

Karen O'Brien, DNP, RN, APHN-BC

ASTDN Executive Director

It is with great pleasure to announce Karen O'Brien, DNP, RN, APHN-BC as the new Executive Director for ASTDN. Dr. O'Brien brings a wealth of experience, a track record of management success, as well as a commitment to and a passion for public health nursing to the Association. The Board looks forward to working with Karen to ensure that ASTDN manages not only to sustain its position as a leader in public health nursing, but also to ensure that it is well positioned to face future challenges and opportunities.

Dr. O'Brien's ASTDN history includes serving as the 2006-08 President –elect, President, and Past President of the Association of State and Territorial Directors of Nursing. In this role she was honored, in collaboration with the ASTDN Executive Board, to secure and administer a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Cooperative Agreement for public health nurses nationwide. During her ASTDN Presidency, she served as Chair of the QUAD Council. In 2008, she was awarded the ASTDN Award of Merit.

In May 2008, Karen earned a Doctorate in Nursing Practice degree from the University of Colorado-Denver with a public health nursing practice focus. Her doctorate work included a national survey of public health nursing orientation programs, a survey on public health nursing educational needs and development of an orientation program for new public health nurses statewide. Her public health nursing experience is extensive having worked in rural and urban settings in New Mexico under a National Health Service Corps grant, Kansas, Illinois and Colorado where she served as the county public health officer for ten years and the Colorado Director of Public Health Nursing for nine years. During her tenure as the State Director of Public Health Nursing, she created an Academic Practice Collaborative which focused on developing a competency based orientation program for public health nurses. Karen's previous nursing service has included a wide variety of roles as a nurse practitioner, clinical nurse specialist, nurse administrator, political advocate and adjunct faculty for numerous Schools of Nursing. She was awarded induction into the Colorado Nurses Association Hall of

Fame for organizing a statewide nurse volunteer system in response to natural disasters and emergencies and state Nightingale finalist for her nursing advocacy.

She speaks nationally as an inspirational speaker and public health advocate. In the past two years she worked part time with a nonprofit organization, The Colorado Center for Nursing Excellence, under a federal HRSA Nursing Practice, Education and Retention grant. This leadership project provided the opportunity to support nurses in their life- long learning journey. Additional leadership roles in state and national organizations include serving as a state delegate to the American Nurses' Association, the Colorado Nurses Association, American Public Health Association- nursing section, and chair of the advocacy workgroup for the Public Health Nurses of Colorado.

Karen is passionate about building strong relationships with public health partners to meet the goals and objectives in the changing health care environment and support the ASTDN members in building a healthier nation for all Americans.

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