

A National PHLI Story: Georges Benjamin, M.D.

President, American Public Health Association



Dr. Benjamin began his public health career as a Health Officer in Washington D.C. from 1990-1991. He returned to the field in 1995 as a Deputy Director at the Maryland State Health Department. Dr. Benjamin currently serves as the Executive Director of the American Public Health Association. He is a PHLI Class of 1995 graduate.

Networking

Dr. Benjamin reflected on the Institute and the role it played in getting acquainted with new colleagues. He comments, “(PHLI) has made collaborating a lot easier. Certainly picking up the phone and talking to people that I know - these are not cold calls anymore. “

Career Decisions

Dr. Benjamin also discussed how NPHLI influenced his early career decisions and ultimately his commitment to public health.

I went to the Leadership Institute at a time when I was re-entering public health, having had been a health officer in 90-91 in Washington DC as a DC health official. That was my entrée into core public health. That’s actually a high-level entry into public health. The DC health job is a fairly highly visible, engaged job, and I didn’t know anybody. I wasn’t really knowledgeable about the field at that time. I was there for a couple years and then I left and went off and did some other things... I came back to public health in ’95 as a deputy at the Maryland state health department... and frankly, my time in PHLI in many ways served to solidify my entry into public health at a time when I was making career choices about whether I was going to stay in public health or go into the health care side of things – into health care management, hospital management.

The Mid-Atlantic Health Leadership Institute

Dr. Benjamin and the colleagues he met at NPHLI believed there was a need to create a state leadership institute in Maryland, which resulted in what is now the Mid-Atlantic Health Leadership Institute.

We had a unique situation in Maryland....I went to the national PHLI course at a time ...when they were not doing teams – it was all individuals....yet my group just happened to have five people in it from Maryland – we came from different portals – one from Hopkins, a couple came from the state, one local – we just ended up with five people...so when we came back, we decided to set up a Public Health Leadership Institute in the state of Maryland, which ultimately became a regional institute – so Maryland, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, DC, and Delaware were the states that were supposed to participate in that...It still exists ...we in effect created that leadership institute.