

# Florida Public Health

The Florida Department of Health  
2003–2004 In Review





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# Building Upon and Continuously Strengthening a Network

Public health responsibilities become more defined with new opportunities that threaten health and safety. Roles in prevention awareness become better targeted with research and data. And competencies become more solid through training, by facing challenges and by setting and meeting high expectations internally.

The Florida Department of Health (DOH) is a network of skilled, intelligent and ambitious people committed to a mission to promote and protect the health and safety of all people in Florida. During fiscal year 2003–2004, with the 10 Essential Public Health Services as our guide, the actions and abilities of employees across the state affirm individual and department commitments to create healthier communities both within the state and in our own agency.

The hurricanes that wreaked havoc across the state during summer 2004 provide prime examples of the department’s capabilities. Although the hurricanes occurred shortly after the fiscal year-end of this report, it would be unjust not to mention public health’s reactions since much of the staff prepare and train to mobilize for such events. DOH employees worked continuously to provide disaster relief services for thousands of people. They operated special needs shelters, eliminated environmental hazards, monitored drinking water safety, provided mental health services, and so much more.

The hurricanes are one example of how quickly we all can be impacted by health threats. Throughout the year, those of us in public health work to advance our abilities, influence health awareness, and improve overall community health. In the **2003–2004 In Review**, you will find examples of our work—through headquarter responsibilities, services provided by county health departments and clinics of Children’s Medical Services, and through our partnerships across the state. As Secretary at the Florida Department of Health, I am proud to introduce the notable work of my colleagues described in this review.

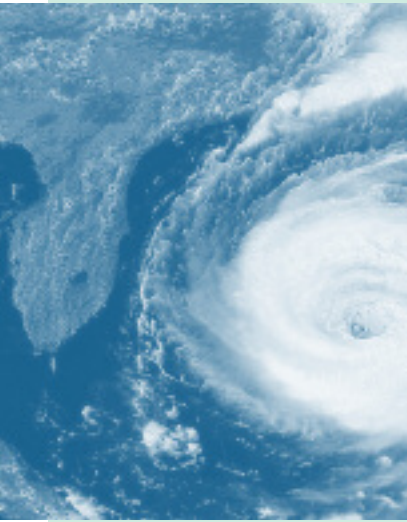


John O. Agwunobi, MD, MBA, MPH  
Secretary, Florida Department of Health



Dr. Agwunobi

## One Hurricane after Another



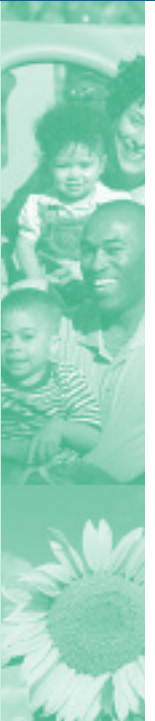
Florida's health and safety response enhancements were put to the test when natural disaster struck during hurricane season 2004. The four deadly hurricanes wreaked havoc with incredible force—all within weeks of one another.

When Tropical Storm Bonnie and Hurricane Charley threatened Florida's Gulf coastline in August, department response teams calculated and prepared. As Bonnie became less hostile, Charley grew more threatening and thus began the long list of health and safety needs. Through Charley on August 13, September's hurricanes Frances, Ivan and Jeanne, Department of Health employees were activated for response and recovery.

As the lead agency for Emergency Support Function 8, the department helped mobilize community partnerships to solve a myriad of health problems associated with each storm. County health department staff manned special needs shelters in their communities, set up mobile and temporary clinics, and dispatched teams across the state to assist colleagues in other storm ravaged counties. Environmental health workers created public awareness for water quality issues among other environmental challenges. And Children's Medical Services ensured the health and safety of their medically fragile clients under extremely trying conditions. Our

health care partners in hospitals, specialized nursing facilities and assisted living facilities were all part of an integrated approach to informing all people in Florida of the health issues associated with hurricane-related damage.

Much of headquarter and county health departments staff spent time actively involved in hurricane response and recovery activities. Many others worked longer hours in their place to ensure that the department continued the critical health and safety mission. The department, along with its community partners, assured the provision of health care in the midst of one of the most dramatic sequence of natural disasters in our history. A special hurricane edition of the department's newsletter, *The Health Advisor*, details some employee experiences and thoughts from those moments. It is available online at <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/HPI/GMarchive/feb.05.pdf>.



## Employee and Customer Satisfaction Strategies

### Building an Able Workforce

- The department completed its third statewide Employee Satisfaction Survey (ESS) in March 2004 and information is now available for department-wide planning and staff development. Such survey information is a vital tool for any business or agency to continue individual and agency growth and development by identifying areas of organizational strength and opportunities for improvement for internal customers.

The 2004 ESS provided a valuable opportunity to trend comparisons from all three full statewide surveys—2004 to 2002 and 1999. Two sample surveys were conducted in 2001 and 2003 and provide intermediate markers on the overall progress of the organization.



## Initial Findings

Overall the department made statistically significant gains in all Survey Dimensions compared to 2002 and 1999, ranging from 1% to 11% and 9% to 27% respectively. The greatest gain over the five-year period was made in the leadership category, increasing satisfaction by 11% from 2002 to 2004. From 1999 to 2004, there was a 27% increase in the leadership category. This indicates better direction and a more coordinated approach.

Employees are more content in 2004 than in 2002 with their work and working conditions. In 2004, 66% indicated their overall satisfaction with the department, which is a 4% statistically significant increase over 2002 and an 11% increase since 1999. Increases resulted in all areas relating to work conditions. Staff feels safer, has secure places for belongings, and feels positive about workspaces. Now, more than ever, employees believe they are recognized for their accomplishments.

- The department's Office of Performance Improvement annually funds Quality Management Demonstration Projects, through an application process, for activities that improve the quality of an identified system, process or work area. The projects provide best model practices that can be replicated throughout the agency. Elements crucial to the success of a proposed project include clearly related goals and objectives; clearly indicated proposed business results; a statement of the impact on customers, employees, and programs; indication of return on investment; the ability to be replicated, and the use of Sterling Quality Management criteria and other management tools.

In the 2003–2004 fiscal year, the following 10 projects were selected for funding: Children's Medical Services—Gainesville/Ocala for project: Community Integration for Nurse Care Coordinator; Volusia County Health Department (CHD) for project: Systematic Customer Complaint & Feedback Process Implementation; Holmes CHD for project: Medical Coding & Reimbursement Project; Seminole CHD for project: Process Lite; Sexual Violence Prevention Program: Project DIVA—Domestic Violence Interventions and Partnerships between County Health Departments and Domestic Violence Centers; Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Data Analysis, Office of State Laboratories, and County Health Departments for: Utilizing the HCMS Lab Module for State Laboratory Processing; Children's Medical Services, Rockledge Office for project: Grab and Go Disaster Preparedness; and Region V Domestic Security Force for project: Consolidated Communication System for Region 5 DSTF Disaster Medical Partner.

Project leaders present final reports during the department's annual Quality Management Showcase.

- The department's Distance Learning Satellite Network fosters professional development and awareness for employees and those of partner agencies through a variety of quality satellite broadcasts. Broadcasts offer various opportunities including continuing education credits for health professionals; critical department information and training; important health information from partner state universities; disaster preparedness information; and administrative messages from the Secretary of Health.

In its 15-year existence, the network has grown from its original 32 satellites used primarily for training and continuing education opportunities to 179 downlink sites that include internal and public service information and that from state and national partnerships. The Network is the largest analog network operated by a state health department. And in 2003, the United States Distance Learning Association recognized DOH's Network for its excellence in programming.

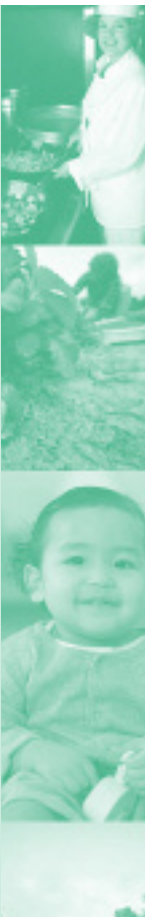
Site coordinators are available at all county health departments. Many attended the first statewide Distance Learning Satellite Network meeting in June of 2004 in Tallahassee where they gained historical perspective of the Network and shared experiences.

