



## State/Territory Report

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### Introduction

In 2003, four state agencies in Texas merged to become a single agency known as the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS). The four legacy agencies were the Texas Department of Health, the mental health section of the Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation, the Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, and the Texas Healthcare Information Council. This merger led to the largest single state agency nursing workforce in Texas. Our agency vision is: **A Healthy Texas**. Our mission is: **To improve health and well-being in Texas**.

The state nursing director role is less than two years old. The position is situated in the agency Headquarters and within the Office of Academic Linkages, which reports to the deputy commissioner of the agency. The state nursing director's role is to provide executive leadership for nurses with the agency including those in both public health and mental health settings. Nurses in public health services in classified nursing positions number approximately 225; although many more nurses fill other positions in public health, e.g., program specialists, managers, directors, etc. The mental health nurse complement within the agency includes approximately 1,200 licensed nurses and approximately 3,000 paraprofessional nursing staff.







In 2009, David Lakey, MD, DSHS Commissioner approved bylaws for the appointment of the DSHS Nursing Leadership Council. Such an organization has never existed before in DSHS. The council has been appointed and has a total of 15 members, including representatives from the DSHS central office, regional, and local public health and mental health settings; state psychiatric and communicable disease hospitals; and two members from academe. The functions of the council have been to address nursing management, practice, and performance improvement functions as well as to promote academic linkages and professional nursing development and education.

### **Projects/Issues Addressed This Year:**

- **Activities of Inaugural DSHS Nursing Leadership Council.** The DSHS Nursing leadership has had a busy inaugural year. The council operates as a committee-of-the-whole and has sub-councils in each of five areas, i.e., professional development and education, practice functions, management functions, academic linkages and performance improvement. The council has developed a two-year operating plan, with a mission statement, goals, objectives, and action steps. Council members are each assigned to a sub-council and work collaboratively toward achievement of plan objectives.

#### **DSHS Nursing Leadership Council Mission Statement and Goals**

*The mission of the DSHS Nursing Leadership Council is to provide leadership for the provision of public health and psychiatric-mental health nursing in Texas, recognizing the authority as well as the responsibility of the governmental role in protecting and promoting the health of the public.*

-  Goal 1: Provide leadership for nurses and for nursing practice.
  -  Goal 2: Promote provision of ethically and quality-driven, evidence-based nursing practice.
  -  Goal 3: Promote professional development and education.
  -  Goal 4: Implement performance improvement systems.
  -  Goal 5: Provide guidance for nursing management practices.
  -  Goal 6: Promote linkages.
- **DSHS Annual Nursing Leadership Conference.** The DSHS assistant commissioners have provided resources for the development of a 1 ½ day nursing

conference that will occur in July 2010. The conference will have both plenary and break-out sessions with a variety of speakers. The theme of this year's conference is: "**New Decade, New Challenges, New Opportunities.**" Topics will include leadership skills, workplace issues, health promotion, growing the next generation of nurses, and self-care issues. All sessions will provide continuing education credit. In 2008, the conference had 160 participants. In 2009, the participant group grew to 280. This year's conference is already sold out with 300 registrants and a growing wait list. There has been a tremendous response from faculty in Texas schools of nursing who have donated their time to serve as conference presenters. Most notable is the University of Texas at Austin School of Nursing, which has five faculty serving as conference faculty. We attribute this strong support to the fact that the DSHS Nursing Leadership Council has actively promoted mutually-beneficial relationships with schools of nursing. The agency provides academic clinical placements for large numbers of nursing students each year and is appreciative of the fact that schools of nursing are willing give of their expertise in promoting professional development of public health nurses in Texas.

- **Grand Rounds.** DSHS began agency-wide Grand Rounds CE programs in the fall of 2008. Since that time, the Grand Rounds initiative has grown into a very popular recurring continuing education event. An effort has been made to engineer grand rounds presentations that are intra-disciplinary in nature. In the past year, a number of public health and psychiatric-mental health nurses have participated as faculty in Grand Rounds, including serving on intra-professional presenter panels. Grand Rounds is convened at a central location and broadcast to more than 60 public sector sites across Texas.
- **ANCC Accreditation as a CNE Provider.** DSHS is a provider of continuing nursing education. In December 2009, the agency had an onsite accreditation visit conducted by two representatives of ANCC. A number of DSHS nurse administrators and educators participated in the accreditation interview process. The visit had a very positive outcome with the agency receiving 6-year ANCC accreditation to provide continuing nursing education. DSHS provided more than 300 educational events during the past year for which nurses were awarded CNE. DSHS has scheduled a 6-hour educational activity later this month targeted at CE event planners. This event will focus on CE event planning processes. The target audience is staff members who participate in planning CE events within their

divisions and includes nurses who are slated to become “nurse planners,” as required by ANCC.

