

**How to Negotiate Time with your Employer  
to Participate in the  
Skills Enhancement for Health Surveillance Modules**

**Date:** August 20, 2004

**Version:** 3.0

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## **Table of Contents**

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| <b>Page 3</b>  | <b>Introduction</b>   |
| <b>Page 4</b>  | <b>The DEAR Approach</b>  |
| <b>Page 6</b>  | <b>Benefits to the Organization / Benefits to the Learner</b>                 |
| <b>Page 9</b>  | <b>Documents on Skills Enhancement</b>  |
| <b>Page 10</b> | <b>How to Contract with Your Organization for Skills Enhancement Training</b> |

# How to Negotiate Time with Your Employer to Participate in the Skills Enhancement for Health Surveillance Modules

## Introduction

You have investigated the modules offered through the Skills Enhancement program, and would like to become involved as a learner. However, in looking at your workload, your responsibilities outside of work, and your limited leisure time, you wonder where you can fit in the time to become a learner. Perhaps an option is to negotiate with your employer so that you would do some of the training during work hours each week.

This document has been developed to help you find ways to negotiate time for learning during your busy workweek. We will identify a number of strategies you may use. In this way, you can select the one(s) that work best for your situation. Feel free to change or add to these ideas to make it “your plan”. You might even take a bit of one strategy, a bit of another strategy, and come up with a new plan of your own!



## The DEAR Approach

Everyone needs to negotiate from time to time. What does the word “negotiate” mean?

Dictionary.com gives these definitions of “negotiate”:

- To confer with another or others to come to terms or reach an agreement
- To arrange or settle by discussion and mutual agreement
- To transact business; to carry on trade

In the best scenario, at the end of a negotiation all parties feel as though they have gained something. This win-win situation results when all parties agree they have been treated respectfully and all have a positive view of the end result of the negotiation.

All good negotiators do some homework prior to going into negotiations. They consider the arguments and counter arguments well in advance. You should be prepared before you go into the discussion. The DEAR approach can help you do this.

There are four steps to the DEAR approach. The material for this approach has been taken from the Engage Pocket Powerbook.

**D** – Describe the situation or problem.

**E** – Explain how you feel and think about the situation.

**A** – Ask for what you want.

**R** – Reward the person you’re negotiating with.

Each of these steps has guidelines:

**D** – Describe the situation or problem.

*“Be specific and objective. Don’t guess the other person’s motives or use sweeping generalizations. Just share what you have observed.”*

**E** – Explain how you feel and think about the situation.

*“Stay calm. Only deal with your feelings about the matter at hand.”*

**A** – Ask for what you want.

*“Make your request specific and reasonable. Be prepared to barter and to compromise. Aim for a win-win situation.”*

**R** – Reward the person you’re negotiating with.

*“In other words, tell them what they are going to get out of the deal. You can offer a negative reward, i.e. a punishment, but generally a positive reward works best.”*

Let’s look at an example of this DEAR approach. This is a script which you could follow:

**D** – In June, a workshop on Best Practices in Public Health is being held in Toronto. My understanding is that some of the leaders in Public Health will be there to share their resources. I have a pamphlet that describes the objectives of the workshop, the training days, and the costs.

**E** – I am keenly interested in learning more about this topic. I believe that I could benefit by attending and learning more about best practices used nationwide. This would also benefit our organization, as I would come back with new approaches to handling situations effectively.

**A** – I would like to attend this conference and would appreciate the financial support of our organization. Specifically, I request that our organization pay my workshop fee, travel costs, and accommodation expenses.

**R** – When I return from the workshop, I would be willing to write a document on best practices for staff use. In this way, I would gain skills and knowledge and the organization would benefit from my experience as well.

OR -- another possible Reward statement:

**R** – My participation in this workshop will result in my learning new techniques and approaches to my day-to-day work. This will enhance my ability to problem-solve and troubleshoot in various situations.

Think about how you might use the DEAR approach to negotiate time at work to do some of the Skills Enhancement module work.

**D** – Describe the situation. What could you tell the employer about the Skills Enhancement program? When are the modules being offered? Which modules are you interested in? What are the learning objectives of the module?

**E** – Explain how you feel / think about the matter. What are your thoughts / feelings on the Skills Enhancement program? Why are you interested in this venture? How do you see the program benefiting your performance at work, increasing your skills in assessment, and enhancing your use of technology?

**A** – Ask for what you want. How much is a reasonable amount of time to request to work on Skills Enhancement modules while on the job? (See timelines listed in “Learner Expectations” document)

**R** – Reward the person you are negotiating with. What are the benefits to your employer? How will this training influence your day-to-day work? In what ways will the organization be positively affected by your participation in the Skills Enhancement program? (See page on benefits to employers and benefits to learners.)