### Distance Learning Network Level of Activity:

	2003	2004
	<b>22,723 participants</b>	<b>30,747 participants</b>
	<b>211 broadcasts/programs</b>	<b>225 broadcasts/programs</b>
	<b>66 preparedness programs</b>	<b>69 preparedness programs</b>
	<b>85 contact hours</b>	<b>123 contact hours</b>

## Administration Creates Efficient, User-Friendly Systems

- Federal funding for the Nursing Home Transition project, within the Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program (BSCIP), ended after fiscal year 02–03. The project assists clients with their transition from nursing homes to their own homes by providing temporary assistance for startup costs, such as rent and utility deposits, furniture, appliances and food. In FY 03–04, the BSCIP identified alternative funding, and the department’s Bureau of Finance and Accounting streamlined the payment processes by adding the Purchasing Card (P-Card) as a payment option which reduced processing times from approximately one week to less than 24 hours. In addition, the bureau—in coordination with BSCIP—continues to maintain its standard high level of accountability by ensuring purchasing via the P-Card is first approved through BSCIP client data base (RIMS). It has proven to be a successful effort, and clients do not experience delays in services.
- When Purchasing Cards were first issued, the Children’s Medical Services (CMS) offices were not afforded the option to purchase client-related services with the P-Card. This obstacle was caused by a process that allows client-related service payment transactions to be recorded in the CMS Client Information System. The Bureau of Finance and Accounting, in partnership with the CMS program office, developed a process with CMS field offices that enables the purchase of emergency goods/services, such as air fare, hotel and medical supplies via the P-Card and still captures the data in the CMS Client Information System (CIS). The CMS field offices submit client authorization forms to the bureau for processing through the CIS system as an adjustment batch. This new process is an example of how the department is working to ensure clients continue to receive vital services in a timely manner.
- The department received grants over the past two years from the federal government that included approximately \$3.5 million to add four additional high safety Bio-Safety Level (BSL-3) Laboratory suites at existing state laboratories. Through the close cooperation of the Bureau of Laboratory Services and the Design and Construction office, these BSL-3 suites were added to the Tampa, Miami, Lantana and Pensacola laboratories. Weekly telephone meetings were conducted for the 20-plus person design team of laboratory, architectural, engineering, and construction professionals to maximize input and project progress. Coordination through the Bureau of General Services was thorough and the overall effort has contributed to the raised level of public health preparedness in the state.
- The Bureau of General Services Purchasing Office of MyFloridaMarketPlace (MFMP) Training Team organized and conducted 16 “Train the Trainer” training sessions in eight cities throughout the state on the use of the state’s new e-Procurement system during August and September. The team trained staff who returned to their designated areas to ultimately train approximately 2,300 “end users.” Their organizational skills made the task of training the department on this new innovative system seemingly effortless. The total number of department staff trained has exceeded that of other agencies that have implemented the MFMP system.



## Florida Institute for Public Health Research Campus

## On the Horizon

The department continues its pursuit to address and prepare in advance for the challenges of emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases. In 2004, the Legislature and Governor Bush approved department expenditures of \$1.25 million for the development of a master plan for a state public health research campus in Lantana that would inevitably provide for the integration of public health practice to integrate with public health research.

The department envisions the Florida Institute for Public Health—a Center of Excellence, that becomes a joint endeavor between DOH and leading public health academic centers. The intent is to enhance and expand the existing site of the Palm Beach County Health Department by doubling its space and services; renovate and upgrade the current public health laboratory; and raze the existing tuberculosis inpatient facility, A.G. Holley State Hospital, for a new, state-of-the-art respiratory care unit.

The vision turns much of the 135 acres of state land in Lantana into a research campus that spotlights South Florida as a center for disease investigation and creates the opportunities for public health practice and research.

# Competent Teams Respond and Strengthen Skills

## State Laboratories Testing Reveals Suspected Smallpox Was a Bad Case of Chickenpox

### The Division of Environmental Health

provides resources and expertise to Floridians and visitors regarding health threats to the land, air, water and food. With proactive planning and strategic collaboration with local, state and federal partners, the division works to prevent and control diseases and injury caused by environmental health hazards at home, in the workplace and in Florida's communities. Evaluation and assessment of potential health risks from chemical, biological, radiological and physical agents in the environment is critical in the role of protecting public health and safety.

### Environmental Health Toll Free Telephone Numbers:

To Report Unlawful Septic Tank Contracting Activity: 888-993-9813

To Ask Questions about Hazardous Waste Sites: 877-798-2772

To Report Pesticide Exposures: 800-606-5810

To Ask Questions about Radon and Indoor Air Toxics: 800-543-8279

Website: [www.myfloridaEH.com](http://www.myfloridaEH.com)

### Priorities include:

- Ensuring safe drinking water
- Preventing food and waterborne illness
- Preventing human diseases from animals and vectors
- Ensuring basic sanitation services
- Promoting personal hygiene
- Responding to a radiation threat
- Supporting first responders with technical advice on health risks and exposure pathways
- Helping emergency managers assess the scale of the emergency and respond effectively
- Addressing the environmental aspects of infectious diseases
- Consulting on the long-term health impacts of environmental exposures
- Controlling exposure to biomedical wastes

Three years ago, specialized specimen analysis for Florida was done at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) labs in Atlanta. Enhanced capabilities made within the state's Bureau of Laboratories during fiscal year 2003–2004 now means specimens no longer require travel outside the state and results are quicker. Here is one example:

One afternoon in late January 2004, the Bureau of Laboratories was called to provide critical support in a case of suspected smallpox. An adult patient was assessed and isolated by county health department personnel according to the rash illness algorithm provided by the CDC. Appropriate specimens were collected, transported and received by the laboratory at 9 p.m.

Manipulation of samples submitted for "biothreat agent testing" (including white powders for the organism that causes anthrax, or clinical specimens suspected of harboring the smallpox virus) requires specific safety practices: isolation rooms must be under negative air pressure to prevent the escape of the agent into the adjoining laboratories if an accident occurs; work is performed inside a cabinet providing further physical containment and workers are protected by disposable coveralls (sometimes referred to as moon suits).

Working through the night, specimens were subjected to various tests that first extracted the genetic material from any viruses that may have been present in the specimens. Next, the extracted material was run through a process that multiplies the genetic material one million-fold and detects the specific virus of interest. By 3 a.m. the following morning, the Bureau of Laboratories reported the patient did not have smallpox.

Although at this time smallpox had been ruled out, the question of what agent this patient was infected with still remained. As part of the rash-illness algorithm, the Bureau of Laboratories also tests for viruses in the same family as smallpox, such as Vaccinia (used as the smallpox vaccine), Monkeypox, and the virus that causes chickenpox. At 4:20 a.m. lab staff was able to report that the patient was suffering with chickenpox.

## Dixie and Taylor County Health Departments Act Quickly to Eliminate Drinking Water Contamination

Not a single illness was reported during a 30-day, two-county contamination of drinking water that began just before Labor Day of 2003.

The quick responses and collaborative efforts of employees from neighboring Dixie and Taylor county health departments helped residents and visitors remain disease free and aware that the rising Steinhatchee River was contaminating the communities' wellfield with coliform bacteria.

The counties worked side-by-side, issuing boil water notices and coordinating emergency water supplies and treatment procedures. The State Emergency Operations Center was mobilized to distribute bottled water to the community and water-filled tanker trucks arrived for community relief.

Throughout the process, CHD employees worked together all hours through nights and weekends, testing and retesting water quality, keeping restaurants and area facilities informed as well.

The exemplary spirit of cooperation and action by those who participated in this water-safety alert helped to ensure the safety of residents.

## Hillsborough County Health Department Responds to Coronet Junction Health Concerns

In response to citizen concerns in the Coronet Junction area, the department and the Hillsborough County Health Department along with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Hillsborough County Environmental Protection Commission (EPC) initiated a full-scale study of the area. The agencies began by looking into health concerns to determine if they could be environmentally related. As part of this study, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) recommended that the Department of Health initiate a public health assessment of two adjacent communities: Lincoln Park and Springhead. Each agency pledged their commitments to assist in the health investigation to evaluate the area's water, air, and soil.

The Coronet Industries plant began operation in 1908, producing a feed-grade tricalcium phosphate from phosphate rock. The facility is regulated for air, water and waste by the EPC and the DEP. Two old landfills of concern are contiguous to the Coronet Industries plant site and lie immediately east of the Lincoln Park community. The landfills were operated by Plant City and Hillsborough County in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The land currently is vacant and has been planned for one of Plant City's largest community developments of 2,600 homes.

In August 2003, the health assessment began with private drinking well-water sampling conducted jointly by Hillsborough CHD and DEP within a quarter mile surrounding Coronet Industries. Teams from DOH, Hillsborough CHD and ATSDR initiated urine sampling and analysis of 106 residents in 36 households whose wells had been previously sampled. Air monitoring and soil sampling in the residential areas surrounding the Coronet Junction area and old landfills were conducted by County EPC. DOH in cooperation with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission conducted fish sampling from ponds in the Coronet Junction area. DOH utilized the Florida Cancer Data System registry to evaluate cancer concerns surrounding the Coronet Junction area.

