



The Commissioner's Report

March/April 2007

MENTAL HEALTH & SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES

MHT grants announced

Under the Mental Health Transformation (MHT) project, DSHS recently announced the community collaboratives grant awards to six communities to improve mental health service delivery in their respective areas. The purpose of the community collaborative is to develop, test and refine models of transformation at the local level. DSHS sent Requests for Application to all county judges in Texas in December 2006. The agency received responses from 20 community collaboratives representing 41 counties and 59 percent of the Texas population. The six community collaboratives selected through a competitive process are:

- Coastal Bend Rural Health Partnership (Kleberg, Jim Wells and Brooks counties)
- Dallas County Unified Public Mental Health Initiative
- Mental Health Connection (Tarrant County)
- Terrell County Behavioral Mental Health Collaborative
- West Texas Community Coalition (Hale, Lamb, Floyd, Briscoe, Bailey and Motley counties)
- Williamson County Mental Health Task Force

With the grant funding, these communities will address issues such as the integration of physical health with mental health, early intervention, implementing quality initiatives and using new technologies such as the Internet and teletechnology to improve mental health care. These community collaboratives will be funded in the amount of \$50,000 per year for up to four years and will serve as models for mental health transformation in other parts of the state. *For more information, contact Sam Shore, Assistant Director, Center for Policy & Innovation, at (512) 458-7375 or e-mail sam.shore@dshs.state.tx.us.*

DSHS participates in Texas Tobacco-Free Kids Day

DSHS and the Center for Safe Communities and Schools (CSCS) sponsored Texas Tobacco-Free Kids Day on March 28 to encourage students to live tobacco free. The Texas day was held in conjunction with the 12th annual National Kick Butts Day sponsored by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. Dozens of Texas activities ranged from school assemblies and information sharing to student-sponsored events and displays. Students from several schools in Harris and Fort Bend counties visited the Texas Capitol on March 28. In Texas, 24.7 percent of high school students and 9.5

percent of middle school students smoke. Nearly 90 percent of adult smokers began using tobacco before age 18. Every year, tobacco use kills more than 24,000 Texans and costs the state approximately \$10 billion in medical costs and lost worker productivity. *For more information, contact Penny Harmonson, Division for Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, at (512) 206-5868 or e-mail penny.harmonson@dshs.state.tx.us.*

MH/SA manager selected for statewide task force

Mike Maples, Director of Program Services for the Division for Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, will serve on a statewide task force as part of a national initiative to improve judicial responses for persons with mental illness in the criminal justice system. Texas was one of seven states selected by the Council of State Governments Justice Center to participate in this national project. The Presiding Judge of the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals will lead the Texas task force; other members include state Senator Robert Duncan, the General Counsel for the Office of the Governor, the Williamson County District Attorney, the Lubbock County Sheriff, and representatives of the Texas Correctional Office on Offenders with Medical or Mental Impairments and the Texas Task Force on Indigent Defense. The Texas Department of Criminal Justice reports that 30% of the people incarcerated in the state have a prior service history with the public mental health system. *For more information, please contact Mike Maples, Division for Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, at (512) 206-5968 or e-mail mike.maples@dshs.state.tx.us.*

Substance abuse featured in EpiLink Online Bulletin

The current issue (www.dshs.state.tx.us/idcu/epilink/) of DSHS's new EpiLink Online Bulletin (formerly Disease Prevention News) is devoted to the issue of substance abuse. Feature articles by MHSA staff include "Adolescent Substance Use in Texas" by Dr. Liang Liu, which captures information gathered through the 2006 Texas School Survey of Substance Use, and "Prevalence of Alcohol Consumption in Texas and Selected Consequences" by Dr. Martin Arocena. Additional feature articles on the methamphetamine epidemic and substance use on the Texas-Mexico Border were contributed by Dr. Jane Maxwell and Dr. Lynn Wallish with the Center for Social Work Research at The University of Texas at Austin. EpiLink is a monthly online publication providing investigative reports, annual reports, and other articles covering important public health issues. *For more information, contact Dr. Martin Arocena, Division for Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, at (512) 206-5809 or e-mail martin.arocena@dshs.state.tx.us.*

PREVENTION AND PREPAREDNESS SERVICES

ORVP activities continue

The 2007 Oral Rabies Vaccination Program (ORVP) surveillance activities following ORVP vaccine bait distribution began the week of February 12. Blood and teeth specimens are collected from coyotes and foxes and tested to determine the level of bait acceptance and the degree of antibody production in a sampling of the population.

Due to fox variant cases identified outside the 2007 bait drop zone, DSHS is working with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to carry out active surveillance. In addition, a supplemental baiting project took place March 21-24. The rabies cases that prompted this contingency action involved four cases in foxes in Upton County; two cases in dogs in Ward County; one case in a coyote in Pecos County, and one each in a bobcat and a domestic cat in Crane County.

