Perhaps you heard the acronym floating around. Maybe you received an informational packet from us. But how does your Public Health Improvement Team (PHI) serve you? What does the program actually seek to accomplish in your community? In this first issue of our quarterly newsletter to you, our stakeholders, we want to highlight a few goals of this elusive undertaking termed “PHI.”

Of the 49 counties located in Texas Health Service Region 2/3, 37 counties do not possess local health departments. Why is this important? Public health programs for these counties are covered by the regional office in Arlington and its field offices located throughout North Central & West Texas.

Currently, our program serves approximately 1.2 million people residing in counties without local health departments. With such a diverse population base, reaching every individual can be a challenge – which is exactly where PHI steps in to help.

We believe that the most powerful forces for change in a community are the individuals who reside within it. Therefore, PHI strives to empower local leadership to build new and strengthen existing public health infrastructure. Such efforts range from conducting county-wide needs assessments to supporting local health authorities.

The cornerstone of our program consists of community coalitions. These groups meet on a regular basis to discuss strategies for improving public health in their counties. Past projects include sponsoring county-wide health fairs, implementing programs to reduce the prevalence of methamphetamine labs, and gathering county-specific health data. Currently, we are working to promote the National Red Ribbon Week Campaign.

Through these partnerships, North Texans become healthier, communities are made stronger, and lives are changed for the better.

Funding Opportunities

| Regional Community Health Grants Program | Aetna Foundation (on-going acceptance of applications) | www.aetna.com/foundation/grants_reg |
| Texas Small Towns Environment Program (STEP) Fund | Texas Office of Rural Community Affairs (posted 12/01/09) | www.tdra.state.tx.us/index.php/Community+Development |
| U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention | Communities Putting Prevention to Work (Due 12/01/09) | http://www07.grants.gov Search Funding Opportunity #: CDC-RFA-DP09-912ARRA09 |

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Upcoming Events

- 10/15/09 - 10/16/09: Facing Family Violence Conference in Plano, TX www.ccc-fv.org/calendar/conference.htm
- 11/09/09 - 11/10/09: Texas Rural Health Forum in Austin, TX www.trha.org/conferences.htm
- 12/09/09 - 12/10/09: 2009 Governor’s Nonprofit Leadership Conference in Dallas, TX www.onestarfoundation.org/page/gnlc
Welcome to the first publication of the Department of State Health Services Region 2/3 Public Health Improvement newsletter! We hope this informational newsletter will aid you in your efforts to develop public health infrastructure in your communities. In each issue, we will feature best practices from around our Region as well as news, funding opportunities and upcoming events of interest.

One of the first highlighted events occurs on October 23-31, 2009 and celebrates the National Red Ribbon Week Campaign. This campaign provides the opportunity for a united effort to inform, educate and mobilize communities throughout the nation to step up the battle against underage drinking, tobacco use, prescription drug abuse, and the use of illegal drugs among our youth.

During this week, communities just like yours will be focusing on drug prevention awareness activities (see page 3). We encourage you to wear a red ribbon, tie a red ribbon outside or keep one on your desk during this week to demonstrate your commitment to a drug-free community.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or need assistance in your National Red Ribbon Week Campaign efforts.

We look forward to partnering with you through this newsletter to build public health infrastructure in North Central Texas.

-Susan Senn, Director of Community Health Services

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Frequently Asked Questions

- What is “public health infrastructure?”
  According to the Healthy People 2010 Report, public health infrastructure consists of “the resources needed to deliver the essential public health services to every community.” The 10 essential public health services include: Monitor Health Status * Diagnose & Investigate Health Issues * Inform & Educate * Mobilize Partnerships * Develop Policies & Plans * Enforce Laws & Regulations * Link People & Resources * Assure Competent Public Health Workforce * Evaluate Health Services * Research Innovative Solutions

- How do I get in contact with the PHI program specialist working in my county?
  To discover which PHI program specialist is working in your county, contact Susan Senn, Community Health Services Director, via telephone at (817) 264-4736 or e-mail at susan.senn@dshs.state.tx.us.