Each agency through teamwork and commitment to health concerns provided the community with up-to-date information on testing and results through newsletters, community meetings (including one attended by more than 700 people), media releases, websites, and hotlines. All health consultation reports of the Coronet Junction area can be viewed at <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/environment/hsee/SUPERFUND/PHA.htm>.

To date, environmental sampling of the water, air, soil, and fish in the Coronet Junction area has not revealed any apparent health hazards.

## Mock Beleaguered Bus Tests Public Health Preparedness

A mock beleaguered bus filled with what appeared to be sick world travelers was an exercise in public health preparedness for eight unsuspecting rural Florida counties in 2004. The arrival of the bus was a group exercise coordinated by the North Florida Domestic Security Task Force Region to evaluate county and local community responses to a public health emergency. The test brought each county an opportunity to improve multi-agency response skills and build relationships and confidence in their abilities to control a public health emergency.

The scenario on the bus was missionaries returning from overseas en route to their North Florida churches on a chartered bus from the Orlando airport. During the ride home, some passengers began exhibiting severe and alarming symptoms. The missionary leader directed the bus driver to call 911 and request emergency medical assistance.


Although county emergency officials knew of such an emergency response exercise in their future, they didn't know exactly when or where. After the initial 911 call, each county responded without further input from exercise controllers. The exercise was closely coordinated with the State Warning Point and the Epidemiology Hotline. And county participants were encouraged to make actual calls to request outside support.

The bus scenario was designed to trigger a public health emergency that required



**Florida's seven Regional Domestic Security Task Forces (RDSTF)** were created in October 2001 by Executive Order of the Governor and designed to provide a preparedness and response structure to cope with terrorism, natural and other human-caused disasters. The North Florida RDSTF extends from Liberty County in the east to Columbia and Gilchrist counties in the west. The Leon County Health Department serves as the coordinating point for the region and coordinated eight "Beleaguered Bus" training exercises during the fiscal year.

**For more about the department's preparedness efforts**, visit its Office of Public Health Preparedness website at <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/PHP/index.html>. The office coordinates planning and program development for the department and other state agencies to protect public health from effects of man-made and naturally-occurring events.



response coordination of multiple county agencies. The counties that were most successful in gaining control over the scene were those that immediately established incident command. All counties initiated at least a partial activation of their Emergency Operation Centers.

About 35 passengers participated in each bus exercise. To present a consistent epidemiology story, passengers were required to memorize facts about their host country, what they ate, insects they saw, etc. They also were coached to present behavioral health challenges.

A disease scenario was created and implemented.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) typically was the first emergency responder on site and thus made first entry onto the bus. They were confronted by anxious passengers, some already off the bus, and symptomatic victims.

Responders called for law enforcement assistance. EMS stabilized the victims and transported them to hospitals. Hospitals assessed incoming victims, placed them in isolation, developed a differential diagnosis in coordination with the county health department, and initiated treatment.

CHDs had two roles in the exercise— establishment of quarantine, and initiation of the epidemiology investigation to determine the disease origins and exposures. CHDs were most effective when the CHD director/administrator took charge of the scene and assumed the role of incident command.

While these exercises are rooted in epidemiology and public health, they serve to test the entire preparedness and response system in each county. The Beleaguered Bus trip was one example of how the department is working internally to improve the state's emergency response system.

### **The Division of Medical Quality Assurance (MQA) has two key functions:**

issue licenses for all the state's health care professionals except X-ray technicians, paramedics and EMTs; and take enforcement actions, when needed, against health care professionals.

The licensure function is handled through the division's bureaus of Health Care Practitioner Regulation, Operations, and Management Services. The enforcement function is handled by the division's enforcement team, comprised of the Consumer Services (CSU), Investigative Services (ISU) and Prosecution Services (PSU) units for licensed individuals; and by the division's Unlicensed Activity (ULA) Program, in conjunction with law enforcement and the state attorney's offices, for individuals practicing without a license.

### **Medical Quality Assurance Toll Free Telephone Numbers:**

Consumer Hotlines: 888-419-3456

Unlicensed Activity Hotline: 877-425-8852 or 877-HALT-ULA

**Visit online at** [www.doh-mqaservices.com](http://www.doh-mqaservices.com)

## **Medical Quality Assurance's Unlicensed Activity Program Expands to Meet Needs**

The Unlicensed Activity (ULA) program of the department's Division of Medical Quality Assurance (MQA) works in conjunction with law enforcement and the state attorney's offices to prosecute individuals practicing without a license. During fiscal year 2003–2004, the unit increased the number of investigators, located new offices in the state, and experienced an all-time high in the number of complaints received and cases.

The program that protects Florida residents and visitors from the potentially serious and dangerous consequences of receiving medical and health care services from an unlicensed person continues to grow to meet the needs of residents and visitors. The ULA program began in 1998 with a staff of four working out of one office in Ft. Lauderdale. Now it includes 11 individuals working in Ft. Lauderdale, Miami, Tampa, St. Petersburg and West Palm Beach. During the fiscal year 2003–2004, 664 complaints were received, resulting in the issuance of more than 100 cease-and-desist orders, and more than 100 criminal court convictions.

DOH has several resources to combat unlicensed activity:

- Consumers are encouraged to use the department's website [www.doh-mqaservices.com](http://www.doh-mqaservices.com) where they can conveniently view the license information of health care practitioners.
- Complaints may be filed anonymously by completing and mailing the complaint form on the DOH website or calling 1-877-HALT-ULA.

During the coming year, the department expects MQA's ULA program to receive an even greater number of complaints and resolve more cases than in previous years. It hopes to place investigators elsewhere in the state, as well, including Jacksonville, Orlando and Tallahassee.

## Florida Board of Nursing Implements Self-Directed Work Teams

During fiscal year 2003–2004, the board office for the Florida Board of Nursing, one of seven such offices within Medical Quality Assurance's Bureau of Health Care Practitioner Regulation, successfully implemented self-directed work teams (SDWT) to review licensure processing procedures, organization of work, and assignment of responsibilities among team members; and, to establish problem solving and decentralized decision-making, problem escalation strategies, communications systems, and performance measures. The implementation of these teams has a projected positive economic impact of more than \$28 million in Florida communities.

Establishment of the SDWT in the board office resulted in:

- a reduction of processing time from more than 33 days in January 2002 to a current average of 14.2 days
- a cost savings in personnel of more than \$18,000
- a reduction in customer complaints
- an increase to the supply of nurses in Florida during a critical shortage, and
- an estimated value of \$11.6 million in added wages for licensees (due to the ability to start work earlier)

The board office was recognized for its innovative thinking with a Davis Productivity Award, and was selected by the Council of State Governments as a 2004 Innovations Awards Program regional finalist.

## Medical Quality Assurance Enforcement Units Continue to Improve Disciplinary Process

The enforcement arm of Medical Quality Assurance—Consumer Services (CSU), Investigative Services (ISU), and Prosecution Services (PSU) units—reviews and investigates complaints, and prosecutes cases resulting from these complaints. All three units, working in partnership, enforce the health care laws established by the Legislature.

Using a team approach, CSU, ISU and PSU work together to determine which cases take priority. Cases involving allegations that could pose a serious and immediate threat to the health, safety and welfare of the public, such as sexual misconduct or excessive prescribing, take priority. During the fiscal year, the team received 168 complaints that required emergency actions.

The enforcement team continuously seeks out ways to improve the health care disciplinary process. During the fiscal year 2003–2004, the number of disciplinary cases resolved through a citation nearly doubled over the previous year—633 compared to 346 during fiscal year 2002–2003. Citations are used for less serious infractions such as failing to release medical records or failing to notify the department of a change of practice address. Citation costs average \$90 per case compared to the \$1,000 that it costs for an average case to be investigated and closed without a finding of probable cause. More importantly, the time to resolve a case through citation is less than 90 days, compared to a minimum of six months that it would take through the traditional process.



# Proactive for Healthy Living

## Officials Launch Women's Health Office

On July 1, 2004, legislation was created to establish an Office of Women's Health within the Department of

Health. Deputy Secretary for Health Nancy Humbert, M.S.N., A.R.N.P., was appointed Women's Health Officer. Her first priority was to implement Senate Bill 2306—which called for the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) and the Department of Health to study issues relating to the accessibility, quality and cost of mammography services. Senate Bill 2306 created the Mammography Accessibility Workgroup within the Department of Health to study the availability, quality of care, and accessibility of mammography; need for research and educational facilities; availability of resources, including health and management personnel; and patient wait-times for screening and diagnostic mammography.

