



# Region 8 Update

Winter 2011

## FROM THE REGIONAL MEDICAL DIRECTOR

Dear Region 8 Employees,

On September 22 and 23, 2011, Region 8 held its first Public Health Leadership Caucus meeting. The Public Health Leadership Caucus was created to serve as an executive leadership advisory panel for Health Service Region 8 and the public health system serving our counties. Thirty individuals were invited to serve for a two year term. These members represent local health departments, elected officials, schools, private non-profits, correctional facilities and other community groups that care about population health. The Caucus members were asked to assist in making public health decisions and, ultimately, in implementing public health strategies in Region 8. Their appointment is for two years.

On September 22, the Caucus met with about 100 stakeholders from around the Region to discuss protocols for TB screening in schools, correctional facilities, health care facilities, shelters, rehabilitation centers, and child care facilities. During this part of the meeting, the Caucus members learned about the issues related to TB screening and the different and sometimes confusing strategies used to screen for TB in various settings.

After the first day of education and breakout sessions, the Caucus convened privately on September 23 to review the input and make recommendations for further action to me. The first meeting focused on TB, but subsequent meetings will explore other topics and different program staff will be involved in designing the event, which will again include a day of education and break-out sessions with a group of interested stakeholders followed by a half day meeting of the Caucus.

With best wishes for Happy Holidays and a Wonderful New Year!

From,

*Sandra Guerra*

Sandra Guerra, MD, MPH  
Regional Medical Director



**Dr. Guerra meets with local health officials during the Public Health Leadership caucus meeting.**

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### FISCAL YEAR 2012 OPERATING BUDGET

The Texas Department of State Health Services is now operating under the financial constraints of Texas' budget shortfall addressed by the 82nd Texas Legislature. The changes include: a \$67 million dollar reduction in general revenue (state funding) and the loss of 115.9 positions (FTEs) or \$7 million in salaries. Some of the programmatic impacts on Region 8 are that Regulatory funding was reduced 16% or \$12 million. As a result, we are not able to fill vacant sanitarian positions. The Tobacco program also faced reductions of \$8 million, approximately 50% of its previous funding. Fortunately, we did not lose our tobacco position in Region 8. The Children with Special Health Care Needs funding was reduced \$4 million or 46%. This means that some of the vacant positions in the program are not currently funded in Region 8. Some of our federal funding was also reduced this year. The Emergency Preparedness grant was reduced by 16% and the reduction was distributed across the Regions and the Central Office. The Early Warning Infectious disease Surveillance grant (EWIDS) that previously funded three positions in Region 8 was reduced by 50%. Regions 9/10 and 11 still have EWIDS staff, but Region 8 no longer participates in the EWIDS program. The Preventive Health and Health Services Grant will be eliminated in 2012. The two positions in Region 8 funded by this grant are gone and the staff have been reassigned.

Several other programs have also lost funds. These include the Family Planning program, the Primary Health Care strategy, the South Texas Health Care System, the Substance Abuse programs and Chronic Disease. In addition the Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) program was eliminated.

These changes affect how much money we have to do our jobs, but public health needs continue. We are fortunate that no Region 8 staff lost their jobs and that our programs will continue to work to improve public health in our counties.

### TEXAS AND COAHUILA SIGN BI-NATIONAL TUBERCULOSIS AGREEMENT

On October 6, 2011, Dr. David Lakey, Commissioner of the Texas Department of State Health Services and Dr. Raymundo Verduzco, Secretary of Health in the State of Coahuila, Mexico met in Del Rio to sign a joint statement of agreement to collaborate in the prevention and control of tuberculosis along the Texas-Coahuila border. The bi-national tuberculosis project's goals are to reduce the rate of TB in Del Rio, Ciudad Acuña, Eagle Pass and Piedras Negras and reduce the transmission of TB across the U.S.-Mexico border by researching, developing and evaluating interventions related to schools, correctional facilities and other congregate settings in these communities.



**Dr. Lakey and Dr. Verduzco sign the the Texas-Coahuila bi-national TB agreement.**

The project will focus on improving active surveillance for TB to identify and adequately treat all identified bi-national cases. In addition, Texas will provide medical consultation to Piedras Negras and Ciudad Acuña with a TB physician expert in MDR TB and with other complications of TB to ensure adequate treatment. Through provider education, the project hopes to identify patients early in their illness so that they can receive prompt treatment. More patients will be treated by directly observed therapy as well. Yolanda Maldonado is the Region 8 staff member who will be coordinating these activities.