- Do all counties in Texas Health Service Region 2/3 have a PHI community coalition?
  No, counties with local health departments do not have PHI community coalitions. Currently, PHI community coalitions exist within 10 counties (see this issue’s In Your Community).

Do you have a question you would like answered in a future edition of the Public Health Improvement Newsletter? E-mail questions to liz.izaguirre@dshs.state.tx.us with “PHI Newsletter” in the subject line or mail them to Attn: Liz Izaguirre, Texas Department of State Health Services, 1301 S. Bowen Road Suite 200, Arlington, TX, 76013.

All questions are screened for appropriateness of content.
Commemoration of the 21st anniversary of the National Red Ribbon Week Campaign (RRW) occurs the week of October 23 – 31, 2009. Every year, RRW seeks to present a unified and visible commitment toward the creation of a Drug-Free America. The campaign’s theme for this year’s celebration announces that “Drug Free is the Key!”

Proclaimed by Congress in 1988, RRW honors the memory of undercover Drug Enforcement Agency special agent and former marine Enrique “Kiki” Camarena. Special agent Camarena lost his battle against illegal drug traffickers in 1985 when they murdered him in Guadalajara, Mexico. Consequently, participants of RRW wear red ribbons to symbolize the intolerance of drug use and to honor the ultimate sacrifice Camarena (and others after him) paid.

As part of a desire to respond to the battle cry of protecting this generation from the dire consequences of underage drinking, tobacco consumption, prescription drug abuse, and the use of illegal drugs, communities across the nation sponsor events to educate and empower children and adolescents to avoid and/or quit these behaviors. How will your community participate in this campaign? Will you sponsor a luncheon honoring those who support youth in this fight against alcohol, tobacco, and drugs? Organize a pep rally? Host a poster or essay contest?

What matters most is not the exact nature of the response but rather that our communities do not remain silent bystanders in the face of such a deceitful enemy of our youth.

While the National Red Ribbon Week Campaign traditionally focuses on illegal drug use among children and teens, one must not ignore the path that often leads to such behavior. Frequently, teenagers experiment with other seemingly less harmful products such as alcohol or tobacco before graduating to substances such as methamphetamine, cocaine, or heroine. While viewed by many as harmless youthful antics or a rite of passage into adulthood, use of these “soft drugs” (often referred to as “gateway drugs”) guide youth down a path that is more mentally, physically, and emotionally costly than many ever imagined.

According to a 2007 report, one out of every four Texas youth have either smoked cigarettes or cigars or used chewing tobacco, dip, or snuff. Perhaps even more alarming is the knowledge that over 27 percent of Texas teens partook of their first alcoholic beverage before the age of 13 years. The reality that more than one-third of 9th - 12th graders in Texas have tried marijuana one or more times during their lifetime points to the fact that parents, educators, local leadership, and community members possess a real responsibility to stem the flood of tobacco products and alcoholic beverages to this next generation of Texans.

During the week of October 23rd through 31st, encourage the youth in your sphere of influence to abstain from the use of illegal drugs – absolutely. However, it is imperative that we also remind this younger generation of the harmful effects of so-called “gateway drugs” – that these substances do act as a gateway. . .but it’s a gateway to nowhere.

CPR Anytime® Kit Project a Success!

Students at Venus Middle School will gain a life-saving skill this fall thanks to a partnership between Public Health Improvement (PHI) and Venus Independent School District. During the months of August and September, PHI worked with 50 school districts across North Central & West Texas to distribute over 200 CPR Anytime® Kits aimed at teaching students the core principles of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Developed by the American Heart Association, each kit contained a 22 minute instructional DVD, an inflatable manikin, and face shields. Eighth grade students in Venus ISD will attend a class utilizing this resource at the end of September sponsored by Ms. Bonnie Ortley, Venus ISD nurse. According to Ms. Ortley, “If [this class] goes well, I'll try opening it up to our high schoolers, and then, who knows? We could have a hit!”

