



# Region 8 Update

Fall 2013

FROM THE REGIONAL MEDICAL DIRECTOR

Dear Region 8 Employees,

The Department of State Health Services is currently undergoing a Sunset Review. This legislatively mandated process involves a commission reviewing the mission and the work of our agency to determine if it is still relevant and needed. Our division, Regional and Local Health Services, presented to the Commission on October 21, including slides specific to our work in Region 8. We are very proud of the many quality services we provide and emphasized these to the Sunset Commission members.

I wanted you all to be aware of the process but not to be alarmed. DSHS leadership does not foresee any situation in which our agency would cease to exist. Our work is too important.

I am looking forward to seeing you all at our December all staff meeting. Thanks as always for your hard work and dedication to the health of the people of Region 8.

From,  
*Lillian Ringsdorf*, MD, MPH  
Regional Medical Director

## CONTEST : BRAND OUR WELLNESS PROGRAM

We'd like to give our wellness program a name and logo of its own! Staff and family members can submit their nominations and artwork to [Katherine.Velasquez@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:Katherine.Velasquez@dshs.state.tx.us) by **November 15, 2013**. All staff submitting nominations will receive a token of appreciation; for each separate and unduplicated entry, staff will be entered in a drawing for a prize. The person or group who designs the winning name and logo will receive a \$25 gift card. Wellness Committee members, Dr. Ringsdorf, and Gale Morrow will select the winning brand. All entries will become the property of the Region 8 Wellness Committee.

Members of the Region 8 Wellness Committee have been weaving time into their workdays to plan and implement worksite wellness. Now that the Wellness Survey results are in, we'll be able to target our time and effort toward activities more likely to be most useful to regional staff. The Wellness Information Centers and *Bits and Tips*, the ultimate in break-time and bathroom reading are up and running. We hope you've enjoyed the information and motivation they provide. All staff members are encouraged to submit content to Jennifer Morgan or Anna Lux; local announcements can be posted directly to the Information Center. The employee wellness program ultimately depends on staff volunteering their time to organize activities and to participate in them at their respective worksites. Please consider volunteering your time to coordinate wellness activities at your work location—pass it by your supervisor and let us know, so we can make it an official wellness activity and help you promote it.

Members of the Wellness Committee include: Kim Bauer, Elizabeth Foy, Glenda Garcia, Martha Groomer, Monica Gwosdz, Anna Lux, Emily Martin, Jennifer Morgan, Mark Mullings, Katherine Velasquez (Facilitator), Michael Wu, and Yolanda Yzquierdo.

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## EXTREME HEAT POSES HEALTH RISKS

High body temperature can develop rapidly in extremely hot environments, such as when a child is left in a car in the summer heat. Two decades ago, this was relatively rare. But in the early 1990s, car-safety experts declared that passenger-side front airbags could kill children, and they recommended that child seats be moved to the back of the car; then, for even more safety for the very young, that the baby seats be pivoted to face the rear. Few foresaw the tragic consequence of the lessened visibility of the child that has resulted in children being left in vehicles and suffering serious consequences.

Over the summer, the Family and Community Health staff have worked diligently to get this important message out to the community. They have created lobby displays in their offices and other public places depicting the dangers of hyperthermia. They have also set up temperature displays in cars showing the interior temperatures and the speed at which the temperatures rise inside a car. They have shared heat advisories with community partners, local medical providers and day cares. Working with community partners, they have educated elected officials, Chambers of Commerce and CRCGs about the dangers

### Tips for Reducing the Risk of Hyperthermia

- Never leave a child alone in or around a car.
- If you see a child alone in a vehicle, get the child out. Call 9-1-1 immediately.
- Use drive-through services when available.
- Create a reminder to always look in your back seat (like a teddy bear).
- Keep your vehicle locked, even in the garage or driveway.
- Keep your keys and garage door openers out of reach of children.
- When a child is missing, check vehicles and car trunks immediately.
- Have your day care call you if your child is not dropped off on time.



Hallettsville staff educate the community.