Based on the workgroup's examination of this information, they concluded that, although there appears to be sufficient machine capacity for the current mammography demand in Florida, there exists a shortage of radiologists trained and willing to read mammography demand in Florida. A shortage of radiologists trained and willing to read mammograms, coupled with population growth, will lead to increased appointment wait times and longer delays in diagnosis. The workgroup requested that the Florida Legislature take a proactive stance to ensure future availability and accessibility to quality mammography services in Florida. The Workgroup's final report of its findings was presented to the Governor's Office in December 2004.

In addition to successfully meeting the charge of the mammography workgroup legislation, the following was accomplished:

- Convened a departmental committee for women's health and named a temporary multi-agency steering group
- Promoted breast & cervical cancer awareness in October
- Promoted the prevention of Sexual Violence
- Convened three forums with experts from throughout the state to obtain input regarding Florida's strengths and opportunities relating to women's health
- Worked with the Office of Injury Prevention on the Suicide Prevention Task Force
- Obtained a three year grant, "Healthy Women: A Framework for a Healthy Community," which will focus on some of the areas included in the women's health legislation.

## Governor Appoints Task Force on Obesity

In the Fall 2003, Governor Bush appointed 16 Floridians to the Governor's Task Force on the Obesity Epidemic to recommend ways to promote the recognition of overweight and obesity as a major public health problem in Florida. The task force was charged with reviewing data and research; identifying contributing factors to the increasing burden of overweight and obesity; recommending ways to help Floridians balance healthy eating with regular physical activity; identifying evidenced-based strategies to promote lifelong physical activity and lifelong healthful nutrition; identifying effective and culturally appropriate interventions to prevent and treat overweight and obesity; providing policy recommendations to improve nutrition and physical activity for youth; and providing recommendations for parents, caregivers, health care providers, and youth leaders to encourage and support healthy eating and increased physical activity.

Four public hearings convened across the state to provide task force members the opportunity to hear expert testimony in the fields of public health, physical activity, nutrition, education, epidemiology and medicine. The meetings focused on the prevalence of overweight, obesity and related chronic conditions; nutrition concerns in school cafeterias, vending machines, fundraisers and class rewards; and physical education, physical activity and fitness. The task force developed 22 recommendations to promote and support lifelong physical activity and healthful nutrition that target families and communities, health care and public health, schools and worksites.

The report developed was submitted to the Governor, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and President

The meetings focused on the prevalence of overweight, obesity and related chronic conditions; nutrition concerns in school cafeterias, vending machines, fundraisers and class rewards; and physical education, physical activity and fitness.

of the Senate. For more information about the task force and to review the report, visit the Department of Health's website at <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Family/GTFOE/index.html>.

## Tallahassee Children's Medical Services Tackles Obesity

A growing awareness nationally of the increase in childhood obesity, the risks associated with it, and the alarming number of children arriving at the Tallahassee Children's Medical Services office with Type 2 diabetes (typically adult-type diabetes) prompted public health workers here to become aggressive and creative with intervention methods.

The Tallahassee CMS office launched the Wellness Clinic in late 2002 for obese patients ages 10–16 and continues to see success in the program today. Nutritionists, licensed health educators, aerobics instructors, and partners and volunteers from local universities work with the CMS office to guide the program.

The Wellness Clinic is a holistic wellness program that aims to reduce incidents of obesity and associated conditions that include Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, restricted vision, kidney disease, limb amputations, stroke and social stigma. Children receive physical screenings for baseline readings as well as education and physical development evaluations before joining the program.

Wellness Clinic data collected during the fiscal year 2003–2004 shows the initiative has positively impacted many children. Patients are enthusiastic about it and enroll for additional sessions. The initiative also supports the Governor's Task Force on the Obesity Epidemic.

## Step Up, Florida Campaign Stages Awareness to Confront Health Issues

More than 13,500 people demonstrated their commitment to physical activity and healthy lifestyles and logged more than 25,000 injury-free miles through various activities during the department-sponsored "Step Up, Florida—on our way to healthy living!"

The month-long relay event that culminated at the steps of the Old Capitol in March 2004 brought attention to the many activities those all over Florida can do for physical activity. The event captured media attention on the activities and on the department's goal of informing people about the importance of staying active and issues associated with the lack of physical activity.

The event was coordinated by the department's Bureau of Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, with more than 400 department employees and 900 partner agencies and community organizations involved. The trek went through 36 of the state's 67 counties. Host counties organized activities that focused on community parks, schools, state parks, walking trails and historic locations along the way.

Chronological coverage of the event and other health information is available online at: [http://www.doh.state.fl.us/family/chronicdisease/walk\\_index.html](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/family/chronicdisease/walk_index.html).

## Read for Health Encourages Literacy for Personal Health Understanding

The Read for Health Initiative created by the department during the previous fiscal year supports Governor Bush's literacy initiative Just Read Florida! and continues to be instrumental in educating the public and health professionals about the impact the ability to read has on health. The goal is to promote and improve literacy among Florida families which supports accessing health care appropriately; understanding and following basic health care instructions; making informed health and life decisions; and interacting with their children for optimal growth and development. During fiscal year 2003–2004, 22 clinics participated in the program and provided more than 5,000 books to children from 6 months to 5 years of age during well-child appointments. Learn more about Read for Health at <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Family/RFH/index.html>.





## Students Continue to Unite and Communicate Tobacco Dangers

“SWAT is not dead. Big Tobacco did not win. We will not stop.” This is the message of the committed youth of Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) who traveled from Panama City to Daytona in June 2004 for a week-long tobacco awareness event dubbed Project Phoenix.

Despite recent funding cutbacks for SWAT and other tobacco awareness programs in the department, Suwannee County youth work to keep enthusiasm high and wanted to help others in other North Florida counties remain committed to SWAT’s mission to counter the messages of the tobacco industry.

Thus came SWAT’s Project Phoenix anti-tobacco advocacy tour made possible with a grant from the Lawton Chiles Foundation—a foundation in memory of the late governor who was instrumental in the state’s 1997 landmark legal victory against Big Tobacco companies.

The touring students visited 17 counties where they met with local county SWAT members, handed out information and carried signs at roadways with anti-tobacco messages. At area beaches, students flew kites and Frisbees with anti-tobacco messages on them, and distributed newsletters they had created. The youth captured the attention of local media including two live radio shows.

An advocacy video was filmed during the tour which will be available for use by SWAT groups throughout the state.

## Osteoporosis Prevention and Education Caters Message to Adults and Youth

The Osteoporosis Prevention & Education Program continues to spearhead education and awareness programs that capture the attention of adults and youth for a better understanding of how to prevent this bone loss disease. The department has partnerships with 10 Area Health Education Centers, county health departments, and concerned citizens to implement the osteoporosis educational programs for adults and children. In addition, the program provides statewide awareness activities by distribution of educational materials, coordination of teleconferences on osteoporosis, data collection and participation in the Osteoporosis Awareness Month (May) activities. For more information about the program and to read the Osteoporosis Strategic/Action Plan, Bones for Life, 2002–2005 Strategic Plan, visit <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/family/osteo/index.html>.

- Total number of people served fiscal year 2003–2004 = 27,887
- Total number of elementary students served = 18,917
- Total number of middle school students served = 6,611
- Total number of adults served = 2,359
- Total number of educational programs presented = 1,208
- High school educational program was developed and implemented in July, 2004

### The department continues to promote awareness of the dangers of tobacco use.

Its Division of Health Access & Tobacco is working toward implementing a comprehensive, statewide tobacco control program, the Florida Tobacco Control Program (FTCP). The program continues the belief that young people will serve as advocates and agents for changing attitudes and it incorporates a vision for all Florida citizens, residents, and visitors to live tobacco free.

More about the Division of Health Access & Tobacco can be found at [www.doh.state.fl.us/tobacco/index.html](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/tobacco/index.html)

### Division of Family Health Services

The Division of Family Health Services focuses on helping people make healthy choices. The division is comprised of five bureaus: WIC, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children; the Child Nutrition Program, a supplemental food program for children in child care and after school programs; Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Education; the Dental Health Program; and Family and Community Health, which includes Adolescent and School Health; and Maternal, Infant and Reproductive Health; and Adult and Community Health. Information on programs and services is available at [www.doh.state.fl.us](http://www.doh.state.fl.us) by clicking on topics under Public Health and Maternal and Child Health or by calling 850-245-4100.

# Empowerment through Partnerships

## Southeast Children's Medical Services Joins Forces with Sickle Cell Foundation of Palm Beach

Children's Medical Services Southeast Region VII, which includes Ft. Lauderdale, West Palm Beach and Ft. Pierce, joined forces with the Sickle Cell Foundation of Palm Beach County to increase awareness of education opportunities and counseling services for parents of newborns found to have the sickle cell trait or sickle cell disease.