Remember, the best negotiators go into the negotiation prepared. Think about all the angles; think about what you will say to the employer; think of the benefits to you and to them! Make it an irresistible win-win situation.

## Benefits to the Organization / Benefits to the Learner

As mentioned earlier, a negotiation works best when all partners gain something in the deal. In this section you will find data collected from learners and from organizations on the benefits of being involved in the Skills Enhancement program.

### Benefits to the Organization

- The mission of the Skills Enhancement program is **“To provide public health professionals with epidemiological and related skills to conduct evidence-based decision making and planning at the local level”**. These skills and knowledge would be beneficial to the organization in terms of decision making and planning.
- *“This would be a good course to offer all new public health staff to establish a common working use of epidemiological terms and concepts.”*

Dianne Shaw  
Manager, Wellness Services  
Chinook Health Region  
Lethbridge, Alberta

- *“Skills Enhancement's on-line program provides relevant Canadian content in a cost- and time-effective manner. Epidemiology and surveillance skills and knowledge should be considered as basic tools in public health, yet traditional teaching is often hard to connect to local issues. Traditional classrooms cannot match this opportunity for learning with other practicing public health professionals and facilitators who have front-line experience”*

Jamie Hockin  
Director, Public Health Training and Applications,  
Centre for Surveillance Coordination  
Population and Public Health Branch, Health Canada  
Ottawa, Ontario

- *“I believe that the staff I work with are among the best at front-line control of communicable disease. Taking the Skills Enhancement modules will enable them to better describe / analyze the work that they do as well as to engage in critical thinking.”*

Anita Hanrahan  
Director, Communicable Disease Control  
Capital Health  
Edmonton, Alberta

## **Benefits to the Learner**

- Effective health surveillance in Canada depends upon our professionals' understanding and use of critical information. Therefore, these professionals require some very specific skills. However, skill levels vary across the country and are limited in many public health jurisdictions. The Skills Enhancement program provides continuing education opportunities that may be locally unobtainable or otherwise unaffordable. The program is designed to help local public health partners acquire the skills necessary to do effective surveillance. This will strengthen sound [evidence-based decision making](#) and planning at the local level to protect and maintain the health of the public. (See the Skills Enhancement website at [www.healthsurv.net/skills](http://www.healthsurv.net/skills)).
- The key target audience is professional staff working in local, regional, provincial, or territorial public health offices. This includes professionals such as public health nurses, inspectors, health promotion personnel, program managers, health planners, health educators, and dental hygienists. Each can benefit by working through the module objectives and content in a team with people from diverse professions and geographical locations.
- *“There was certainly a broad ‘net’ of resources and information we gained access to through the Basic Epidemiology Course offered by Health Canada. The experience of learning online was especially convenient and flexible. I could work on this anywhere I had access to a computer.” – Former learner*
- *“I really like this forum for learning. It allows me to work from home rather than attend courses. If I could not do it from home, I doubt I would be able to do this course (I have a 2-year-old). I also feel the setting is quite realistic. I sit in my office and have to come up with stats, ideas, and projects. I do not have the luxury of being at a university library when I need information. This course has really opened my eyes to resources available here, online. The advantage of the web-based course is its flexibility as far as time and one’s schedule is concerned. The course offers very interesting web links, which help you to go beyond the class setting and see the practicality of it. I’m glad I did the first module, and that’s why I’m back for the next one.” – Former learner*
- *“I found (and continue to find) the online experience timely, practical, convenient, and an excellent resource with linkages to terrific sites. The first module I participated in was facilitated with some face-to-face contact. This, together with the peer support provided by team members, was very conducive to cross-spectrum understanding of common terms and baselines of information, etc.” – Former learner*

- *“Overall experience was very positive! I loved this learning environment - no traveling, no boring lectures, only pertinent info available whenever I had the time to study and read. Memorial has done a great job; the program I feel was well designed and they provided excellent links. The discussion boards provided the feedback and interaction necessary to stay challenged and involved. A welcome medium for health professionals providing services in rural and remote areas of Canada.”* – Former learner
- *“Cross-discipline material is great.”* – Former learner
- *“Very up-to-date material added to knowledge.”* – Former learner
- *“This learning was a bridge through cyberspace to great libraries and to great people, bridging academic and workplace. I did not find it too time-consuming, and I thought content was playful and fun at times. Great content.”* – Former learner
- *“I am interested in rural health-services delivery and see utilization of WebCT for facilitation of remote learners as the only way*
- *advanced skills will be available to nurses (and other health care workers) who do not live in university towns.”* – Former learner



## Documents on Skills Enhancement

If you would like a brochure on the Skills Enhancement program, or any of the documents listed below. Send an email to [health\\_surveillance@hc-sc.gc.ca](mailto:health_surveillance@hc-sc.gc.ca) and type "Skills Enhancement" in the subject line.

