handy, and the presenter may send it as an attachment. *The moral of the story: It is better to be an early member of one session than it is to be a late member of another!* APHA’s web site now has a handy on-line Annual Meeting Scheduler that allows you to select sessions, record their locations, and make notes so you’ll

remember why you chose the session in the first place. The first time you use it, the Scheduler may seem like a bit of technological wizardry — you press buttons to choose the sessions you plan to attend, and it works, but you’re not quite sure how. However, the end result is that you should have a clear plan of how you think you’re going to spend your time at the Annual Meeting.

Having carefully planned your itinerary, you are now ready to bravely go forth to your chosen sessions. But, before you leave your hotel room, be sure to have your laser-tagged name badge in hand. This badge is your ticket in to the APHA sessions, social areas, and exhibit hall (*more on that coming up*). And, for those in the know, it is also an innovative networking tool, allowing you access to I-Communicate, an e-mail system for registered meeting attendees, as well as add your name to the mailing lists of many exhibitors. As you can see, APHA is making networking a science...

Speaking of networking, most Community Health Planning and Policy Development Section members say that “networking”, the verb that dictionaries forgot, is a major reason they belong to APHA. The Annual Meeting provides plenty of opportunities to find old friends and meet new ones. One terrific way (*we may be biased*) is to get involved in Section activities during the meeting. The Section comprises a diverse group of folks involved in all aspects of health planning, policy research, education, finance, advocacy, and service delivery, plus whatever else isn’t covered by those categories. At the Annual Meeting, Section members begin planning for next year’s program, have small issues (*please don’t ask*), and define direction for the Section’s activities in the coming year.