



## 2009 State Report

**State:** Georgia

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### Projects/Issues Addressed This Year:

#### 1. Workforce Development

- A DVD of a Public Health Nurse's passion for public health (*Melisa's Story*) was produced as a retention tool, distributed statewide and received very positive feedback after being viewed by local Public Health Nurses.
- *Words of Encouragement* was produced and distributed statewide as a template for recognizing excellence in public health nursing.
- New PHN Salary Guidelines were developed (not yet approved) in a similar manner to current salary guidelines used for epidemiologists.
- A new comprehensive Career Track for Public Health Nurses was developed and approved by the PHN Executive Leadership Group. One of the key features of the career track is the requirement that all PHNs without a BSN must complete a Public Health/Community Health Nursing course within the first year of employment.
- A new Public Health Nursing recruitment brochure was developed and distributed statewide that can be customized to local needs and services.

#### 2. PHN Web-Based Database---an outline for a new web-based PHN database has been developed to include the following components and will be presented to the PHN Executive Leadership for approval on May 20, 2009:

- Section I Demographics
- Section II Turnover and Vacancy
- Section III Licenses
- Section IV Supervision
- Section V Training
- Section VI Personal/Preventive Services
- Section VII Population Health Services
- Section VIII Outcomes
- Section IX Retired PHNs
- Section X Customer Satisfaction
- Section XI Recruitment/Retention Practices
- Section XII APRN QA Oversight

#### 3. Population Health Elsevier Online Course Pilot

The Elsevier Company's Community Health Nursing online course is being tested by 10 PHNs in District 10 (Athens, Georgia). The Elsevier Company has provided access to the online course, online access to the 4 texts and hard copies of 1 of the

texts for each of the 10 participants without charge to the agency. If the evaluation from the pilot project recommends the course to other PHNs, guidelines will be developed and resources requested to provide this course for other PHNs.

4. **BSN Study Committee**---based on a resolution developed and approved by PHN Executive Leaders and Nursing academic partners in 2008, a study committee was convened to consider the benefits and drawbacks of requiring the BSN for practice as a PHN in Georgia. The study committee produced a report with recommendations that did not include requiring the BSN at this time, but outlined several initiatives, including support for PHNs completing courses in Public Health/Community Health Nursing, seeking scholarships to support BSN completion, more emphasis on PHNs being in the classroom to recruit BSN students and the proposed Career Track for PHNs.
5. **New PHN Research Agenda**---the new research agenda will be soon posted on the web site and will be distributed to the Schools of Nursing with an invitation to collaborate on joint research initiatives.
6. **Annual Nurse Week Celebration with CDC**---the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Nurse Week Celebration has been planned jointly with Georgia PHNs and CDC Nurses for May 11, 2009.
7. **Guidelines for Nurse Agents to Administer Vaccines**---these guidelines were developed in response to private companies and hospitals wishing to administer seasonal influenza immunizations, in accordance with the nurse protocol statute, to the public.
8. **Travel Restrictions**---due to budget cuts, the Division has limited all travel, which has impacted the capacity of State Office Nurses and Nursing Section staff to provide onsite consultation, training and technical assistance. Nearly all meetings are currently held by conference call or WebEx.

### **Projects/Issues Pending:**

1. **Public Health Restructure July 1, 2009**  
Effective July 1, 2009 the Division of Public Health (DPH) will leave the Department of Human Resources, the umbrella organization created in 1972 by then Governor Jimmy Carter, and move to the Department of Community Health (DCH), which already includes the state Medicaid agency. The DPH Director will report directly to the Governor and to the DCH Commissioner. Although it is not yet clear how the restructure will operate, we are hopeful that the direct line to the Governor will be positive for public health and public health nursing.
2. **Access to Essential Nurse Training Resources**  
Budget cuts, high turnover and extended vacancies have negatively impacted the capacity of the state office programs to provide training that the districts have relied upon to prepare new nurses and update current nurses. The lack of these essential training resources has reached a level of concern expressed by the District Nursing Executive Leaders as well as the State Office Nurse Consultants and the Nursing Section. A report documenting the issue and outlining a set of solutions has been submitted to the Division. A presentation on the issue and solutions is to be made to the Division leadership.