Following routine newborn screening tests at Department of Health laboratories, parents of newborns with the sickle cell trait are notified by letter from the Department of Health. With the new partnership, the Southeast CMS office medical director sends parents contact names and other information for the local Sickle Cell Foundation. A flyer from the Sickle Cell Foundation also is included.

This new partnership has resulted in 20 percent of the parents contacting the foundation for information, education and counseling. Prior to this, telephone calls to the Sickle Cell Foundation as a result of newborn screening were minimal. Services are provided to Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie, Indian River and Okeechobee counties. And other partners in the project include the regional Hematology/Oncology centers at Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital (Hollywood Memorial) and Chris Evert Children's Hospital (Broward General) in Broward County, and St. Mary's Hospital in West Palm Beach.

This new partnership has resulted in 20 percent of the parents contacting the foundation for information, education and counseling.

The expanded Sickle Cell Program is funded through a grant from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau of HRSA. It addresses Healthy People 2010 goals to provide early and continuous screening of children with special health care needs, and to identify culturally competent, comprehensive, community-based service systems for children enrolled in CMS Programs and their families.

## Children's Medical Services Prevention and Intervention Team Champions Hearts of Gold

Art evokes a myriad of emotions, especially when expressed by abused children in therapy.

At the Children's Advocacy Center of Southwest Florida Sexual Abuse Treatment Program, art as a means to express emotions is encouraged and exercised in therapeutic groups. The center is a contracted provider of the Children's Medical Services Division of Prevention and Interventions. When the center organized award recognitions for supporters, it seemed fitting for the children there to have the opportunity to express their feelings of thanks through their creativity.

Eight female members of the sexual abuse therapy group, ranging in ages 6 to 9, were selected to prepare handmade works of art that would later be presented to award recipients. These works also became the background for the inaugural "Hearts of Gold" certificate. Armed with paper, paint and brushes, the youngsters went to work to create golden hearts. The creative silence was broken only by expressive giggles and chatter. Not long after, these eight "Hearts of Gold" were presented to supporters of the Children's Advocacy Center.

### Florida Abuse Hotline, 1-800-962-2873

The toll free hotline will accept a report when reasonable cause to suspect that a child located in Florida less than 18 years old has been harmed or is believed to be threatened with harm from a person responsible for the child's care.

One heart was presented to Florida Attorney General Charlie Crist, whose office awarded the CMS Sexual Abuse Treatment Programs statewide \$500,000 annually for the next two years. The Center wished to specially recognize the attorney general. The award was accepted by Deputy Attorney General John

Carassas, on Crist's behalf, in June at the annual Department of Health Child Protection Team statewide meeting in Tampa.

The Hearts of Gold award is scheduled to be presented annually now to individuals who generously support the Children's Advocacy Center of Southwest Florida.





## Child Care Centers Share Nutritional Success Stories

- **The Toy Box Preschool, Englewood, FL—Jo Ann Wieleba, Owner and Child Care Food Program (CCFP) Manager** Planning healthy menus that meet USDA requirements and posting them for parents to view is a CCFP requirement. Ms. Wieleba noticed parents seldom read the menu so she decided on a more creative way to market the CCFP meal program. She takes a digital picture of a plated lunch meal for the day, prints a color copy, and displays it on the wall. She states this simple act “has been major”—parents can better plan for dinner and are impressed with the hot lunches being served. Ms. Wieleba strongly feels that participating in the CCFP is worth the effort to ensure nutritious meals and snacks are served to the children.
- **Venice Presbyterian Church—Early Childhood Center, Venice, FL, Susan Bensen, CCFP Manager** This center received a \$170,000 grant for the renovation of its existing kitchen. The grant was awarded because of the center’s participation in the CCFP. Ms. Bensen’s mission is to teach children healthy eating habits by serving meals that are lowfat and contain plenty of whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables. The chef here created a “Picky Eaters Club” for the pre-K students and turns the “picky eater” label into a positive one by explaining it’s good to be picky for healthy foods.
- **Precious Years Day Care Center, Tallahassee, FL—Mary Johnson, Owner and Mindy Zinser, CCFP Manager** The center is the first to receive the bureau’s Nutrition Excellence Award, an award bestowed for exceeding the CCFP minimum nutrition requirements. Ms. Zinser was recognized for her outstanding use of fresh fruits and vegetables in menus and in the variety of foods offered. She prefers fresh because she believes fresh is more exciting and offers more choices. Ms. Zinser notes the children enjoy raw vegetables such as cucumber, broccoli, carrots and celery served with a ranch dressing.

## Pinellas Woman Credits Healthy Start for Saving Son

A decision eight years ago to accept a new beginning with Healthy Start made a difference for a young Pinellas Park woman and her son. She’s reminded daily of her choice as she passes by a house just around the corner from her own. The woman knows her life probably would be drastically different without the help of Healthy Start. It began when she was living in the house that was then a treatment home for pregnant women undergoing drug and alcohol rehabilitation. The young woman was unstable, addicted to drugs and alcohol, and frequently in and out of prison. She relapsed once from her treatment program.

But after realizing she was pregnant, she again took a chance for recovery. She’s convinced the Healthy Start Program made all the difference. Today, the woman rejoices in the fact that she has been free from her addictions for eight years, and her son was born healthy, full term and named “student of the year” during his first grade year at elementary school. She credits Healthy Start for saving her son’s life and possibly her own.

The woman continues her success and works full time, attends St. Petersburg College and serves as a member of the Board of Directors of the Healthy Start Coalition of Pinellas. She says her goal is to offer a real life perspective to decisions made for the 5,000 people Healthy Start in Pinellas County serves each year.

## The department’s Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs administers the Child Care Food Program (CCFP), the Afterschool Snack Program and the Homeless Children’s Nutrition Program.

The 1,200 participating institutions provide some 400,000 nutritious meals and snacks to more than 160,000 children each day in a variety of child care settings.

The bureau aims to educate partners on the importance of a balanced diet and to provide safe and healthy meals to children. The bureau develops and disseminates nutrition education materials, conducts nutrition and food safety workshops, and adopts menu policies more restrictive than those required by the USDA.



## Healthy Start is a statewide initiative designed to decrease the risk of pregnancy complications and poor birth outcomes for all pregnant women.

The goal of Healthy Start services is to provide risk-appropriate care for optimizing pregnancy, birth, child health and developmental outcomes. Florida’s Healthy Start was implemented in April 1992. Information on Healthy Start, including the Healthy Start annual reports, can be viewed online at <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/family/mch/hs/hs.html>.

### Healthy Start Prenatal Data 2003 and Infant (postnatal) Data 2003:

<b>Number of women who received a Healthy Start Service</b> . . . . .	<b>98,104</b>
<b>Women determined as needed ongoing care coordination</b> . . . . .	<b>33,537</b>
<b>Number of infants who received a Healthy Start Service</b> . . . . .	<b>67,307</b>
<b>Infants determined as needing ongoing care coordination</b> . . . . .	<b>16,127</b>

Source: Healthy Start Executive Summary Reports as of 7/29/04

## Miami-Dade County Health Department Curtails Rodent Problem at Juvenile Justice Center

A rodent problem at a local Miami-Dade Juvenile Justice Center prompted a request from the Courts to the Miami-Dade County Health Department (CHD) for a thorough inspection of the center's main buildings and outlying structures.

The CHD's Environmental Health Neighborhood Improvement Unit was called in to provide expertise to the center's custodial and maintenance staff. The unit routinely inspects areas of the county and facilitates with problematic issues such as garbage, sewage and rodent situations. The assistance provided to the Courts is a prime example of partnerships between local agencies and county health departments.

At the Juvenile Justice Center, the Neighborhood Improvement Unit discovered problems and advised staff on corrective measures. Problems were observed in all areas, including areas occupied by only employees. Trees were cut back to remove access by the rodents, and all areas were extensively cleaned. Repairs were made to cabinets and walls where holes were discovered that provided an entry point for rodents.

Food service areas received normal inspections and staff in areas other than in food service received instruction on proper storage of food or other items that might attract rodents. Employees also were given instruction in vermin control and made to understand that the rodents could not be eliminated unless everyone involved made a team effort to correct the problem.

A noticeable improvement has been made at the center, including in employee offices, areas occupied by confined teenagers and the courtrooms.

## The Targeted Outreach for Pregnant Women Act

The Targeted Outreach for Pregnant Women Act (TOPWA) Program operates in 12 Florida counties through Department of Health contracts with community-based organizations that conduct outreach to pregnant women at risk for delivering an HIV-infected or substance-exposed infant. These organizations link women to needed services and provide follow-up services throughout their pregnancies; and offer free on-site HIV testing and pregnancy testing.

These services are of great value to high-risk women, including those imprisoned. Frequently the corrections system is a "revolving door" for high-risk women, who are typically incarcerated on prostitution or drug-related charges, and it is extremely difficult to gain their trust and maintain contact with them after their release. TOPWA providers are diligent in their services to these women. Several conduct services within local county jails.

