
Stacie P. Kershner

Introduction
Georgia State University College of Law, through the Center for Law, Health & Society, developed a pair of online libraries for faculty teaching public health law in schools of law or public health. Development of these libraries was funded by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation as part of The Future of Public Health Law Education: Faculty Fellowship Program.1

One of the several goals of the fellowship program was to share and build resources that foster model approaches and best practices for teaching public health law. In support of this goal, the two online libraries were developed to provide access to existing public health law resources to the fellows during the fellowship program as they designed courses, externships, and clinics for their fellowship projects, as well as to provide access to existing resources and new resources developed by the fellows and others as part of the fellowship to faculty teaching public health law beyond the fellowship program’s conclusion. Both online libraries can be accessed at law.gsu.edu/PHLFellowship.

Public Health Law Research Guide
The first online library is the Public Health Law Research Guide (see Figure 1).2 This research guide is publicly accessible and includes a database of substantive public health law materials for use in courses and research by faculty, students, and others. This guide was compiled by graduate research assistants under direction of fellowship program leads Charity Scott and Stacie Kershner. Fellows and mentors with the fellowship program reviewed the site, provided feedback, and suggested edits which were incorporated. The research guide is regularly curated to add new materials and to remove outdated ones. Materials selected for the research guide are considered introductory for a target academic audience new to public health law or to specific topics within public health law. The site is hosted and maintained through the Georgia State Law Library using the Springshare LibGuides platform.3

The research guide is broken down into categories. These include an introduction to public health law, an overview of public health practice, and broad topics such as communicable disease prevention and control, chronic disease prevention, injury prevention, and environmental health. These topic areas were selected because the coverage reflects that of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and state public health agencies and because these categories generally align with the textbooks most commonly used for introductory public health law courses. Within each category is a series of materials, including links to relevant government agencies and organizations, textbooks and study aids, journal articles, seminal court cases, videos, and other research materials. Faculty may use materials on this site during class, assign readings or videos from the site, or suggest that students access the materials for a starting point when conducting research or as review for exams.

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Public Health Law Faculty Teaching Resources

The second online library, Public Health Law Faculty Teaching Resources, features a database of teaching tools and other materials (see Figure 2). This site offers a collection of materials that can be used by faculty teaching public health law and related courses such as food and drug law, HIV/AIDS and the law, legal preparedness for public health emergencies, or tobacco control. Upon demonstrating proof of teaching a course in this area, faculty may request a login and password to access these materials. The site is password protected to encourage faculty to contribute their own resources and to use materials on the site without fear that students have accessed these materials outside of class.

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While the format for the site was developed by fellowship program leads, the web design was provided by the Network for Public Health Law, a sister program funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The Network will continue to host and maintain the site. A primary reason for this is in recognition of the Network’s function as a hub for various professionals in public health law to connect and collaborate in a centralized location, including legal counsel for public health departments, practitioners, and now faculty. The Network has a variety of public health law tools that may be beneficial to faculty, aside from these teaching resources, and faculty can easily identify experts in the field through the Network’s website that may provide updated information, offer a greater understanding of how legal issues play out in the field, and serve as guest speakers. A separate but related project, the Student Network for Public Health Law, is also housed on the Network’s site and is a resource for law students interested in practicing public health law after graduation, providing information on careers and opportunities for networking. A secondary reason for housing the site with the Network is practical. The Network’s grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is for multiple years which will help to ensure sustainability of the teaching resources.

Once logged in, faculty are able to access a compilation of teaching tools and materials such as syllabi, case studies, bibliographies, and slides. These materials cover a variety of topic areas in public health law and were created by the fellows, mentors, and other public health law faculty. Faculty may download materials for their courses and use them as written or adapt them to their course. After using these tools and materials, faculty can provide feedback on how they used the materials, what worked well, and any modifications they may have made to adjust for class size, format, or recent changes to statutes or regulations.

Faculty are encouraged to upload their own teaching tools to the site as well. New contributions to the site will help make it a robust and valued teaching resource. As public health law is a broad and constantly changing field, the teaching site allows for faculty to obtain materials developed by individuals with expertise in certain topics and to contribute materials in areas of their own expertise. The site is also a way for faculty to develop relationships with each other as new faculty reach out to veteran faculty for additional information and advice with the materials on the site serving as a conversation starter.

Anecdotally, syllabi and case studies or class exercises appear to be the most popular materials for faculty on this site. Faculty compare and contrast syllabi of their colleagues when designing their own courses to organize the order of topics, determine the amount of attention to give a particular topic, select readings, and plan individual assignments and class exercises. Case studies and class exercises offer faculty an opportunity to teach core competencies of skills and values, in addition to knowledge, through hands-on learning.

Network for Public Health Law, “Public Health Law Faculty Teaching Resources,” available at <https://www.networkforphl.org/faculty_teaching_resources/> (last visited January 21, 2016) (this site is password protected; faculty may request a password from the Network on the site).
Through case studies and class exercises, students are able to practice identifying legal issues, applying relevant law, analyzing the impact of possible legal interventions, and assessing additional considerations such as ethics, policy, and health equity, in the safe environment of a hypothetical but real-world scenario.

The teaching resources library provides faculty with limited time the opportunity to focus on developing a few key exercises of their own and to borrow or tailor exercises developed by other faculty, expanding the repertoire that can be used with their students. Currently, there are over 30 case studies and exercises on the site addressing topics such as quarantine of disease carriers, vaccination and religious objections, tobacco advertising and cartoons, the movie Contagion, abatement of nuisances, and gun control, among others.

Future
Both online libraries have a variety of materials that are useful to public health law faculty teaching in schools of law and public health and related graduate programs where public health law is taught. Initial materials on each site provide a solid foundation on which to build robust databases. To ensure the future of the online libraries developed through the fellowship program, faculty who find the materials beneficial will need to continue to access the materials, provide feedback, and contribute materials for others to access. Funding for development of additional resources is also critical. For example, several fellows have suggested that short videos or podcasts on specific hot topics in public health law would be valuable for enhancing their courses. Creating these videos would require funding to identify the appropriate experts in the field, arrange for and conduct the recording, and post the video or podcast to the online library.

While these libraries are specific to public health law, the concepts could be replicated in other teaching fields. Although virtual, libraries like these serve to connect faculty teaching in similar areas, helping to foster a sense of community and connection.

Contact
For more information about the online libraries or to provide feedback, suggest additions, or contribute materials, contact Stacie Kershner, J.D., Associate Director for the Center for Law, Health & Society at Georgia State University College of Law.

References
4. Network for Public Health Law, “Public Health Law Faculty Teaching Resources,” available at <https://www.networkforphl.org/faculty_teaching_resources/> (last visited January 21, 2016). (This site is password protected; faculty may request a password from the Network on the site).