

Hi, I'm Randal Miller, Project Coordinator of the MCH Training Network, a project of the Institute for Child Health Policy, University of Florida, funded by the HRSA / Maternal and Child Health Bureau's Training Program. Our goal is to provide Training Program grantees with support and services including web development, collaboration tools, and technical assistance.

Initially we assisted the Training Program in developing their web pages, providing a wealth of information for current and prospective grantees. Our current focus is to foster collaboration among grantees groups that share a common interest, mainly through the development of websites and email discussion lists AKA listservs.

For those who don't know, a Listserv is an email-based discussion group. It's convenient in that you send an email message to one single address and the message is delivered to everyone in the group, whether it's 10 people or 10,000. Listservs are great for announcements, discussions, and peer to peer support.

The antecedent leading up to this project included the development of the Pediatric Pulmonary Centers' group web site and listservs.

Let's hear what Dave Yonutas, of the PPC group has to say: (roll video clip)

Our current project allows us to offer web and list services to Training Program grantees, plus, we've added some new services and created the MCH Training Network. First we developed a main project website, our home base, at www.mchtraining.net to provide project information and links throughout the developing MCH Training Network.

Then we began work with two grantee groups, Nutrition and LEAH, and created two new websites, or subwebs, at nutrition.mchtraining.net and LEAH.mchtraining.net. Both of these groups also have corresponding listservs. We also developed a special purpose website for workgroups.

We provide all the web design services, web hosting, and we also assist with the initial content development and provide ongoing technical support.

What's new and different with this project is that all of these websites are powered by a database driven, content management system. The content management system allows web site managers to add, edit, and delete content, using only a web browser. This allows site management duties to be decentralized and passed from one member to another without the need for installing any special software. All you need is a web browser, administrator permissions, and perhaps a short tutorial to help get started.

We've also added some new distance learning tools for all Training Program grantees to use, including an eLearning system for conducting web-based courses. Grantee projects based at a university may have an eLearning system such as Blackboard or WebCT, but for those who don't, we've made an eLearning system available. It's a great system that's remarkably easy to use. It provides a mechanism for user login and tracking of activities and grades. At the end of the course, simply export a spread sheet with names and grades as documentation for continuing education credits.

Apart from websites, listservs, and the eLearning system, another community building tool on the internet is the forum, also known as a bulletin

board or discussion board. These names are used interchangeably. In some ways, the concept is similar to a listserv, but messages are posted to a web site, organized by forum, topic, question and response.

We also have some exciting tools in development, including a system for creating and conducting online surveys, which could be a great tool for program evaluation. When it is up and running we'll send an announcement through the Training Program grantee listserv.

Now, let's take a closer look at the main project website and the content management system.

Here you'll find project information on the Introduction and Services pages. The next menu item is the News. Content is generally organized into categories. The dynamic nature of this site allows for additional features, such as an automatic listing of the 5 Latest News items and the 5 most popular. A comment box allows readers to comment directly on the web site below each news item.

Likewise, the LINKS section is organized by categories.

Let's take a look at the Nutrition subweb for some additional features.

The DOCUMENTS section is a repository of files, again, organized by category. In this case we'll look at the Value Maps.

File information can include a title, description, submission date, author, version, rating, and more.

The Events page is a simple listing of Events, with a brief description and a "Read more" option for the full listing.

The News Feeds is a listing of syndicated news articles with title and synopsis. The full article opens on the news provider's web site.

The Polls page, offers a quick polling feature - votes are instantaneous and anonymous.

The Listserv link allows new visitors to subscribe to the mailing list while existing members can view the message archive.

Finally, the Helpdesk provides direct access to technical support.

One of our priorities is to develop a group-oriented website for each of the Training Program grantee groups that express an interest. To ensure success, we will not only develop and host these subwebs, but will also assist with content development, site management, and provide technical support along the way.

If you're interested in using any of these distance learning tools for your project, please feel free to contact us. Start by visiting www.mchtraining.net.

We sincerely hope that the MCH Training Network, with its family of subwebs, collaboration and distance education tools, will be of value to you and your project. We welcome your participation and feedback. THANKS FOR WATCHING!