

Leadership Profile of Dr. Katherine Kinsey

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Not that long ago, I had the pleasure to sit down with Dr. Katherine Kinsey, Principal Investigator and Administrator of the Philadelphia Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) to talk to her about her long career in public health and her philosophy on leading non-profit organizations. Dr. Kinsey is also Grant Writer/Developer for NFP, Mabel Morris (NMM) Family Home Visit Program (Parents as Teachers), and the nurse-led public health Nurse/Legal Partnership, as well as a contributor to various public health and primary health initiatives implemented by the National Nursing Centers Consortium (NNCC). In addition, Dr. Kinsey previously served as a professor at La Salle University and Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia, PA and held the Independence Foundation Chair in Nursing at La Salle University's school of nursing.

Every ship has a captain and it is the captain's expertise, knowledge, and leadership that determine the success of the ship getting from one destination to the next. Dr. Katherine Kinsey has all three components which has enabled her to guide the organization she is in charge of from one success to the next. Academically speaking, Dr. Kinsey has obtained a PhD in Health Professions Education, in addition to her MSN Degree in Community

Health and BSN Degree in Nursing. She has written, contributed, and edited many publications on various public health-related issues. Dr. Kinsey has also managed to keep herself grounded in what is happening to people in the real world. She had a rich, hands-on experience being a school nurse, a home care supervisor and a staff nurse, a public health coordinator, and an on-call nurse. According to Dr. Kinsey, her stubbornness, perseverance, and refusal to give up are what drive her work.

In terms of running organizations and sustaining growth, Dr. Kinsey employs strategy in a dynamic way, her growth strategies evolve with time in light of the surrounding environment. For Dr. Kinsey, strategy is like a tree: you have a foundational core that is fed by the essential elements which keep the organization alive. These elements are embedded within the mission, vision, and objectives of an organization. The stems and branches that expand from the core hold the leaves or strategies. And just as the tree grows, seasons pass, and like leaves fall that off and get replaced by stronger ones, strategies change too: some are dropped because their time has passed and some are added because their time has come. It is this kind of flexibility and consideration of the overall setting that allows room for long-term growth while staying true to the identity and foundational beliefs an organization carries.

But good strategy is not the only thing that is needed to sustain an organization. Keeping the engine of an

organization running in full-effect depends heavily on funds. Kathrine Kinsey has raised over 30 million dollars in federal, state, and foundational grants. When I asked how she managed to do it, she said she wrote meaningful proposals based on what the organization seeks to do, address real need in the community, and that her proposals were also well-developed and thought through. Real-life issues get addressed effectively and efficiently by presenting measurable and demonstrable outcomes. Truly meaningful solutions for her are not mere band-aids but are long-term models that are just as much, or possibly more, preventative than they are medicative.

Dr. Katherine Kinsey is responsible for the administration and oversight of the Public Health Nursing programs that serve over 650 low-income mothers and their children; moreover, she is responsible for the supervision of 45 nursing and administrative staff and the fiscal management of multi-million dollar grants. According to her, to run an organization like a well-oiled machine, all the inputs and processes must be clearly defined and managed, and objectives should be consistently met. Dr. Kinsey's leadership style is well-balanced: she pays equal attention to the non-human components as to the human components of the organization she runs. When leading her staff and employees, whom she considers colleagues, Dr. Kinsey emphasizes the importance of building and fostering a healthy and supportive working environment, which she believes are essential to empowering people to

generate their best results. She says she hires professionals; and accordingly, she thinks that professionals should not be micromanaged, but rather guided and supported. Dr. Kinsey believes that the authority she gives to her staff members according to their functions must be respected, even by her: a higher authority. For Dr. Kinsey, micromanagement of staff is simply energy-consuming and is neither efficient nor effective.

To be good at what you do, many believe that you should do what you love the most: this is in line with Dr. Kinsey's philosophy because she does not believe that people should be convinced about what they want to do, in nursing or in any other field. She believes that people need to have a foundational interest in what they do and that it is the job of their leaders to help them grow and develop. Passion is what has fueled Dr. Kinsey's long-time career in public health. Her professional journey, which began in 1971, started off with her desire to be a nurse when she was just seven years old. When she was seventeen years old, she read a book on epidemiology entitled *Eleven Blue Men* and from that point on, she knew that her career must enable her to not only understand what people suffer from but also help her to do something about it. In the words of Dr. Kinsey, she is "just a passionate public health nurse who wants to convey to others that a health profession such as nursing, could really be mainstream and make a difference in the lives of

people, one by one, and community by community."