## MASS FATALITY PLANNING

What would you do if you received a call telling you that a mass incident has just killed five people in your area? Ten people? Twenty? Five hundred? Do you know your role? What number of fatalities would completely overwhelm your emergency management system? Do you have a plan to handle this incident?

All these questions and more have been discussed since last fall when Region 8 applied for funding to develop a Mass Fatality Concept of Operations Plan. With funding approved and in cooperation with the Southwest Texas Regional Advisory Council (STRAC), we contracted with BCFS Health and Human Services to assist in developing a Regional Mass Fatality Plan and designing training to help push out the message.

To ensure input from Region 8 counties, we held meetings with the emergency managers, county elected officials, hospitals and community partners. Participants included the Bexar County Medical Examiner and Justices of the Peace because of their key role as the medico-legal authorities in a mass fatality incident. Once developed, the plan was vetted through our regional partners and culminated in a Mass Fatality Conference held in San Antonio to present the final plan.

[BCFS staff lead Mass Fatality 101 class at the San Antonio Emergency Operations Center.](#)



Following the conference, five Fundamentals of Mass Fatality Response training courses were held in the region with over 250 individuals attending. We also hosted two Advanced Mass Fatality courses with 50 participants.

At the Region 8 staff meeting to be held in March 2014, we will offer mass fatality training specific to the Region 8 staff.

We would like to express special thanks to our partners, Southwest Texas Regional Advisory Council and BCFS for their roles in developing the Concept of Operations and conducting the training courses.

**FLU SEASON IS BACK!**

The start of the school year is a very exciting time for parents and children. Weeks before the first day, we spend hours shopping for everything we need to make the year just right for our children. They need the perfect back-to-school outfits, the coolest backpacks, and lots of notebooks adorned with their favorite stars and teams. But how are we preparing our children for the microscopic dangers they will face? You know who they are ...those evil creatures that fly through the air on the wings of an uncovered sneeze or cough seeking their next victims. One innocent, uncovered sneeze and the next thing you know, you have a sick child. While most school supply lists include tissues, hand sanitizers and antibacterial wipes, those things are no match for the flu virus. The best way to protect your child and your family from the flu is to get vaccinated.

The symptoms of influenza appear rapidly, and sometimes can be mistaken for the common cold. However, flu is much more serious than a cold. Symptoms of influenza include fever, cough, sore throat, runny/stuffy nose, body aches, headaches and feeling unusually tired. Children, older adults, pregnant women, and people with chronic health conditions are at higher risk of severe illness (and even death) due to influenza. In the United States, an average of 20,000 children under the age of 5 are hospitalized each year because of complications (like pneumonia) of influenza.

Our kids are not the only ones who get sick. Because siblings, parents, and grandparents have close contact with sick children, influenza can spread quickly through an entire household. While there is no vaccine for the cold virus, a vaccine is specifically designed to target the strains of influenza that are circulating. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) does flu surveillance year-round to determine the strains of flu that should be included in the vaccine. The vaccine you get this year may be completely different from the vaccine you got last year. That's why the CDC recommends that everyone over the age of 6 months get vaccinated against influenza every year.

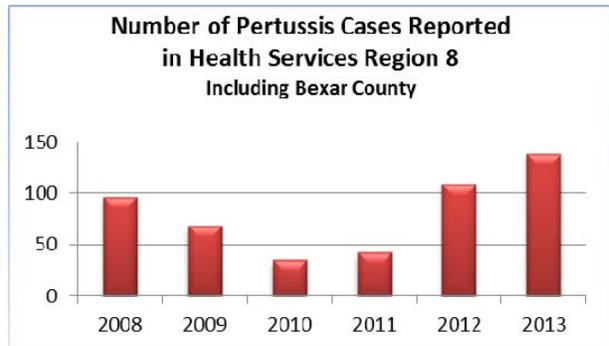
Do your part in protecting yourself and your family against the influenza virus. Get vaccinated. If you or a family member does get sick, try not to spread the disease. Cover your cough, wash your hands and stay home if you are sick!