The Wildlife Service division of APHIS is supplying 340,000 vaccine baits, two aircraft and personnel for the surveillance project. DSHS is supplying two two-person teams for the bait drop. *For more information, contact Tom Sidwa, Zoonosis Control Branch, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 6628, or e-mail tom.sidwa@dshs.state.tx.us.*

Medication staff assesses pharmacy assistance feasibility

The Texas HIV Medication Program (THMP) is assessing the feasibility of implementing a State Pharmacy Assistance Program (SPAP) for certain Medicare beneficiaries. Eligibility criteria for the SPAP would include Texas residency, denial of the full low income subsidy by Social Security, an income of less than 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), and no other secondary payer for prescription drug coverage. On March 9, THMP received the Level of Effort (LOE) completed by First Health/Vendor Drug for projected start up costs to implement the SPAP. The LOE is an estimate of the time it would take to develop the systems and software applications that would be needed to administer the program. DSHS staff is currently in the process of reviewing and assessing the LOE. *For more information, contact Dwayne Haught, Texas HIV Medication Program, at (512) 533-3002 or e-mail dwayne.haught@dshs.state.tx.us.*

Mosquito Abatement grants announced

DSHS has awarded \$1,108,619 for mosquito abatement activities in counties affected by hurricanes during 2005. The funds were provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) under the Emergency Supplemental Appropriation Act for Defense, the Global War on Terror, and Hurricane Recovery of 2006. The intent of these funds is to provide financial support to county and local governments to conduct mosquito and other pest abatement activities during the hurricane and West Nile virus (WNV) season. Twenty-two counties in southeast Texas were identified by the Federal Emergency Management Administration as being eligible to receive the funds and were notified by DSHS. Counties that chose to participate include Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Jefferson, Liberty, Montgomery, Nacogdoches, Polk and Orange.

With the grant funding, these counties will enhance their existing Integrated Mosquito Management (IMM) programs through increased mosquito surveillance for both operational activities and disease surveillance; purchase of the latest technology for insecticide application equipment; updating of the insecticide delivery systems for aircraft; strengthening of insecticide resistance monitoring in target mosquito species; increased community education programs and increased continuing education training for mosquito control personnel. *For more information, contact Roy G. Burton, State Vector Control Entomologist, at (512) 834-6773, ext. 2302, or e-mail roy.burton@dshs.state.tx.us.*

Staff participates in nuclear emergency response exercise

On March 28, staff from the DSHS Radiation Control, Environmental Health and Manufactured Foods programs participated in a reception center exercise at the Tri-State Fairgrounds in Amarillo. The reception center is where, in the unlikely event of a radiological release from the US Department of Energy's Pantex Nuclear Weapons Plant, potentially contaminated citizens would come for a radiological evaluation. Other participating organizations included the American Red Cross, numerous local government entities from Amarillo, US Department of Energy's RAPTOR Team, Pantex Emergency Management, the Texas Governor's Division of Emergency Management, and US Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) Region 6. *For more information, contact Alice Rogers, Inspection Unit Manager, (512) 834-6629 or e-mail alice.rogers@dshs.state.tx.us.*

DSHS hosts conference on Perinatal Hepatitis B

DSHS hosted the first Perinatal Hepatitis B Prevention Conference in Austin on February 22. The purpose of the conference was to ensure that professionals have the most recent information on reporting, surveillance and case management requirements. More than 130 registered attendees received an updated program manual, newly developed parent/provider brochures and posters; updated screening cards; and sample patient charts to promote consistent charting across the state. *For more information, contact Charles Wallace, Infectious Disease Intervention and Control Branch, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 2291, or e-mail charles.wallace@dshs.state.tx.us.*

FAMILY & COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES

Texas Health Steps Coalition holds expert forum

DSHS Texas Health Steps regional provider relations activities continue throughout the state. Regional THSteps staff provides information, education and training to providers offering Medicaid services to the newborn through age 20 population. Staff focuses on assisting providers and other partners in understanding THSteps program operations and conducting other activities designed to recruit and retain providers. For example, in March in Region 2/3, The Texas Health Steps Coalition, a partnership of those interested in improving the use of THSteps services, conducted a "Texas Health Steps Expert Forum." This forum, and similar events conducted throughout the state, trained and updated THSteps medical and dental providers on program benefits and services. The Region 2/3 Expert forum was well attended and positively evaluated. *For more information, contact Karen Riley, Health Service Region 2 Texas Health Steps, at (817) 264-4918 or e-mail karen.riley@dshs.state.tx.us.*

OTHER DSHS ACTIVITIES

New birth and anniversary certificates available

The Vital Statistics Unit (VSU) is pleased to announce the availability of a new heirloom birth certificate and a commemorative wedding anniversary certificate.

The heirloom birth certificate is designed to celebrate the heritage of native-born Texans. It is a legal certificate of birth and may only be issued to a properly qualified applicant, as required with regular birth certificates issued by VSU. Gift certificates are also available and may be redeemed by the qualified recipient. The certificate has a specially designed engraved intaglio border with engraved seals on heirloom quality paper that incorporates special security features. Two background styles are available: baby bassinette (new design) and Texas state flag (existing design).

The commemorative wedding anniversary certificate is designed to recognize marriage milestones. This is not a legal certificate of marriage and does not establish or may not be used to establish a marriage relationship. The certificate may be issued to any individual making a request. The parchment-like certificate may be customized to recognize a couple's anniversary — from the first to the 100th. The background style features a bouquet of flowers.

Both types of certificates bear the signatures of the Governor of Texas and the Texas State Registrar and cost \$60 per certificate. The commemorative wedding anniversary certificate may be ordered online at www.dshs.state.tx.us/vs/reqproc/wedding.shtm and the heirloom birth certificate is available at www.dshs.state.tx.us/vs/reqproc/heirloom.shtm. The certificates will also be made available through Texas Online later this year. *For more information, contact Geraldine Harris, State Registrar, at (512) 458-7366 or e-mail geraldine.harris@dshs.state.tx.us.*