

Community-based Research Education in Eastern Kentucky

A CREEK Update



CREEK Mission

The mission of CREEK is to build the capacity of rural peoples and communities to overcome individual and structural barriers to attaining individual and community health and wellness

CREEK Principles

- CREEK is a catalyst that enables:
 - Communities to be informed partners in health decision-making
 - Individuals, families and communities to advocate for their own health and wellness
- CREEK values community-based knowledge, expertise, and experience
- CREEK synthesizes the knowledge and experience of individuals, communities and researchers
- CREEK addresses the needs and concerns of rural people and communities
- CREEK seeks equitable access to health and wellness
- CREEK advocates health and wellness as the foundation for economic growth in communities

CREEK is in the community and the community is in CREEK.



The Appalachian Kentucky Context

The National Cancer Institute defines special populations as those that face higher than average risk of death, disease and disability. Special populations include people with low incomes, older Americans, African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, other ethnic populations, and rural Americans.

Residents of Eastern Kentucky face health challenges related to:

- Higher than average risk of death, disease and disability from chronic illnesses (e.g., cancer, heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, and asthma)
- Higher than average rates of poverty and unemployment
- Lower than average educational attainment
- Reduced access to health care
- Infrastructure gaps (e.g., limited public transportation and community services)
- Reduced access to health-promoting resources (e.g., walking paths, farmer's markets, or outdoor clubs)
- Higher rates of risky health behaviors (e.g., smoking, poor diet, substance use or inactivity)
- Lower rates of health-oriented behaviors (e.g., active lifestyles and health screening)



Colleges and universities that serve students in the 51 Appalachian counties can join the CREEK Consortium. Participants include:

University of Kentucky
UK Center for Rural Health
Alice Lloyd College
Berea College
Eastern Kentucky University
Morehead State University
Kentucky Community and Technical College System

The CREEK Curriculum:

- Emphasizes behavioral and social sciences.
- Complements students' disciplinary studies.
- Offers undergraduate and graduate courses.
- Provides community-based research experience.
- Focuses on topics related to community-based research: health issues, Appalachian social structure, qualitative research, community-based participatory research, health policy and population science.
- Builds multidisciplinary, multilevel research teams.

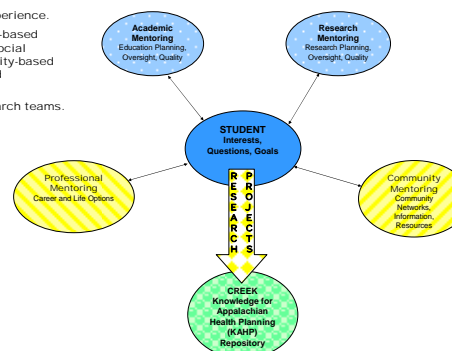
The CREEK Approach



CREEK Education



CREEK Mentoring Model



Recent CREEK Student Research Topics

- Body Mass Index Trend Analysis: A Pilot Study in Rural Appalachia
- Influencing Food Choices in Appalachian Kentucky
- Civic Engagement of Rural Elders: Defining Local Environmental Supports for Physical Activity
- The Impact of Regional Culture On Framing Substance Use Issues in an Appalachian Community With and Without a Women's Prison
- Evaluation of the People Encouraging People (PEP) Coalition: a Community-based Substance Abuse Prevention Program
- Coal Workers Pneumoconiosis
- Effects of AIDS on Rural Women in Appalachia
- Depression in Women in Appalachia
- Effects of Alcohol Use and Death Self-reflection on Risk-Taking Behavior Among College Students



CREEK Clearinghouse

The CREEK Clearinghouse was established in 2006 with seed funding from the Appalachian Regional Commission. The Clearinghouse maintains databases of health-related research activities in eastern Kentucky, serves as a repository for the products of research by CREEK students, faculty and associates, coordinates research experiences for CREEK students, and links research employment opportunities with qualified personnel.

Featured Activities

- Five CREEK students are involved in paid research roles. Two received support for dissertation research projects.
- One NCI-funded project (tobacco cessation in rural Kentucky) specifies collaboration with CREEK and offers opportunities for research employment (2007-2009).
- Two proposals (colorectal cancer screening and substance abuse treatment) are pending that specify collaboration with CREEK.
- Three CREEK students are presenting research results at professional meetings in 2007.
- Financial support was awarded to CREEK from the National Cancer Institute, Appalachian Cancer Control Network, Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), Good Samaritan Foundation, and Cancer Research and Prevention Foundation.
- ARC provided funding to develop the CREEK Clearinghouse and to expand the educational consortium (2006 through 2007).
- The CREEK Clearinghouse has initiated the development of community-based research interest groups and collaborated with the Appalachian Inter-Agency Health Council, a federally-funded women's health project.
- Pathfinders of Perry County was established in collaboration with the CREEK Clearinghouse (2006) and serves as a model of health-related community intervention.

