

**Department of State Health Services  
Agenda Item for State Health Services Council  
August 6, 2007**

**Agenda Item Title:** Commissioner's Report

**Agenda Number:** 2

**Recommended Council Action:**

For Discussion Only

For Discussion and Action by the Council

**Summary:**

Dr. Lakey will provide an update on DSHS-related activities, to include:

- a. 2007 Annual Texas Behavioral Health Institute
- b. Collaboration with Texas Youth Commission
- c. Suicide prevention activities
- d. Pertussis awareness campaign
- e. State Hurricane Exercise
- f. Statewide response to flooding
- g. Children with Special Health Care Needs Services Program
- h. Expansion of Breast and Cervical Cancer services
- i. Women Infant and Children updates
- j. Border Health Commission

**Proposed Motion:**

No Action Required

**Agenda Item Approved by:** Executive Leadership Team and Council Chair

**Presented by:** David L. Lakey, M.D.

**Title:** Commissioner

**Program/Division:** Commissioner's Office **Contact Name/Phone:** Rosamaria Murillo  
458-7404 ext. 2149

**Date  
Submitted**  
07/23/07



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## The Commissioner's Report

July 2007

### **MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES**

#### **DSHS hosts annual Behavioral Health Institute**

The annual Texas Behavioral Health Institute, "Building Better Health through Resiliency and Recovery," will be held from July 30 to Aug. 3 in Austin. The conference focuses on providing Texans with access to community-based, integrated services in public health, mental health, and the prevention and treatment of substance abuse. Hosted by DSHS, the institute includes sessions on how local agencies can improve service delivery and develop systems to enhance workforce capacity. Usually, more than 1,500 participants attend. For conference information, go to <http://www.txsaainstitute.com/>. For more information, contact Mimi Martinez McKay, Division for Mental Health and Substance Abuse, at (512) 206-5804 or e-mail [mimi.mckay@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:mimi.mckay@dshs.state.tx.us).

#### **Texas Youth Commission residents receive referrals through counseling program**

At the request of the Governor's Office, DSHS established a 24-hour helpline from April 15 to May 15 to provide assessment and brief trauma-focused counseling services to youth who experienced trauma while residing in a Texas Youth Commission facility. With training and technical assistance from DSHS, TYC staff conducted debriefing meetings at each of their facilities, and sent letters to youth currently on parole, to educate youth about the common effects of traumatic stress and the counseling resources available to them through the DSHS helpline. DSHS contracted with 37 local mental-health authorities and Value Options in the NorthSTAR area to provide assessment and counseling services at all TYC facilities and in communities where youth on parole reside. Individuals who self-referred through the toll-free number or who were referred by a staff member or guardian were authorized for five sessions of assessment and brief counseling with licensed mental-health professionals. The helpline received 520 calls and made 396 referrals; 320 youths have received at least one face-to-face contact with a therapist, and 135 youths were referred for further evaluation or treatment. Therapists will continue to provide counseling through the summer. For more information, contact Joe Vesowate, Assistant Commissioner, Division for Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, at (512) 206-5797 or e-mail [joe.vesowate@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:joe.vesowate@dshs.state.tx.us).

#### **Suicide prevention activities under way**

Texas is taking a new step to combat suicide. As part of a grant awarded to DSHS by the federal Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration, the Texas Suicide

Prevention Council and Mental Health America in Texas have launched a website, [www.texassuicideprevention.org](http://www.texassuicideprevention.org), to help educate Texans about suicide warning signs and to offer guidance on helping someone in crisis. It's a tool for suicidal parents, teachers, counselors, and individuals who may use the Internet to look for help. Known as the Texas Youth Suicide Prevention project, this effort will also provide suicide-prevention training in Bexar, Harris, and Travis counties, which have the state's highest incidents of suicide among 15- to 24-year-olds. In August, the project will launch prevention services targeting military dependents in San Antonio, including families of soldiers wounded in combat and returning from Afghanistan and Iraq. Screening and prevention services will be offered to 5th-graders at the Fort Sam Houston Independent School District and to students at Cole Middle School and Cole High School through their school-based clinic; dependents will be referred to the Brooke Army Child and Adolescent Pediatric Services Center. The service portion of the Texas Youth Suicide Prevention project will be subcontracted to the San Antonio Center for Health Care Services. *For more information, contact Dan Rawlins, Program Services Coordinator, Texas Youth Suicide Prevention project, at (512) 206-5866 or e-mail [dan.rawlins@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:dan.rawlins@dshs.state.tx.us).*