## DR. THOMAS FRIEDEN, CDC DIRECTOR, VISITS SAN ANTONIO

On Tuesday, August 16, 2011 Dr. Thomas Frieden, Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Dr. David Lakey, Commissioner of the Department of State Health Services, visited Health Service Region 8. In preparation for the visit, the Public Health Emergency Preparedness staff together with staff members from our Emergency Medical Services and Epidemiology Response Team, started out early that morning setting up the Region's emergency response trailers and Zumro tents. The Region has trailers for Immunization Response, Shelter Response, Communications and Command. The inflatable Zumro tents can be connected together to be used as a mobile mass response clinic for emergencies such as a mass immunizations campaign like the H1N1 vaccination campaign of 2009/10.



Photos by Bill Lydon



Dr. Frieden, CDC Director

In about two and a half hours, the set-up team had the trailers in position and the tents inflated and connected. Inside the tent, the team set up the patient areas, a RapidTag ID tagging station for registration of volunteers and staff, the emergency response Bus Kits used for mass evacuations due to hurricanes and other disasters, the portable hand washing station, and the nurses' charting station. The communications trailer was set up to demonstrate our connectivity capability in a field environment. The entourage arrived around 1:00 pm and was given a tour of the tents and trailers with a demonstration of the ID tagging system and other equipment. Steve Hannemann gave the visitors an overview of public health emergency preparedness in Region 8, while other staff provided demonstrations and explanations of equipment.

After the Emergency Preparedness tour, the entourage was met by Mr. Jim Elkins, Administrator of the Texas Center for Infectious Disease, to take the visitors on a tour of the new TCID Hospital. The hospital is a 75-bed facility and is the largest new infectious disease hospital to be built in the past fifty years. The hospital is specially designed to care for patients with tuberculosis.

It's not often when we have the opportunity to showcase our preparedness assets and the capability to treat infectious disease. All in all, Dr. Frieden and Dr. Lakey's visit to our Region was a great shot in the arm!



Dr. Lakey, Texas Commissioner of Health

## SB 969 - PUBLIC HEALTH FUNDING AND POLICY COMMITTEE

On October 24, Dr. Lakey convened the first meeting of the Public Health Funding and Policy Committee. This committee, created by Senate Bill 969 during the last legislative session, is asked to define the core public health services a local health department should provide. It is also charged with evaluating public health in Texas and identifying initiatives for areas that need improvement. The group will identify funding sources available for local health departments and establish public health priorities for Texas. It will make recommendations to DSHS on the use and allocation of funds available exclusively to local health departments to perform core public health functions and make recommendations for improving the overall public health of Texas.

The committee has nine members. Three members represent communities of different sizes (population of 50,000 or fewer; 50,000 to 250,000; and at least 250,000). Two others represent local health authorities working in local health departments. Two represent Schools of Public Health in Texas and the final two members are regional medical directors. One of these regional medical directors is Region 8's own, Dr. Sandra Guerra.

SB969 also asks DSHS to document how it collaborates with local health departments. As a result, program managers are asked to identify and report actions and events that we perform in local health department counties. This will help the legislature understand our role in all the counties in Region 8.

## LAUGHLIN AIR FORCE BASE PILOT FOR A DAY PROGRAM

Since the fall of 2003, Laughlin Air Force Base has hosted the Pilot for a Day Program for children with special needs. Since that time, more than 30 children have been selected to be a "Pilot for a Day". Laughlin's instructor pilots are at the helm, providing the VIP day for the child pilot who is selected by Sharlene Perez with Region 8's Social Work Services Program. The four training squadrons at Laughlin AFB share the task of hosting the Pilot for a Day (PFD).

The day begins with the instructor greeting the family and friends at the front gate. As they caravan to the Pilot for a Day's squadron, a flashing sign says "Welcome to Laughlin- Pilot for a Day and includes the child's name.