One such agency is the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Center, Inc. of Miami-Dade County, who enrolled a 25-year-old African American woman into the TOPWA program. Prior to her incarceration, this woman was working as a prostitute, had received no prenatal care and was smoking up to 20 crack cocaine rocks per day. She was arrested on drug-related charges about three months into her pregnancy. At first declining all offers of assistance, she eventually told the TOPWA worker she was "tired of this same life" and agreed to receive help for her drug problem. The TOPWA provider immediately linked her to those who could assist. She received emergency shelter at the Homeless Assistance Center, where there is normally a wait process, and she was enrolled into the Maternal Addiction Program.

With further help from TOPWA, the young woman successfully completed a substance abuse treatment program and found a job. She is voluntarily in contact with Teen Pregnancy Prevention each day, and is in compliance with all terms of her probation, a testimony to the dedication of the TOPWA staff. The woman is determined to beat the odds and says the Serenity Prayer each night to help her stay "clean" for her baby.

### Disease Control Toll Free Telephone Numbers:

Florida HIV/AIDS Hotline: 1-800-FLA-AIDS (1-880-352-2437)

1-888-503-7118 (TDY)

1-800-545-SIDA (Spanish)

1-800-AIDS-101 (Creole)


Florida Hepatitis Hotline: 1-866-FLA-HEPC (1-866-352-4372)

**The Bureau of HIV/AIDS has one of the nation's most comprehensive programs for HIV/AIDS surveillance, education, prevention, early intervention, counseling, testing, care and treatment.** The

coordinated approach in fighting HIV/AIDS and in providing care and treatment to those already infected, has been very successful in reducing the state's HIV/AIDS rates. The Florida Hepatitis and Liver Failure Prevention and Control Program, a part of the Bureau of HIV/AIDS, has been successful in providing a comprehensive program for hepatitis education, vaccination, and prevention.

Florida currently ranks number three in the nation in the number of reported AIDS cases and continues to be one of the states hardest hit by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Reported AIDS cases totaled 95,141 through 2003, with 4,851 cases reported in 2003 alone. There were 301,687 HIV tests performed by county public health departments in 2003, with 2.2 percent of tests being positive. Reporting of HIV cases was implemented in Florida on July 1, 1997, and cumulatively through 2003, 32,113 HIV cases have been reported, including 304 pediatric HIV cases. The department estimates that approximately 100,000 Floridians are living with HIV infection — with the state's racial and ethnic minority populations being disproportionately affected.


It is estimated that approximately one in 46 blacks and one in 176 Hispanics are infected with HIV, compared to one in 346 whites. As a result, the department has redoubled its commitment and mobilized resources to address the disproportionate impact of the epidemic on minority communities. For more about the Bureau of HIV/AIDS, visit [www.doh.state.fl.us/disease\\_ctrl/aids/index.html](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/disease_ctrl/aids/index.html).




TOPWA program providers have conducted more than 24,000 outreach sessions in high-risk venues, screened and provided information on HIV prevention and treatment to almost 96,000 women, and enrolled more than 13,500 high-risk or HIV-infected pregnant women through December 2003. Forty-three percent of enrolled women were not receiving adequate prenatal care at the time of their screening and more than a quarter of the pregnant women enrolled had never been tested for HIV. TOPWA partnerships have provided women the opportunities for better health and the health of their children.

## Tracking Health Information

### Department focuses on Community Health Assessment Infrastructure



County health departments (CHDs), the department and its Office of Planning, Evaluation and Data Analysis recognize the statewide and local benefits of establishing an infrastructure for community health assessment. During the fiscal year, following input from CHDs, the office created and launched the Comprehensive Assessment, Strategic Success initiative referred to as COMPASS. The initiative aims to institutionalize the process of community health assessment in all Florida counties by enhancing workforce capacities, outlining key performance measures, and developing policies. Prior to inception, county health departments had no centralized resource within the Department of Health for guidance and assistance on such processes.



As the framework for the development of tools and resources, COMPASS utilizes the National Association of County and City Health Officials' (NACCHO) Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) strategic planning model. County health departments and community partners also use health statistics via the Community Health Assessment Resource Tool Set (CHARTS) data website.

Community health assessment practice is the process of systematically collecting, analyzing and using information to educate and mobilize communities, develop priorities, gather resources, and plan actions to impact the public's health. COMPASS can have an overall impact of improving health outcomes by identifying local and state health priorities, prioritizing existing resources, targeting resources, identifying gaps and duplication of services, and allowing for a broader community ownership of health and quality of life issues. For more information about COMPASS, visit online at [http://www.doh.state.fl.us/planning\\_eval/CHAI/index.htm](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/planning_eval/CHAI/index.htm).

### Revised Birth Certificate Includes More Birth and Health Facts

The State Office of Vital Statistics implemented a revision of the Florida Certificate of Birth—the first revision of the form since 1989—following the National Center for Health Statistics' recommendations for a revised national standard to meet the changing needs of public health information gathering.

The new birth record includes facts about delivery and other health information that could help determine if women and their infants are receiving necessary prenatal care to ensure healthy pregnancies and healthy delivery outcomes. Public health officials, for example, will have information regarding the transportation of mothers and infants from one birth facility to another with higher levels of care. This scenario could provide a greater understanding of those who may be considered at higher health risk.

During fiscal year 2003–2004, the Office of Vital Statistics trained more than 550 people in 14 sites in the state to help ensure a smooth transition for using the new form. Training was offered to those involved in the birth registration process, including staff members of hospitals, birthing centers, county vital statistics and Healthy Start.



## FloridaCHARTS.com Provides Access to Public Health Data

The department introduced FloridaCHARTS.com, an innovative website that makes public health statistics easy to locate and use. CHARTS stands for Community Health Assessment Resource Tool Set. The data and its organization can help researchers when applying for grants, students in health programs, citizens interested in their community health. Plus, it provides critical information needed for communities to prioritize public health issues specific to their residents.

The innovative site contains a variety of health statistics, including

- County and community level data in prepared reports
- Detail or summary data based on your selections
- Definitions and descriptions to assist in interpretation
- Interactive community maps with health indicators at the census tract level
- Downloadable report tables and maps for each data set

CHARTS provides a County Health Profile report that displays data in several formats from key health categories, including population, major causes of death, communicable diseases and socio economics. The site is available at <http://www.floridacharts.com>.

## Alachua County Health Department HIV/AIDS Patient Care Program Implements Health Clinic Management System

The Alachua County Health Department HIV/AIDS Patient Care program provides care coordination to a very diverse patient population of approximately 1,500 clients. In CHD contract year 2002, 6,917 services of varying complexity were provided to this clientele. These services were tracked and coordinated largely through manual processes.

The Alachua Patient Care staff partnered with the Office of Planning Evaluation and Data Analysis to implement the existing Health Clinic Management System (HCMS) to serve as an automated care coordination reporting and accounting tool for the local office. This provided immediate recurring value by replacing the manual business practices relating to the daily operations of the office. Automation has increased the billing collections rate for Medicaid Project Aids Care clients. Clients have benefited through improved, seamless case management.

Mandated reporting has been enhanced significantly through automation. Manual form-based tracking was an inefficient use of case manager's time, overly complex for the client, and created difficulties in complying with reporting requirements in the Notice of Grant Award from HRSA.

Using HCMS, the Alachua CHD was able to eliminate duplicate client counts and report timely and accurate data on program utilization to the Bureau of HIV/AIDS. Over a one year period (Sept. 2002–Aug 2003) the number of services provided to clients increased by 25 percent.


Automation has increased the billing collections rate for Medicaid Project Aids Care clients. Clients have benefited through improved, seamless case management provided.

It was accomplished using existing technology in a creative and innovative manner. It allowed the agency to avoid purchasing, implementing and maintaining a private software solution. The project also fits the State Technology Office's Internet Technology (IT) Governance initiative and the development of enterprise technology solutions. The team was recognized with a 2004 Davis Productivity Award. The program has been expanded to Duval County Health Department where the HIV/AIDS program is implementing the HCMS.



# Diverse Audiences

## Consumers and Licensees Benefit from [www.doh-mqaservices.com](http://www.doh-mqaservices.com)



The Division of Medical Quality Assurance (MQA) continues to expand online services for consumers and licensees available through [www.doh-mqaservices.com](http://www.doh-mqaservices.com). The site, developed and maintained by the Licensure Services Unit in the Bureau of Operations, offers a great deal of services, including license look-up of any health care practitioner licensed in the state of Florida, profile information viewing for the five profiled professions, license certification and data request, public records request filing, complaint filing, unlicensed activity reporting, licensure application packet request, and licensure evaluation tool capability.