Each year in the United States, approximately 300,000 individuals experience out-of-hospital cardiac arrests that are treated by emergency medical services providers. Additionally, four out of every five non-hospital cardiac arrest events occur in a home setting. In the absence of effective CPR, chance of survival among sudden cardiac arrest victims is reduced by 7%-10% for every minute of delay until defibrillation. On the other hand, the likelihood of a victim surviving cardiac arrest doubles if a bystander performs effective CPR.¹

In light of these facts, your regional PHI team sought to empower communities to safeguard their health through the effective and timely delivery of CPR.

Regional Program Highlight: Tobacco Prevention & Control

Tobacco Prevention and Control services are guided by the program’s goals which consist of preventing the initiation of tobacco use among youth; increasing cessation among youth and adults; supporting policy for environmental changes; and reducing exposure to secondhand smoke. Additionally, we promote awareness and provide technical assistance and education to organizations which provide or desire to provide tobacco-related services.

Texas Health Service

Upcoming Health Observances

October, 2009
- 1st – 31st: National Breast Cancer Awareness Month
- 18th – 24th: National Teen Driver Safety Week
- 23rd – 31st: National Red Ribbon Week Campaign

November, 2009
- 1st – 30th: American Diabetes Month
- 1st – 30th: Pulmonary Hypertension Awareness Month


Public Health Improvement Newsletter
Community coalitions form the backbone of the regional PHI program. Individuals involved with these groups sacrifice personal time and effort to make a difference in the well-being of their county's residents. Below is an introduction to the ten community coalitions currently at work in North Texas.

**Fannin Health Coalition: Health Partnership & Medical Reserve Corps (FHC)**
The FHC meets in Bonham, Texas at the Bailey Inglish Campus each month. This group is working on an influenza vaccination campaign for Fannin County residents to decrease the number of preventable hospitalizations occurring each year due to influenza infection. For more information, contact Liz Izaguirre at (817) 264-4905.

**Jack County Health Action Coalition (JCHAC)**
The JCHAC meets the second Tuesday of every month at the Law Enforcement Center in Jacksboro, Texas. The group recently launched an initiative called MethWatch in Jack County which seeks to partner local businesses with law enforcement to reduce the prevalence of home-grown meth labs. For more information, contact Liz Izaguirre at (817) 264-4905.

**Montague County Health Board (MCHB)**
In order to accommodate various schedules, MCHB meetings are held on a rotating schedule: afternoons the 2nd Tuesday of odd-numbered months in Bowie & evenings the 2nd Thursday of even-numbered months in Montague. As an upcoming project, the MCHB will promote frequent hand-washing to prevent the spread of influenza. For information, contact Jane Schwarz at (817) 264-4611.

**Rolling Plains Rural Health Partnership (RPRHP)**
The RPRHP is a coalition comprised of five counties: Baylor, Foard, Haskell, Knox, and Throckmorton. Currently, this coalition is working to develop a plan to address teen pregnancy. Monthly meetings occur the third Friday of each month at 10:00 a.m. in one of the member counties. For more information, contact Marsha Waters at marsha.waters@dshs.state.tx.us.

**Wilbarger County Health Coalition (WCHC)**
The newly formed WCHC meets the first Tuesday of each month at 9:00 a.m. at the Vernon College Library. As first order of business, this group is educating themselves about community resources to aid in the development of a Health Improvement Plan for the county. For more information, Contact Jane Schwarz at jane.schwarz@dshs.state.tx.us.

**Wise County Health Group/Forum (WCHG)**
The WCHG meets the fourth Thursday of each month at 9:00 a.m. in the Community Room of Decatur City Hall. This group is working on addressing access to care issues impacting the uninsured and underinsured residents of Wise County. For more information, contact Marsha Waters at marsha.waters@dshs.state.tx.us.