The Pilot for a Day and family are greeted by the entire squadron. There are often forty to fifty pilots lined up applauding. Inside is another sign that says "Welcome Pilot for a Day". The host instructor and the Wing Commander then present the child with a flight suit. The Squadron usually prepares a breakfast and there is a time to mingle.

The child will change into his or her flight suit and the VIP tour begins. The host and the child, along with family and friends, venture out to the flight line where they find a plane with the child's name on the side. The smile on the child's face is inevitably priceless. The squadron joins the child for a picture in front the airplane. The PFD then gets to climb up onto the airplane.

The tour continues to the fire station where the child gets to climb into a fire truck and shoot the world's biggest water gun onto the flight line. The child gets a chance to try on fire suits and find out what Air Force fire fighters do. Then it's off to Security Forces to meet the Air Force security dogs. The child watches a dog going through an obstacle course and always getting the bad guy.

Then it is time for the tower tour. At the top of the tower, the child looks out and tries to find his or her home. Next on the agenda is lunch at the VIP table that is set up so the PFD can watch the airplanes take off and land. The flight simulator is usually the final stop. Here the child gets to actually fly a simulator with the help of his instructor host pilot. Family members also get to fly the simulator if the PFD allows them. At the end of the day, the squadron presents the child a framed collage of photos from the day, as well as other memorabilia. After hugs, smiles, tears and high fives, the child and the family depart.

Over the years, Sharlene Perez has witnessed many miracles that she believes are a result of this program. One child, who took ten different medications for breathing and behavioral issues, is now off all his medications and has been placed into regular classes, is on the honor roll and is thriving in high school. His mother reports that she feels that the Pilot for a Day Program was the catalyst to this improvement. Another twenty year old autistic, developmentally challenged individual would not go into public places. He arrived on the base and, when faced with the group of pilots applauding him, instead of running (his mother thought he would) he smiled and walked right through the center of the group. Later in the day he took the initiative and climbed into his plane, interacting with his host pilot and smiling from ear to ear. His smile said it all. That day showed his family the potential that he has! This child has gone from having daily outbursts to minimal outbursts and has moved from being in an intensive behavioral unit to a moderate behavioral unit at school.



**The Pilot for a Day flies the simulator at Laughlin Air Force Base.**

*Velma Stille of Region 8, Texas Health Steps attended a Pilot for a Day event and called the pilots, "Angels in Green Flight Suits." She was inspired to write a poem*

### **Angels are my Heroes**

There are angels among us; I've heard the poets say  
And now I know it's really true, as I met a few today  
They gently held a tiny hand-a child so frail and weak  
I quickly turned my head away, as tears ran down my cheek  
Yes, feathers are not the fabric of the sturdy Angel Wing  
They're made instead of love-and all that sort of thing  
Yes, angels are among us-they can easily be seen,  
Just look for pilot flight suits, neatly pressed and olive green.

**REGION 8 TAKES ON MOTHER FRIENDLY WORKSITE PILOT PROGRAM**

DSHS received a grant to implement, and promote worksite lactation support policies, programs, and environments. The goal of the Mother Friendly Worksite is to provide guidance, tools, and support for new parents returning to work after childbirth.

Region 8's Mother Friendly Worksite Committee is creating a plan to implement the Mother Friendly Worksite Initiative in our region. Velma Stille, a member of the committee says "I remember the challenges I faced as a working, breastfeeding mother thirty years ago – support of breastfeeding mothers in the workplace was very limited. I am pleased that the State is committed to ensuring that we now offer breastfeeding mothers a mother friendly workplace. This agency's support of "cradles and careers" encourages these experienced, valuable, co-workers to return to the workforce and this is a win/win for all of us"

Region 8 has designated a room for breastfeeding mothers to use to express their milk. The room is being converted to reflect an environment more conducive to breastfeeding mothers. It will include a multi-user hospital grade pump, ergonomic chairs with foot stools, and small desks so mom will be able to continue working even when she is pumping.

As for the new parents working in the field, the committee has developed a concept of mom-to-go kits that provide the basics to be able to pump when she is away from her office. The committee is also working on establishing a relationship with WIC clinics in Region 8 to offer employees a place to stop when traveling where they are able to meet their breastfeeding goals.

