

PRSTRT Launches Public Health Trust in Puerto Rico ^[1]

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Public Health Trust in Puerto Rico ^[2]

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Opening the Public Health Week, the announcement of the Puerto Rico Health Trust was made in collaboration with governmental agencies, communities, both local and international health institutions and academia.

April 2nd, 2019 - San Juan, Puerto Rico – The Puerto Rico Science, Technology and Research Trust (PRSTRT) announced today the creation of the Puerto Rico Public Health Trust (PRPHT) to work in partnership with multiple sectors including governmental

agencies, communities, the health care delivery system, businesses, media and academia.

PRSTRT is a 501(c)(3), and in 2017, was designated by the Puerto Rico Legislature as the Puerto Rico Public Health Institute. The PRPHT has been set up as a program powered by the PRSTRT; and its mission, vision and objectives were developed with a group of collaborators, including the participation of local communities, the Puerto Rico Department of Health, the Graduate School of Public Health of the University of Puerto Rico-Medical Science Campus, the School of Public Health of Ponce Health Sciences University and Central Caribbean University; the Association of Primary Health, the Association of Hospitals and various other partners and businesses, such as Impactivo Consulting and FDI Clinical Research.

Lucy Crespo, PRSTRT CEO said: “The mission of the PRPHT is to serve as a trusted ally working with partners in the public and private sector to identify and implement evidence-based and community-led solutions. We aim to have an immediate and sustainable impact in the public health sector. In keeping with the efforts of our collaborators, the PRPHT endeavors to make a change and to create a positive and significant impact on the public’s health through its agility, capacity and commitment.”

Vince La Fronza, President and CEO of the National Network of Public Health Institutes (NNPHI) expressed: "The National Network of Public Health Institutes is deeply honored to welcome the Puerto Rico Public Health Trust to our growing family of more than 43 member organizations working to build health. We are committed to supporting PRPHT’s success in creating a multi-sector muscle that will create more equitable and sustainable health and wellbeing for all Puerto Ricans."

The Puerto Rico Public Health Trust will have a strong community focus. José F. Rodríguez Orengo, acting Executive Director, explained that “the vision of the PRPHT is to achieve sustainable health and equity for the Puerto Rican communities and to improve the quality of life through innovation, collaboration and community engagement.”

The priorities of the Puerto Rico Public Health Trust will include efforts to improve the public health systems and its results promoting innovation, maximizing resources and creating alliances to improve the public health including: Emergency Preparedness, Recovery and Response, Chronic Disease: diabetes, obesity, etc., Health Equity, Climate Change, Mental Health and the Opioid Epidemic among others.

The PRPHT plans to carry out activities and programs for the health of the population. Since 2018, the PRPHT has already established 4 main initiatives to spearhead its work in Puerto Rico:

- 1. 1. Hurricane Response Hub Technical Assistance Center (HRHTAC) - To provide training and technical assistance to Health Departments, Emergency Management, and Community-Based Organizations in the Caribbean. PRPHT is one of five regional technical assistance centers for the Hurricane Response Hub (HRH) initiative, led by the National Network of Public Health Institutes (NNPHI). Funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), this national program is designed to enhance disaster-related surveillance and environmental and occupational health recovery efforts in areas impacted by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria by building disaster-related public health workforce capacity.**
- 2. Caribbean Strong - Under the slogan of Building Resilience with Equity, Caribbean Strong was the first post Maria resilience summit held at the Sheraton Hotel of the Convention Center from February 27 to March 1, 2019. It focused on the lessons learned after the two devastating hurricanes that hit Puerto Rico and the Caribbean Region in 2017. During the event various entities and leaders of key sectors from within and outside of Puerto Rico shared their experiences, lessons learned and recommendations to improve resilience in health and public health systems.**
- 3. Capacity Building for Jurisdictional Hurricane Recovery – Puerto Rico Staffing Capacity Enhancements- Supporting the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) and the Puerto Rico Department of Health in the shared work of rebuilding Puerto Rico’s public health infrastructure and capacity. We are directly hiring and managing administrative and technical experts within Puerto Rico. Staffing is focused around the areas of environmental health, community risk mitigation, death registry processes, healthcare infection control surveillance and prevention, vector-borne diseases and disaster reconstitution management.**
- 4. Community Engagement- We envision enabling leaders in all fields and areas of work in the community—such as churches, schools, businesses, academic institutions and municipalities—to challenge systems, tackle the root causes of health inequities, and build healthier communities in Puerto Rico. We will be: Participating in Community Conversations, Facilitating the growth of local health**

coalitions; Mapping of Assets and Data; Identifying community leaders and enhancement of their leadership skills; Identifying positions such as Promotores de Salud/ Community Health Workers and Community Research Liaisons; Understanding existing community networks (community and system), strengths and gaps, and Supporting the needed infrastructure, resources and technology to meet identified needs.

What is Public Health?

Public health promotes and protects the health of people and the communities where they live, learn, work, worship and play. It is the science of protecting and improving the health of people and their communities. This work is achieved by promoting healthy lifestyles, researching disease and injury prevention, and detecting, preventing and responding to infectious diseases and emergencies.

The PRPHT has assembled a five-member advisory committee with US and Puerto Rico public health experts to guide the process of establishing its governance and administrative structures. These members are: Lt. Col. Wilson Ariza, Experienced Senior Management Director with extensive record of successful management of multiple multi-billion programs in healthcare services in the Department of Defense and the US Department of Veterans Affairs; Dr. Antonia Novello de Coello, 14th Surgeon General of the United States; Dr. Richard Cohen, President and CEO Public Health Management Corporation, Philadelphia; Dr. Ronald Quincy, Academic Director, Rutgers Civic Leadership Institute Visiting Senior Fellow for Diversity Studies, John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development; and Dr. Jose F. Cordero, University of Georgia School of Public Health Department Head, Patel Distinguish Professor.

As part of its launch during the National Public Health Week, the PRPHT will celebrate its first community event with the Caño Martin Peña community on Friday April 5th with a health fair that includes dental checkups, immunizations, water filter information and distribution, among others.

For more information about the Puerto Rico Public Health Trust please visit:
www.prpht.org ^[2]

About the Puerto Rico Science, Technology and Research Trust:

The Puerto Rico Science, Technology and Research Trust, as described in Public Law 214, is a nonprofit organization created in 2004 to promote the participation and creation of

jobs in the Island in the global knowledge economy by promoting investment and the financing of research and development of science and technology. By investing in technology research and commercialization, the Trust serves as a catalyst for the creation of jobs and the retention of highly qualified and often bilingual residents of the Island. It is also responsible for the public policy of Puerto Rico for science, technology, research

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