### **Terrell State Hospital awarded full accreditation status**

Terrell State Hospital received official word from the Joint Commission regarding its decision to award Terrell State Hospital full accreditation status following its recent survey. The Joint Commission is an independent, not-for-profit organization that evaluates and accredits health-care organizations and programs in the United States. Accreditation by the Joint Commission indicates that a hospital meets high performance standards and provides safe, high-quality care, treatment, and services. Terrell State Hospital has been continuously accredited by the Joint Commission for 40 years. *For more information, contact Peggy Perry, State Hospitals Section, at (512) 206-4619 or e-mail [peggy.perry@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:peggy.perry@dshs.state.tx.us).*

### **Anti-drug campaign honored for excellence in public service**

The DSHS-funded "It's Happy Bunny" anti-drug campaign, which features a poster, a sticker series, and a website (<http://www.drugfreebunny.com>) and which was created in 2006 by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America, Texas Alliance has received several awards. The 2007 Austin Addy Awards honored the campaign with a Gold Addy for "Public Service Campaign." It also received the Silver Addy for "Public Service Direct Marketing" and a Bronze one for "Public Service Poster." In the regional Addy competition, the campaign received a Silver Addy for "Public Service Campaign." Finally, the National Association of Government Communicators recognized the campaign's anti-smoking poster with a prestigious Silver Award. The campaign uses humor to give messages aimed at preventing drug abuse, smoking, or experimenting with alcohol. *For more information, contact Mimi Martinez McKay, Division for Mental Health and Substance Abuse, at (512) 206-5804 or e-mail [mimi.mckay@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:mimi.mckay@dshs.state.tx.us).*

## **PREVENTION AND PREPAREDNESS SERVICES**

### **DSHS kicks off pertussis-awareness campaign**

In conjunction with National Immunization Awareness Month, the DSHS Immunization Branch will conduct a campaign from July 13 through Aug. 31 to raise public awareness of pertussis. The campaign will target mothers ages 25 to 54 and medical staff who work in close proximity to infants. English-language and Spanish-language TV and radio ads will air in Amarillo, Austin, Dallas/Fort Worth, Houston, San Antonio, Tyler, and Waco, which all had the highest incidence rates of pertussis in 2006. The ads encourage mothers to vaccinate their families with the Tdap vaccine to help prevent pertussis. English-language and Spanish-language highway and neighborhood billboards will also be placed in low-immunization-level areas in Austin and Dallas/Fort Worth. English-language billboards with a message encouraging medical staff to be vaccinated with Tdap will be placed next to birthing centers and hospitals with the highest number of births. The same message will be placed in professional health-care magazines, including *Texas Medicine*, *Texas Family Physician*, and *Texas Hospitals*. *For more information, contact Jack Sims, Manager, Immunization Branch, Disease Prevention and Intervention Section, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 6215, or e-mail [jack.sims@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:jack.sims@dshs.state.tx.us).*

### **Experts on infectious disease share information**

The Infectious Disease Surveillance and Epidemiology Branch convened the Infectious Disease Epidemiology Workgroup on June 22 to share pertinent information among physicians, laboratory personnel, epidemiologists, and pharmacists from around the state. The group meets quarterly discuss a broad range of topics including drug-resistant organisms emerging as important public-health problems, such as methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, known as MRSA. The meetings provide DSHS staff with guidance from experts, as well as a forum for DSHS to present projects, studies, and investigations for the workgroup's review and comments. The June 22 meeting included an update on Senate Bill 288 and health-care-associated infection reporting, the pros and cons of MRSA reporting, electronic lab reporting now being entered into the state disease surveillance system, overviews of listeriosis and respiratory syncytial virus, and the influenza sentinel-surveillance system. *For more information, contact Tom Betz, M.D., Infectious Disease Surveillance and Epidemiology Branch, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 6332, or e-mail [tom.betz@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:tom.betz@dshs.state.tx.us).*

### **Article developed by DSHS staff on neural-tube defects to be published**

*Birth Defects Research* has accepted for publication "Neural Tube Defects, Micronutrient Deficiencies, and *Helicobacter pylori*: A New Hypothesis," authored by DSHS staff. Neural-tube defects (birth defects of the brain and spine) may result when some vitamins do not reach the fetus. *Helicobacter pylori* is a bacteria that causes vitamin deficiencies, and it infects many women in Texas counties that border Mexico. The staff research does not prove that *Helicobacter pylori* causes neural tube defects, but it indicates that more research could be useful. A publication date has not yet been set. *For more information, contact Tom Betz, M.D., Infectious Disease Surveillance and Epidemiology Branch, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 6332, or e-mail [tom.betz@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:tom.betz@dshs.state.tx.us).*