The committee has just finished writing an operating plan for the pilot program. The Mother Friendly Worksite Program will kick off in January 2012. The Mother Friendly Worksite Committee feels that this program will help us retain qualified employees who are new parents.

By Kristen Gutierrez

**SPECIAL THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING CONTRIBUTORS :**

Kristen Gutierrez, Bill Lydon ,Sharlene Perez, Trudi Shim and Velma Stille



HELLOS AND GOODBYES IN REGION 8

We are fortunate to have added some new staff during 2011. Here is some information about them.

**Hello to ...**

**Jose Guerrero (Nurse III)** is a long time resident of Del Rio with a history of working in multiple clinic areas from Federally Qualified Health Centers to prisons. He is the clinic team leader for the Del Rio field office, responsible for coordination of direct care and population-based services such as immunizations, communicable disease surveillance, STD/HIV and TB support.

**Tenia Houck (Nurse II)** comes to Region 8 from the Mississippi Health Department. She has a history of working in the tuberculosis program. Her headquarters is in Kerrville. She provides nursing assistance in Kerr County and is also responsible for Gillespie County's population-based services, communicable disease surveillance, STD/HIV and TB.

**Stacey Hull, LVN** joined us as a Program Specialist III for the HIV/STD program. She is the team leader, front line supervisor and disease intervention specialist. She received her LVN from Victoria College and has been an LVN for the past 16 years. She completed an Associate's Degree in Business Administration from the American Intercontinental University in 2008 and is currently working on a Bachelor's of Science in Psychology through University of Phoenix and hopes to complete it by June 2012. Stacey is married and has three daughters (ages 20, 18, and 10 years), and has two Shih Tzu, which take up most of her time outside of work and school.

**Yolanda Castillo-Yzquierdo** is a registered nurse working in the TB clinic in Eagle Pass. Yolanda graduated from Laredo Community College in 1993 with an Associate's Degree in Nursing and recently went back to school and received a Master's Degree in nursing from Texas A&M International University. Working in public health has been a new experience for her, since she worked in acute care for most of her career. She says the most rewarding part of her work is that she gets to bond with our clients. Yolanda enjoys painting in oil and acrylic, mainly landscapes, realist style.

**Glenda Garcia** is a Public Health and Prevention Specialist (PHPS) in Eagle Pass. Glenda graduated from the University of Texas at Austin with a Bachelor of Science degree in Kinesiology-Health Promotion and Fitness. Her job as a PHPS is to provide Directly Observed Therapy (DOT) and conduct contact investigations for clients with or suspected of having tuberculosis. She is a people person so she absolutely enjoys working with our clients to help them get through some of the challenges this condition can present. Away from work she enjoys exercise, the arts and great food! She loves dancing and especially enjoys going to Zumba classes where she can dance and get a work out. Glenda's latest motto is "Why not!"

**Roxann Ortiz-Vigil, Lorena Felan and Kristen Gutierrez** joined the Social Work Services team in January as case managers. Henry Gallegos came on board in June. All three hit the ground running and are now managing caseloads of 150 to 200 cases. Congratulations to Roxann on the arrival of her second child, Dominic Michael, who was born on 11/11/11. Dominic's dad is a veteran and he is

very proud that his son was born on Veterans' Day.

**Kenda Deputy** is the new nurse for the Epidemiology Response Team. She is a native of El Paso and earned her BSN at the University of New Mexico. Her public health experience includes providing healthcare and education in Kenya, serving rural populations in Bolivia and volunteering for Healthcare for the Homeless. Through her travel to third world countries and developing nations, she gained extensive experience in the medical management of infectious disease. Kenda enjoys scuba diving, cooking, and exploring other cultures. She plays tennis and the piano and enjoys watching baseball and basketball.

**Goodbye to ...**

- Elly Castenada (Seguin field office)
- Christine Soria (Boerne field office)
- Kelly Enriquez (Seguin field office)
- Maricela Benavides (Pearsall field office)
- Amy Roach (Boerne field office)
- Mary Rowden (San Antonio)
- Shawn Mergele (San Antonio)
- Rosemary Armendariz (San Antonio)
- Erasmus Cano (San Antonio)
- Nancy Walea (San Antonio)
- George Sutton (Uvalde)
- Kassie Rogers (Camp Wood)

We wish you well in your new adventures!