**PERTUSSIS HITS RECORD NUMBERS IN TEXAS**

The cough caused by the bacteria Bordetella Pertussis is not your normal cough. That's because the pertussis bacteria attach to the cilia (tiny hair-like extensions) in the upper respiratory system where they release toxins that damage the cilia, causing inflammation. The damage to the cilia can cause a person to have coughing fits (called paroxysms) that can cause trouble breathing, sometimes followed by a whoop sound. Paroxysmal coughing episodes can make you gag, vomit and turn blue. Pertussis is a very serious and contagious illness.

Texas is currently seeing a record number of pertussis cases. In Region 8, the total number of cases in 2010 was 35. In 2013, 138 cases have already been reported, with three months left in the year. This is a higher number of cases than we have seen in 50 years. The situation is so serious that on September 3, DSHS issued a Health Alert to the medical community. The alert highlights symptoms, treatment and lab testing. It also serves as reminder to doctors to report probable and confirmed cases. By law these cases are to be reported within one work day.



When Region 8 receives a report of a case of pertussis, a member of the Epidemiology Response team begins an investigation that includes reviewing the lab result, interviewing the family and determining who else might have been exposed. These investigations are challenging because they can quickly involve many people.

Protect yourself and your loved ones by making sure everyone in the family is vaccinated. If you think you have pertussis, contact your doctor. Take your prescribed antibiotics and stay home until you are well. And always remember to cover your coughs and wash your hands frequently.

**CONTRIBUTORS:** Thank you to the following contributors to this newsletter: Connie Alaniz, Kim Bauer, Rita Espinoza, Monica Gwosdz, Steve Hannemann, Theresa Kostelnik, Katherine Velasquez and the Wellness Committee.

## THE STATE OF WELLNESS

Thank you to everyone who responded to the Wellness Survey. The survey was sent to just under 160 staff. One hundred and two (102) staff responded to the survey; most answered all the questions. The findings are now analyzed and useful enough to provide direction for wellness activities. The survey was divided into two parts—questions which help describe the current health status of staff and questions which address staff goals and preferred activities.

**Health Status findings:** 73% of respondents are overweight or obese, which is greater than the city, state, and national rate. At least 1/3 of respondents does not exercise or gets insufficient exercise in a typical week (0-2 days per week of at least 10 minutes). About 1/3 of respondents have not completed a Health Risk Assessment (HRA) or annual physical in the last year; only a quarter have completed an HRA. Most surveyed would rate their physical and mental health as good or better. Of the conditions listed, respondents most reported experiencing low energy, high stress, pain, and poor sleep. The average amount of daily sleep is 6.7 hours. Overweight and less physically active staff had lower self-rated health, hours of daily sleep, and energy levels.

**Health Goals and Activity Preferences:** Health goals most often selected were *lose weight* (74%), *get in shape* (74%), *healthier eating habits* (61%), *become more active* (55%), *have more energy* (54%), and *better night's sleep* (40%). Barriers most often reported were *time* (76%), *lack of energy* (46%), and *lack of motivation* (42%). All wellness activities were selected at decent rates, some quite closely bunched, but the highest were *information center* (54%), *newsletter* (48%), and *after-hour activities/meet-ups* (44%). *Healthy potlucks* and *recipes* were selected by 32% and 40%, respectively. In terms of information that would be helpful, the stand-outs by a long stretch were *exercise* (77%) and *making healthy food decisions* (65%).

The Wellness Committee will use these findings to help develop a regional wellness plan and implement activities.

## RUNNING FOR WELLNESS

Since committing to living a healthier lifestyle in January 2013, Kristy Wurn (Social Work provider liaison) has run five 5k runs including the Children's Shelter 5k, the Foam Fest 5k (Mud Run), Get Up & Glow 5k, Color Me Rad 5k, and the Orange Leaf 5k. Kristy likes to choose runs that support charities. She ran her first 10k on September 14<sup>th</sup> in Gruene. Next up? Her first 1/2 Marathon here in San Antonio on Nov. 17<sup>th</sup> at the Rock-n-Roll Marathon. She has also signed up with the DSHS "Pink Ladies" team for the Dirty Girl Mud Run on Dec. 7<sup>th</sup>. Kristy says, "If you had asked me back in January if I would have done all of these things I would have said, 'Absolutely NOT! I don't run!'... and look at me now!" Moreover, Kristy has lost 35 pounds and 10% body fat! "I am not trying to lose weight. I am trying to live longer, relieve stress and have a healthier lifestyle! My hope is to inspire others to join me on my journey of wellness."