### **Staff participate in statewide hurricane exercise**

Under the direction of the Governor's Division of Emergency Management, DSHS staff from across the state participated in the Statewide Hurricane Evacuation and Sheltering Exercise held June 4-7 to improve a statewide response to a catastrophic hurricane striking the Gulf Coast, particularly the evacuation and sheltering of persons with special needs. The Multi Agency Coordination Center, housed in the DSHS lab building in Austin, was activated and staffed with trained personnel from DSHS, HHSC, DFPS, DADS, and DARS. Additional DSHS staff and executive leaders were present in the State Operations Center and participated in decision making throughout the exercise. Regional staff participated in local and regional operations centers. All participants could provide feedback on what worked well and what needs to be improved. An after-action report will be released through GDEM, but DSHS is already working to implement lessons learned. *For more information, contact Dede Powell, Public Health Preparedness Unit, at (512) 458-7219 or e-mail [denita.powell@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:denita.powell@dshs.state.tx.us).*

### **Statewide flooding prompts significant response effort**

During June and July, as flooding across the state accelerated, DSHS regional and central-office staff assisted local entities and communities by coordinating the provision of disaster mental-health services, tetanus shots, information on vector control, and supplies needed because of the lack of potable water. Staff worked with local authorities to provide health-related support for shelters. The Multi Agency Coordination Center was activated to assist the regions in response and recovery efforts. Participating DSHS staff provided feedback in an after-action review. Lessons learned will be documented and used in future planning efforts. *For more information, contact Dede Powell, Public Health Preparedness Unit, at (512) 458-7219 or e-mail [denita.powell@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:denita.powell@dshs.state.tx.us).*

### **State-level pandemic-flu exercise postponed**

Because many local and regional entities were still active in response and recovery efforts related to flooding, the state-level pandemic-flu exercise scheduled for July 9-12 has been reset for Aug.13-16. Its participants will include DSHS, the Governor's Division of Emergency Management, Region 8 and hospitals in that region, San Antonio and Fredericksburg, Education Service Center 20, area councils of government, and state and federal military forces. *For more information, contact Dede Powell, Public Health Preparedness Unit, at (512) 458-7219 or e-mail [denita.powell@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:denita.powell@dshs.state.tx.us).*

## **FAMILY AND COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES**

### **Time-limited benefits available under Children with Special Health Care Needs**

DSHS notified 1,162 clients on the Children with Special Health Care Needs Services Program waiting list that they can receive comprehensive health-care benefits in July and August. Meanwhile, they'll remain on the waiting list and maintain program eligibility. All clients on the waiting list have been determined eligible for the program and normally receive case-management services while on the list. The "time limited" comprehensive benefits are being provided because fiscal projections indicate availability of sufficient

funds through the end of fiscal year 2007. DSHS continually monitors CSHCN projected expenditures and funding availability in order to remove clients from the waiting list when possible. Coverage of the “time limited” benefits is subject to restrictions in scope, amount, and duration and is not intended to be sustained over time. *For more information, contact Jann Melton-Kissel, Manager, Specialized Health Services Section, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 2002, or e-mail [jann.melton-kissel@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:jann.melton-kissel@dshs.state.tx.us).*

### **Legislature expands services for breast and cervical cancer**

Effective Sept. 1, House Bill 1 and Senate Bill 10, passed by the 80th Texas Legislature, will expand the DSHS Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening program and the Medicaid Treatment Act under HHSC. With additional appropriations to DSHS (\$5.2 million) and HHSC (\$14.5 million), more women will have access to screening for breast and cervical cancer and to treatment under the Medicaid Treatment Act. S.B. 10, the Medicaid Reform Act, directs HHSC to qualify any individual eligible for Medicaid and diagnosed with breast or cervical cancer to receive treatment under Medicaid. DSHS and HHSC are collaborating on the expansion of services. Key components of the DSHS plan to increase the number of women screened and diagnosed for breast or cervical cancer include:

- increased access to DSHS breast-cancer and cervical-cancer screening and diagnostic services;
- education and outreach to health-care providers, agencies, and the public;
- education and outreach on clinical “best practices” for screening and diagnosis of breast or cervical cancer; and
- promotion of community breast-and-cervical-cancer coalitions and networks to support the safety-net health-care system of care.

