



## State and Partner Report 2006\*

**State:** Texas

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### Projects/Issues Addressed This Year:

- Along with several of the other Gulf States, Texas was actively involved in providing assistance and care for evacuees from Hurricane Katrina. Shortly thereafter, in October, Hurricane Rita hit the eastern Texas Gulf Coast and we became an affected area as well as a responder. For the first time, the Department of State Health Services assumed its new role as the coordinator for Special Needs Populations.

### Projects/Issues Pending:

- There has been a workgroup formed, involving all agencies of the Health and Human Services Commission, which is exploring the problem of nurse recruitment and retention faced by all of the agencies under the commission. The workgroup is looking at salaries, career ladders and various other strategies that could have a positive impact on the situation. Workgroup members from the Department of State Health Services include a nurse from the Central Office and one of the Regional Nursing Directors.
- Department nurses once again sponsored a Nursing Leadership Conference which was held March 2-3, 2006 the after a 3-year absence. The conference was the first major collaboration between nurses from the newly formed Department of State Health Services, which consolidated both public health and mental health into one agency. The conference was a huge success featuring Dr. Tim Porter-O'Grady as the keynote speaker. Approximately 150 nurses attended coming from public health, mental health, community mental health, academia, and DSHS contractors
- Nurses, along with other DSHS employees will be participating in a statewide hurricane preparedness exercise on May 1-5.

### Issues and Special Concerns for Public Health Nursing:

- There continues to be a void in nursing leadership within the department at the central office level since there is no longer a Division of Public Health Nursing. Previous functions of the Division have been reassigned to other areas but there is no oversight to assure that these functions are carried out. The situation has created some unique challenges for nursing within the agency. Much of the continuity within the Nursing arena has been maintained by a core group of nursing leaders in the department, especially the nurses in leadership roles in the regions.

\*Reports must be sent electronically to Justina Novak ([justina.novak@doh.wa.gov](mailto:justina.novak@doh.wa.gov)) by April 15, 2006 in order to be included in packets. If your form is not received by then, you need to bring 50 copies of your report to the meeting.