This August, another Region 8 social worker, Henry Gallegos, ran his first full marathon, the Mt. Sneffels Marathon, in Ouray, Colorado. When asked what the best part of the marathon was, Henry stated, "The best thing is the overall experience—running on a beautiful course, meeting new people and pushing myself." He would like to encourage others to try running because he feels it is a great way to stay healthy, meet people, and enjoy the outdoors. While this was Henry's first full marathon, it is not his last—he will be running San Antonio's Rock and Roll Marathon in November.

Kristy and Henry shared a few tips for getting started. Henry's advice to new runners is to read up on running and talk to people who have run marathons. Running magazines or websites, like *Runner's World*, provide him with a lot of helpful information and tips. Kristy has a running partner. She says it's harder to skip a run when you know someone else has gotten their stuff together and is waiting for you. She enjoys listening to music as she runs and recommends wearing proper footwear to avoid over-use injuries. When you do find your muscles tired and in knots, a foam-roller is your best friend. Some people find it useful to use a personal running trainer or to join a running club or marathon training group. Some clubs are for serious runners, but others welcome all levels. Enjoy your runs and watch for more running information in [Bits and Tips!](#)

Kristy Wurn and Henry Gallegos are running for wellness.



**KARNES FITNESS FRENZY**

Each year, Karnes County DSHS staff collaborates with Karnes City ISD by participating in the school's Annual Fitness Frenzy Challenge. The challenge started this year February 4th in conjunction with Heart Awareness Month and ended May 3<sup>rd</sup>. During this time, families at Karnes City ISD were encouraged to participate in physical activity together and record their time on log sheets provided by the school nurse. This year's challenge was extended from the usual six week challenge in hopes that more families would get outdoors and enjoy the warmer spring months. Twenty-four families participated with eight families turning in completed logs. Karnes DSHS staff awarded prizes to the top three families that accumulated the most minutes of activity. These prizes were awarded during the school's annual awards ceremony on May 29<sup>th</sup>. The prizes included numerous cook-books for all members of the family to enjoy, items to promote physical fitness as well as small tokens to promote overall health and safety, such as sunscreen & mosquito repellent. In addition to the prize items, DSHS staff provided educational and wellness support to Karnes City ISD families & employees by serving as a resource for educational items on nutrition and physical activity throughout the challenge.

**MAINTAIN NO GAIN—HOLIDAY WEIGHT MAINTENANCE CHALLENGE**

Do you want to avoid gaining extra pounds this holiday season?

The average American gains 8-10 pounds over the holiday season, Thanksgiving to New Year's. DSHS Region 8 Wellness Committee will be launching "Maintain, No Gain: Holiday Weight Maintenance Challenge" to encourage weight maintenance or a gain of no more than 2 pounds during the holidays. Prizes will be awarded, so be sure to stay tuned for coming details! If you would like to help coordinate your worksite's pre- and post-weigh-ins, please e-mail [Kimberly.Bauer@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:Kimberly.Bauer@dshs.state.tx.us)

**DIRTY GIRLS MUD RUN**

Some female staff from Region 8 have entered a team in an upcoming Dirty Girl Mud Run to benefit cancer research. Ladies, you can still join our team, the "Pink Ladies," and anyone can come cheer us on! This event is a non-competitive 5k with obstacles. We launch at 10:30 a.m. on December 7, 2013. Contact Kim Bauer for more information (210-949-2114).



**W E L C O M E   T O   R E G I O N   8**

**Sandra Calvillo.** Human Services Technician (Floresville) joined the Family and Community Health Program on September 1, 2013. Sandra lives in Pleasanton and commutes to work in Floresville. She most recently worked at the Toyota Center in San Antonio for eight years and at HHSC prior to that.

**Michael Comfort** is joining DSHS in San Antonio as a Surveillance Specialist in the Birth Defects Registry. He has a Bachelor of Science degree in Exercise Science and Psychology and has worked in two major hospitals in San Antonio.