Consumers can check specialty certification, place of education and criminal proceedings for licensed allopathic and osteopathic physicians, advanced registered nurse practitioners, podiatrists and chiropractors. They can place a request online for several documents, including license certification, license data and public records. The system accepts most credit cards for documents that require a fee. Forms can be downloaded to report unlicensed activity or to file complaints, which helps minimize the need to print complaint forms.

The website also offers services for licensees, including license renewal, address updating, and updating profile information.

### Medical Quality Assurance Toll Free Telephone Numbers:

Consumer Hotlines: 888-419-3456

Unlicensed Activity Hotline: 877-425-8852  
or 877-HALT-ULA

## Medical Quality Assurance's New Collections Policy Reaps Rewards

Medical Quality Assurance's (MQA) new policy for collecting nonpayment of fines and costs began in February of 2003 by the Bureau of Management Services. During fiscal year 2003-2004, the policy has resulted in the collection of more than \$100,000 in outstanding debt—money that can be potentially passed on to licensees in the form of lower licensure fees.

After contacting the Comptroller's Office for guidance, the bureau's Client Services Unit developed a policy to utilize a collection agency already under state contract, in accordance with appropriate legal requirements and existing business practices. Mention of the collection agency in notification letters was sufficient to encourage payment, as almost 90 percent of the collected funds came directly to MQA without involvement from the collections agency.

Articles placed in professional association newsletters also gave those with outstanding accounts an opportunity to meet obligations before referral to a collection agency. The articles stressed that nonpayment could adversely affect a practitioner's credit, as collection agencies have authority in all states to access the personal finances of debtors. Also noted was that failure to fulfill discipline obligations such as fines may be grounds for further practitioner discipline.

When the collection agency does become involved and is successful in obtaining payment, MQA is notified and funds collected are distributed to the appropriate board via the department's Finance and Accounting.

## Disability Determinations Meets Demands

Florida's Division of Disability Determinations (DDD) is responsible for making fair, consistent and timely entitlement decisions regarding the medical eligibility of Florida citizens applying for disability benefits under the federal Social Security and Supplemental Security Income programs, and the state Medically Needy program. It is also responsible for conducting reviews of existing beneficiaries under the federal programs and determining continued eligibility.

DDD became part of the Department of Health in January 2000. It remains the third largest in the country, maintains nine offices to respond to residents and works to meet demands of anticipated population growth and internal change that includes technological upgrades.

An estimated 2,435,000 people in Florida have a disability, or 15.6 percent of the population age 5 and over. An

estimated 461,000 people, or 3 percent of the population 5 and over, have difficulty performing self-care activities. This is reflected in the growing number of individuals applying for disability over the last five years. Annual claims workload is approximately 260,000, and this number is expected to grow over the remainder of the decade recognizing two primary reasons: continued population growth in Florida and the baby boomers reaching disability prone years.

Better use of technology and moving toward a paperless society, the Social Security Administration has developed an electronic folder system called eDib, which holds data and images including medical information. This radical re-engineering will replace the current process of moving paper folders from one office to another and re-entering data into separate systems. DDD will electronically capture and share relevant disability case information regardless of source and type through eDIB, including electronic medical evidence. Rollout began in September of 2004 and is projected to have the equipment and connectivity by December 2005. Until certification of the paperless folder has been achieved, the staff will manage a parallel paper file while transitioning to an electronic intake process and imaged medical evidence while managing ongoing workloads.

## Tuberculosis Day Event Geared Toward Haitian Awareness

The Broward County Health Department joined the Southeast Florida Tuberculosis (TB) Coalition and partners the American Lung Association of Florida, Inc.; Gilead Pharmaceuticals; Area Health Education Centers; and the Association of Haitian Physicians Abroad for a seminar in Plantation to commemorate World TB Day 2004 in March entitled "Contemporary Healthcare Issues in the Haitian Community."

The day's events also included a health fair at the church that included free cholesterol, glucose and blood pressure screenings, confidential HIV, sexually transmitted diseases, and Hepatitis C testing, and immunizations. More than 100 people attended the workshop/seminar, which featured physicians from the local community who presented information on current health issues affecting the Haitian community. Representatives from the Department of Health, Bureau of TB and Refugee Health, were among the presenters.

## Rise in Syphilis Warrants Targeting At-Risk Groups

For the past six years, Florida has experienced a steady rise in infectious syphilis cases. Most of these are male cases, and many are cases of men having sex with men (MSM). In response to this health issue, the Bureau of STD Prevention and Control contracted with the United Foundation for AIDS (UFA) of Miami to work with Miami-Dade, Broward, and Orange county health departments to develop social marketing messages. The group also is getting input from the South Florida Syphilis Coalition (SFSC).

Since fall 2003, UFA and its partners have developed radio and TV public service announcements to address the prevalence of syphilis in South Florida. UFA and its partners also produced posters and information cards for distribution through local health departments, other organizations and events in Florida.

A 2004 billboard campaign also has proved effective with its message: "Syphilis is Back, and it's Spreading." The billboard along the roadways in Miami-Dade and Broward counties includes phone numbers for where to get tested. UFA and SFSC also developed a website about the syphilis problem and where to get tested. It is available at [www.stopsyphilis.org](http://www.stopsyphilis.org).



# Notable Recognitions

## 2004 Davis Productivity Awards

The Davis Productivity Awards recognize and reward

state government employees whose work significantly and measurably increases productivity and promotes innovation to improve the delivery of state services and save money for Florida taxpayers and businesses. The program is a major government improvement initiative chaired by Lt. Governor Toni Jennings and sponsored by Florida TaxWatch, The Florida Council of 100, and the State of Florida.

In 2004, 18 teams and individuals received cash awards totaling more than \$10,500. In all, 99 out of the 106 Department of Health nominations submitted received recognition. Some of the top award winners were:

**DISTINGUISHED TEAM ACHIEVEMENT, \$1,500.00 | Board of Nursing, Medical Quality Assurance, Tallahassee.** The board implemented self-directed work teams (SDWT) to review licensure processing procedures.

**DISTINGUISHED TEAM ACHIEVEMENT, \$1,500.00 | Gulf CHD, Port St. Joe.** This team applied for and was awarded a FQHC grant of \$617,500. A comprehensive, integrated medical home of both primary care and public health programs was created for the community.

**DISTINGUISHED PARTNERSHIP ACHIEVEMENT, \$1,500.00 | Polk CHD, Bartow & Orlando.** The "Forensic Exam" was created to save taxpayer dollars, reduce the trauma to rape victims and help law enforcement prosecute rapists.

**DISTINGUISHED INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT, \$1,000.00 | Valerie Bourgeois, Palm Beach Children's Medical Services' West Palm Beach.** Ms. Bourgeois discovered that the Medicaid billing rate used by CMS clinics throughout the state was out of date. This discovery resulted in an increase of \$10.82 in Medicaid reimbursement per clinic visit, for approximately 4,500 visits per year.

**Baker County Diabetes Education Team of Macclenny** for its development of a "Credentialed Third-Party Payable Diabetes Education Program."

**Susanne Schomer of Panama City** for her development of an "Information Security Handbook for Statewide Training."

**Dr. William Watson of Panama City** for his development of "Smallpox Vaccine Stabilizer."

**Environmental Chemistry Team of Jacksonville** for the development and implementation of "Drinking Water Investigation Kits."

**Darlene Deas of Tallahassee** for the creation of the "Statewide Online Journal Service" at the Office of Performance Improvement.

**Florida Board of Nursing Team of Tallahassee** for implementing self-directed work teams.

**SARS Incident Command Team of Tallahassee** for the "Prevented Statewide Outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Disease."

**Mary Tsu Cook of Lantana** for her development of "Core Database for Florida Medical Laboratories."

**Peggy Sue Baker of Fort Myers** for "Increased Health Department Medicaid Revenue from Retroactive Billing."

**Healthy Workplace Team of Ft. Myers** for the development of "Healthy Workplace Model for Business Community."

**Manatee County WIC and Nutrition Program Team of Bradenton** for "Increased WIC Participation While Reducing Service Costs."

**Samir Elmir of Opa Locka** for "Improved Revenue Enhancement, Customer Satisfaction and Compliance."

**One-Stop Permitting Team of Fernandina Beach**, which Implemented "One Stop Permitting."

**Epidemiology Rapid Response Team of Palatka** "Developed Rapid Response Team for Infectious Disease Control."

**Merle L. Hillard of Port St. Lucie** "Designed Comprehensive, Centralized HIV Medical Services Delivery Model."

## 2004 National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) Model Practice Awards for Exemplary Local Public Health Programs

NACCHO presented 29 “Model Practice Awards” in all to programs from across the nation in July 2004 that demonstrate exemplary and replicable qualities in response to an identified public health need. Florida was awarded six of those awards, which recognize initiatives—including programs, resources and tools—that show how local public health agencies and their community partners can effectively collaborate to address local public health concerns.