Documents on the Skills Enhancement website at [www.healthsurv.net/skills](http://www.healthsurv.net/skills) may be helpful to prepare you to negotiate with your employer.

Go to the website and click on "**Resources**".

The following documents may help you / your employer to understand the benefits of being a learner in the Skills Enhancement program. Do your research! Be informed!

### **"Towards Effective Community-Based Action: Using Epidemiological Skills in Public Health Surveillance for Local Public Health Practice"**

This is a 25-page referenced paper written for Health Canada by the Ontario Public Health Research, Education, and Development Program and the Association of Public Health Epidemiologists in Ontario. The paper describes the importance and use of epidemiology and health surveillance in public health practice and decision making at the local level. [A one-page summary is available on the web, www.healthsurv.net/skills.](http://www.healthsurv.net/skills)

### **"The Art and Science of Evidence-Based Decision Making...Epidemiology Can Help!"**

This is a flexible, 20- to 40-minute PowerPoint presentation based on the paper "Towards Effective Community-Based Action: Using Epidemiological Skills in Public Health Surveillance for Local Public Health Practice". The presentation can be used with public health staff and decision making, such as boards of health to build support for improving epidemiological skills and capacity at the local level. A three-page guide is available on how to use the presentation.

Source:

Skills Enhancement for Health Surveillance

Accessed on May 7, 2003

Available URL: [www.healthsurv.net/skills](http://www.healthsurv.net/skills)

## **How to Contract with your Organization for Skills Enhancement Continuing Education**

In addition to negotiating informally using the DEAR approach, you may want to develop a written contract with your organization. This document would state the negotiated terms under which you will complete your Skills Enhancement continuing education.

In this contract, a number of items would be identified:

- The objectives and topics addressed through the Skills Enhancement modules.
- The total time that you require to take the online modules. If the module takes approximately 30 hours to complete, how much on-the-job time do you expect to use for your training?
- The support resources the organization is expected to provide. For example, the contract may specify the use of a computer on the job and two hours of work time per week for an 8-week period.
- Consider questions about how this time from work will impact on workload for your office or your district.
- What is the content of the module you wish to take? How is your learning that content going to benefit you, your public health practice, the public health organization?
- What other benefits might there be for you?
- What other benefits might there be for the organization?

On the following pages are some sample contracts you may wish to use as you negotiate with your organization. These are not written in stone; they can be adapted to suit the needs of both you and your organization.

# **Contract for Skills Enhancement for Health Surveillance Continuing Education**

## **Sample #1**

Employee:

Organization / Agency:

Supervisor / Manager:

Date:

Title of Skills Enhancement Module:

Description of Content / Objectives of the Module:

Total amount of time to complete training:

Amount of time requested to do training on the job:

When employee will do training on the job:

What is the employee willing to do in return for having time on the job to do Skills Enhancement training?

What is the organization / agency willing to do to support the employee in this training?

What are the benefits to the employee?

What are the benefits to the organization?

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Employee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Manager

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

# Contract for Skills Enhancement for Health Surveillance Continuing Education

## Sample #2

Name:

Organization / Agency:

Supervisor / Manager:

I would like to enroll for the \_\_\_\_\_ module in the Skills Enhancement program.

Through this professional development opportunity, I would develop skills in the following areas:

| Skill | Why this is important for me to learn | Benefit to the organization / agency |
|-------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
|       |                                       |                                      |
|       |                                       |                                      |
|       |                                       |                                      |
|       |                                       |                                      |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| While involved in this professional development from _____ to _____, I request the following support from the organization / agency | In exchange for the support offered by the organization / agency, I am committed to carrying out the following actions |
|   |  |

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Employee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Manager

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

# Contract for Skills Enhancement for Health Surveillance Module

## Sample #3

Name:

Title:

Department:

Date:

I request  \_\_hours/week time from work  use of computer  
From \_\_\_\_\_ (date) to \_\_\_\_\_(date).

Description of Activity (Include name of activity and professional development provider (Health Canada), as well as your developmental objectives. Attach brochure or additional information to contract.):

Impact on my workload of taking time each week to do professional development:

Benefit(s) to the agency:

Requested by: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_