- **A Record-breaking Flu Season.** As of March 2010, Texas public health nurses had administered more than **707,142** doses of H1N1 vaccine. Nurses were integral to the planning and deployment of numerous flu vaccine campaigns across the state. Texas public health nurses also participated in flu campaign call center support activities and in the development of written H1N1 guidelines that were published on a number of topics including pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical interventions.
- **Academic Linkages.** DSHS nurse leaders have been actively increasing the number of academic linkages between the agency and schools of nursing within the state. Although the agency already has more than 1,500 undergraduate and graduate nursing students in clinical rotations and internships each year, efforts are underway to increase linkages, especially with graduate students. There are currently two doctoral nursing students collaborating with the agency on dissertation topics. In the past year, the DSHS nursing director has served on advisory groups within two university settings on the development of two new nurse practitioner programs. These programs will be able to provide needed new advanced practice nurses to the DSHS nurse workforce. The state nursing director also taught two courses in the past year in a university setting, including a web-based RN-to-BSN/MSN nursing management course.
- **Highlighting DSHS Nurse Workforce Issues.** The State of Texas has a Statewide Health Plan that informs planning, prioritization of resources, legislative initiatives, and the development and deployment of statewide policy. This year, the DSHS Nursing Leadership Council was invited to develop a white paper on public health nurse workforce issues. This white paper will be an attachment to the new Statewide Health Plan, thus improving the visibility of challenges facing public sector nurses in Texas.
- **Completion of a Nursing Educational Needs Assessment.** The DSHS Nursing Leadership Council has provided oversight for the development of an electronic educational needs assessment that was distributed to public sector nurses in Texas. The electronic survey was distributed in January 2010. A total of 387 responses were received. The results of the survey were used to develop the

content of the annual nursing educational conference and will also be used to plan other educational programs in the upcoming year.

- **Public Health Nursing Perspective in Revision of the State Differentiated Entry Level Competencies for Nurses.** The Texas Board of Nursing maintains a guideline that sets forth entry level competencies for new nurse graduates. The document has a grid format and delineates knowledge, clinical judgments, and behaviors expected of new graduate vocational, associate degree/diploma, and baccalaureate nurses. This important document is used by schools of nursing in developing curricula and is also used by employers of nurses to guide entry level practice parameters. In the past year, the DSHS state nursing director was invited to participate on a workgroup appointed to revise this document. The workgroup has been underway for the past year and is expecting to take forward a draft document in the fall of 2010. DSHS is grateful to have had input into this document as it has a direct impact on new graduate entry-level public health nursing competencies..

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

- Development of a single nursing profession homepage on the DSHS website (to replace multiple division-level homepage sites currently maintained).
- Revision of the agency nurse peer review policy and procedures.
- Development and administration of a needs assessment to Texas schools of nursing, the results of which will be used to inform strategies for promoting additional academic linkages.
- Development of a nurse practitioner training stipend program (in formative stage).

### **Issues & Special Concerns for Public Health Nursing:**

- Budget challenges facing the state and the resulting potential impact on the ability to maintain the nurse workforce needed to provide public health services within the state.
- Challenges of a dwindling nurse applicant pool within the state as many nursing positions go unfilled for long periods of time.
- Challenges with ensuring that public health nursing is represented in health policy-making activities at the highest levels within the state.
- Challenges with implementation of strategies to ensure a nurse workforce that is culturally competent to provide public health services in Texas, given predictions of the state demographer with regard to dramatic shifts in size and characteristics of the future state population.
- Challenges with border health issues.
- The ongoing challenges presented by the fact that Texas has more natural disasters than any other state in the U.S.

**Please complete the “State/Territory Report Form” and e-mail it to Janet DeVeney-Edwards at [JanetkD@health.ok.gov](mailto:JanetkD@health.ok.gov) Reports received by May 21, 2010 will be included in meeting packets. If you do not send by May 21<sup>st</sup>, please bring 50 copies to the meeting.**