**Brevard County Volunteer Dental Clinic, Dentist’s Care** Brevard County Health Department, Merritt Island, FL

**Cervical Cancer Screening and Follow Up** Brevard County Health Department, Merritt Island, FL

**Drinking Water Nitrification Surveillance Program** Lee County Health Department, Ft. Myers, FL

**Healthy Work Place** Lee County Health Department, Ft. Myers, FL

**Increased Medicaid Reimbursements to Enhance Breast/Cervical Cancer Screenings Project** Leon County Health Department, Tallahassee, FL

**Healthcare Emergency Response Coalition of Palm Beach County** Palm Beach County Health Department, West Palm Beach, FL

## The Florida Environmental Health Association (FEHA)

FEHA presents annual awards in recognition of members’ efforts and service to the field of environmental health. The following were awarded in 2004:

**Brian M. Schnarr, Environmental Specialist for the Santa Rosa County Health Department** received the Rookie of the Year for 2003–2004, an award that recognizes a professional with less than 16 months of service who has exceeded minimum requirements and contributing in an outstanding way.

**Jack Petenbrink, R.S., Environmental Specialist III at Palm Beach County Health Department** received the Outstanding Environmental Health Professional for 2003–2004 Award for his significant and successful contribution during the year.

**Charles E. Luther, R.E.H.P., C.E.H.P., Environmental Manager for Volusia County Health Department** received the Charlie Rhodes Award for his long-term contributions and exemplary behavior.

**Paul Minshew, R.S., Environmental Manager in the Volusia County Health Department** received the Billy G. Tennant Award for his long-term contributions to the field.

## Other Awards and Recognitions

**Department of Health Secretary John O. Agwunobi, M.D., M.B.A., M.P.H.,** received the Chairman’s Recognition Award from the Florida Board of Medicine in October 2003 for outstanding contributions toward the protection of Florida’s citizens, the medical profession and public service.


**Deputy State Health Officer Bonnie Sorensen, M.D., M.B.A.,** received the 2004 Outstanding Woman in Public Health Award by the University of South Florida’s College of Public Health for her significant contributions to the field of public health.

**Deputy Secretary for Health Nancy Humbert, M.S.N., A.R.N.P.,** was named the 2004–05 recipient of the Florida International University Distinguished Alumna Award, College of Health and Urban Affairs, for notable record of service and achievement in public health and nursing.

**The Department’s Project Management Office received the Best IT Governance Structure Award in March 2005** by the International Quality and Productivity Center’s IT Financial Management Institute. The award recognizes that IT Governance directly contributes to the overall success of the organization and the strategic plan for future development.

**The Florida Department of Health shared the National Birth Defects Prevention Network’s 2003 Birth Defects Prevention Month Award** with the Florida Chapter of the March of Dimes and the University of South Florida Birth Defects Center for their combined innovative approach to promoting awareness about birth defects.





**The Florida Diabetes Prevention and Control Program received the 2004 Frankie Award** from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Division of Diabetes Translation for innovative use of the National Diabetes Education Program's "prevent type 2 diabetes" message and materials.

**The Bureau of Radiation in 2004 received commendation from the Conference of Radiation Control Program Directors, Inc.,** and the Organization of Agreement State for providing more than 40 years of outstanding radiation safety programs, for regulating radiation sources in the state, and for participating in the Agreement State Program of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission for the past 40 years.

**Board of Nursing staff members Anthony Jusevitch and Betsey Hines, along with Executive Director Dan Coble, R.N., Ph.D., C.N.A.A., C, B.C., and Board of Nursing Vice Chair Mary Kay Habgood, R.N., Ph.D.,** were awarded four-year fellowships in the Institute of Regulatory Excellence through the National Council of State Boards of Nursing.

**Florida Board of Medicine was ranked first among large states in the percentage of licensed physicians disciplined,** according to the 2003 Annual Disciplinary Report of the Federation of State Medical Boards of the United States (FSMB).

**Florida Board of Osteopathic Medicine was ranked first among medium states in the percentage of licensed physicians disciplined,** according to the 2003 Annual Disciplinary Report of the Federation of State Medical Boards of the United States (FSMB).

**Miami Dade County Health Department Administrator Lillian Rivera, R.N., M.S.N.,** received the 2003 Outstanding Woman of the Year Award from the Miami chapter of the National Association of Puerto Rican Women, Inc.

**Lucia Schatteleyn, Sarasota County Health Department nursing program specialist,** received the 2004 School Health Nurse of the Year Award from the Florida School Health Association for her work and dedication to her field and students.

**Leslie Adams, Santa Rosa County Health Department nurse,** received the Florida Association of School Nurses 2004 School Nurse of the Year Award for her professionalism, dedication and enthusiasm to her job and students.

**Family Health Services Division Director Annette Phelps** received the National Fetal Infant Mortality Review Award from the America College of Obstetrician and Gynecologists for a decade of vision, outstanding advocacy and leadership to assist in improving birth outcomes nationally.

**Alice Manley, A.R.N.P.,** received the 2004 Public Health Nurse of the Year Award from the Florida Association of Public Health Nurses. Manley has been a nurse with Polk County Health Department since 1956.

**Jane Correia, coordinator of the Florida Birth Defects Registry and Environmental Specialist in the Division of Environmental Health,** received the National Birth Defects Prevention Network's 2002 President's Award for her significant contributions to the Network's mission and goals in January 2004.

**Juanita Barnhart, Children's Medical Services registered nurse specialist,** received the 2003 Hispanic Woman of Distinction Award from the Southwest Coast Division of the March of Dimes and the PanAmerican Alliance for her work and dedication to children in Hendry and Glades counties.

**Peter Thornton, Volusia County Health Department's Environmental administrator,** received the 2004 Walter F. Snyder Award from the National Environmental Health Association and the National Sanitation Foundation International for achievement in attaining environmental quality.

**The Volusia County Health Department's Environmental Health Team** received the National Association of Counties 2004 Achievement Award for innovative programs that contribute to and enhance county government.

**Julie Terrell, Escambia County Health Department School Health Nurse** received one of five 2004 Mentor of Excellence Awards from the Governor's Mentoring Initiative for her dedication and outstanding influence to a child she mentored for the past four years. Terrell was the first person in public health to receive the award.

## Trust for America's Health

The State of Florida continues to rank highly in the new scale of preparedness capabilities, and twice ranked among the top states by watchdog group Trust for America's Health (TFAH) as meeting key indicators of readiness for a public health emergency. In its December 2003 report, "Ready or Not? Protecting the Public's Health in the Age of Bioterrorism," TFAH found Florida as one of four states meeting seven of the 10 key indicators and was noted especially for its preparedness capabilities to receive and distribute drugs and other supplies, if necessary, from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Stockpile.

In TFAH's second Ready of Not? report (2004), the group recognized Florida as one of two states achieving nine of the 10 indicators. The Department of Health plays a major role in the state's overall emergency disaster preparedness efforts. The department's Office of Public Health Preparedness coordinates planning and program development in conjunction with other state agencies and the Florida Domestic Security Task Force, and works with private organizations, as well, to protect public health from the effects of man-made and naturally occurring events.

## USDA

The USDA selected two of Florida's successful "innovative practices" to include in its June 2004 report: "Innovative WIC Practices, Profiles of 20 Programs." WIC is the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children. The federal report was prepared by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., under a cooperative assistance agreement with the Economic Research Service. The two practices from Florida in the report are: Miami-Dade County WIC's "Breastfeeding Promotion and Support Program," as an outstanding multifaceted program with a strong outreach component; and Florida's "Mooove to Lowfat or Fat Free Milk" Campaign, as an innovative obesity prevention intervention which focused on a specific message that is very relevant to WIC—use lowfat or fat free milk for children age 2 or above. What made this campaign especially successful is because it was a joint effort of a number of state programs and agencies.

## Florida State Employees Charitable Campaign

The Department of Health is proud to recognize employees from across the state for contributions to the Florida State Employee Charitable Campaign (FSECC). During the 2003 campaign, department employees donated more than \$491,000 to charitable organizations of their choosing. The amount represents a 4 percent increase over the total contributions made in 2002.

## Governor's Mentoring Initiative

During fiscal year 2003–2004, 642 Department of Health employees mentored or volunteered. Additionally, employees contributed 2,411 new and gently-used books and money to purchase new books to schools and organizations in Alachua, Citrus, Calhoun, Escambia, Gadsden, Hillsborough, Leon, Palm Beach, Pinellas, Santa Rosa, Seminole and Wakulla counties.