**Patricia “Pat” Dominguez,** SHSS Administrative Assistant (Eagle Pass), Is a former migrant seasonal farmworker who was born and raised in Crystal City, Texas. She was assisted by the Job Training Partnership Act and has worked for the state 24 ½ years in the following state agencies: Texas Employment Commission, Texas Workforce Commission (Clerk, Interviewing Clerk, Workforce Development Specialist I-III), and DSHS (Trainee Eligibility Worker). She says, “I look forward to a challenging growth and development career...[and] a rewarding retirement with the state agency.”

**Sebastian Escandon** joins the Tuberculosis program as a Public Health and Prevention Specialist in Eagle Pass. He has a BS in Microbiology from UT Austin and completed an MPH in Epidemiology at the Texas A & M School of Rural Public Health. His experience includes an internship with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and serving as a research assistant at UT Austin.

**Steven Kotsatos** came to DSHS from San Antonio Metropolitan Health District. He is a Sanitarian I in the Foods Group South. A native of Ohio, he graduated from the University of Akron. He served as Vice President of the Central Texas Environmental Health Association .

**Laura Rios-Salinas,** SHSS Human Services Technician II (San Antonio) is originally from San Antonio. Her career as a Medicaid Eligibility Specialist started at various hospitals in 2001. She has experience in, “pretty much any government program...I enjoy helping patients/clients with needs and also educating them about resources that are available to them.” During her spare time Laura enjoys spending time with her family and volunteers coaching children 3-10 years of age (basketball, indoor soccer, and t-ball) at The San Marcos Activity Center. Working with DSHS “has been a dream of mine for a very long time. I am grateful in given the opportunity to work here and I am looking forward to being part of this team.”

**David Ramirez** started with EMS Compliance in March. He moved to San Antonio from his hometown of Laredo. He has six years of EMS field experience as an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) and a supervisor.

**Rosy Santos** is the newest member of the Office of Border Health in Eagle Pass. She comes from the Health and Human Services Commission, where she worked as a Texas Works Advisor. She earned her degree at UT-Austin.

**Miguel Antonio Solis,** LMSW (Victoria) is originally from Mission, TX, but he considers San Antonio his home since he has been here for the majority of his adult life. “My hope for my new position is to expand my experience as a social worker and help individuals in need of services throughout the state of Texas.”

**Irma Sosa,** LBSW (San Antonio) has been working in the field of social services for over 40 years. She retired from DSHS 10 months ago but couldn't stay away! “I returned to DSHS when I saw an opportunity, because I realized that serving families is my life and I feel that I still have much to offer.” During her retirement she was able to complete some courses in religious theology and obtained a certification that she had put off for many years. She continues to be very active in her church and her community.

**Janie Wetsel-McGuire** also comes to DSHS from the San Antonio Metropolitan Health District where she served as a Retail Foods Sanitarian. She previously served as a Texas Works Advisor with HHSC. She has a BS in Nutrition Science and a Master of Science in Adult Teaching in Learning.

**S P E C I A L I Z E D   H E A L T H   A N D   S O C I A L   W O R K   S E R V I C E S   U P D A T E**

For the first time in many years, SHSS is just one person short of being fully staffed, and we're fully enjoying that status. We're proud of the camaraderie and competence of our team. We've been busy since the last newsletter. The entire department spent 2 ½ days at Mayan Ranch participating in staff development, covering topics in customer service and emergency preparedness, and beginning the process of strategic planning. Other staff training has included courses in office ergonomics, Working with Culturally Diverse Clients, and Dealing with Death and Dying. Unfortunately, some of our clients live short lives, and their deaths touch us and their families deeply. We've experienced new and improved procedures from central office programs (and survived). The last legislative session mandated the transfer of some of the services we provide to managed care. We do not anticipate this process to occur earlier than January 2015. In the Children with Special Health Care Needs program, more funds were released to move 53 children off the Waitlist, which is always a cause for celebration. Finally, staff are learning about the new options related to the Affordable Care Act, so that they can assist clients and families.