*For more information, contact Margaret Mendez, Community Health Services, at (512) 458-7796 or e-mail [margaret.mendez@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:margaret.mendez@dshs.state.tx.us).*

### **WIC continues rollout of electronic-benefits transfer**

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) continues to implement electronic-benefits transfer to provide nutritious foods to participants. WIC clinics and grocers in 25 counties are preparing to start using the EBT cards in August at more than 100 grocers. When implementation is complete, EBT benefits will be available in about one-fourth of Texas counties and issued to about 150,000 of the 900,000 WIC clients served each month. Clinics now issuing EBT are in West Texas; the 25 new counties circle Dallas and Tarrant counties but do not include them. Work continues on the development of a new EBT card that will provide more features than the current card. *For more information, contact John Hanneman at (512) 458-7111, ext. 3497, or e-mail [john.hanneman@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:john.hanneman@dshs.state.tx.us); or contact Mike Montgomery, Nutrition Services, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 3408, or e-mail [mike.montgomery@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:mike.montgomery@dshs.state.tx.us).*

### **Milk prices exceed maximum printed on WIC vouchers**

The Texas WIC Program authorizes clients to receive 1½ gallons of milk per month; most clients are issued three months of WIC benefits during each clinic visit, with issuances for milk having a not-to-exceed (NTE) limit of \$7.05 for 1½ gallons of the least expensive brand of fluid milk. Recent jumps in wholesale and retail prices for milk have

required an increase in the NTE, which was raised July 2 to \$8.55 for all paper vouchers printed in WIC clinics on or after that date. However, all existing paper vouchers already in circulation must be held to the original \$7.05 NTE limit; some of these documents will remain in circulation until the end of August. Many counties that have been converted to the WIC electronic-benefits transfer system will have no delay in the effective date. WIC clients encountering a problem redeeming their milk benefits are being referred to other stores in their area where the NTE is still below the \$7.05 maximum. In smaller cities with few stores, clients are being told to return to the clinic where their current vouchers will be voided and new ones with the higher \$8.55 NTE will be printed. There have only been about 12 client complaints statewide. However, this number could increase if milk prices continue to rise. *For more information, contact Ray Krzesniak, Nutrition Services, at (512) 341-4400, ext. 2200, or e-mail [ray.krzesniak@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:ray.krzesniak@dshs.state.tx.us).*

### **WIC changing formula contractors**

Federal legislation requires all states' WIC programs to implement cost-containment measures when supplying standard milk-based and soy-based infant formulas, which are all nutritionally equivalent. Every three to five years, Texas WIC solicits bids for rebates on infant formula. After eight years of rebates from Mead Johnson, Ross Laboratories has been awarded the most recent infant-formula contract, to begin Oct. 1. Ross Laboratories, the manufacturer of Similac, will be the sole supplier for both milk-based and soy-based infant formula for about 200,000 infants seen each month through Texas WIC. Most infants receive a standard formula package of either eight or nine cans of dry powder or 31 cans of concentrate. Training about the change has been designed for local agencies and will be held throughout the summer. A physician packet is being designed and will be mailed out later this summer. Local-agency staff will provide written information to participants to notify them of the change in formula contractors. State and local-agency staff will assist participants by using handouts containing transition information that will help babies get used to the new flavors. *For more information, contact Patti Fitch, Nutrition Services, at (512) 341-4400, ext. 2227, or e-mail [patti.fitch@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:patti.fitch@dshs.state.tx.us).*

## **OTHER DSHS ACTIVITIES**

### **Mental Health Transformation activities continue**

Current Texas Mental Health Transformation activities are geared toward "moving to a place of action" through workgroup teams focused on defining specific priorities, roles, activities, and timelines. Their updated comprehensive plan on Year 3 strategies is due to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration on Sept. 30. Teams are developing a communication plan, logo, vision statement, and mission statement. The past month's activities included:

- A half-day meeting with all work groups to ensure alignment of strategies and activities.
- Designating that the work group's chair will be filled jointly by the DSHS commissioner and the work group's project director.
- The first transformation workgroup meeting since February was held on July 6, and reports were given by each of the five workgroup executive sponsors.

- Continued preparation for a community collaborative conference and a consumer-voice conference in August.

Information about the Mental Health Transformation grant, including workgroup meetings and activities and transformation activities at the national level, can be found at <http://www.mhtransformation.org/>. *For more information, contact Sam Shore, Center for Policy and Innovation, at (512) 458-7373 or e-mail [sam.shore@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:sam.shore@dshs.state.tx.us).*

### **Border Health Commission meets in Washington**

The U.S.-Mexico Border Health Commission was created as a binational health commission in July 2000, and it's composed of the federal secretaries of health, the chief health officers of the 10 U.S.-Mexico border states, and prominent community health professionals from both nations. Texas is represented on the commission by three members including Commissioner Lakey. Its mission is to provide international leadership to optimize health and quality of life along the U.S.-Mexico border. During a recent meeting in Washington, D.C., Michael Leavitt, secretary of Health and Human Services, directed commission members to sustain binational pandemic-flu planning efforts and to initiate steps to address food-safety issues. *For more information, contact Ronald J. Dutton, Director, Office of Border Health, at (512) 458-7675 or e-mail [rj.dutton@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:rj.dutton@dshs.state.tx.us).*