

Texas Department of Health

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Agency Vision

We commit, through personal and organizational excellence, to be an agent of change dedicated to achieving a healthier Texas.

Agency Mission

The mission of the Texas Department of Health is to protect and promote the health of the people of this state. In keeping with this, each program or activity conducted by the Department will strive to obtain the most up-to-date information possible about public health conditions, to direct its human and financial resources toward the areas where improvements in public health are needed, and to make every effort to ensure that the people of Texas receive the vital information and services needed to maintain and improve the health of the public.

Board of Health Strategic Priorities

By 2001, the healthier Texas we seek to achieve will be evidenced by:

- * Healthier children.
- * Natural and work environments posing less risk to human health.
- * Enhanced personal and public responsibility for health.
- * A better coordinated public health system responsive to the needs of all Texans.
- * Assuring essential public health services.

The issue of health is becoming exceedingly more complex, bound to a growing number of social and economic conditions. New advances such as telemedicine and breakthroughs in medical research have been matched by new outbreaks in tuberculosis and rabies. Recent years have also



witnessed the devolution of authority and responsibility for health-related services from the federal level to the state, regional and community levels.

The Texas Department of Health (TDH) is responsible for providing public health services as assigned by statutes, rules and policies of the Texas Board of Health and by direction of the commissioner of Health. The Department currently has responsibilities that range from registering births, immunizing children, providing health care for low-income families, preventing diseases and assessing health status to regulating food and drugs, licensing private psychiatric hospitals and recording deaths. In addition, TDH has a responsibility to work with local health departments and other public health providers as they take on new roles in a changing health care environment.

Agency Leadership

Interim Commissioner of Health: Patti Patterson, M.D., M.P.H.

Board of Health

Board Member	Term Expiration	Hometown
Walter D. Wilkerson, Jr., M.D., <i>Chair</i>	2/1/2001	Conroe
Mary E. Ceverha, M.P.A., <i>Vice-Chair</i>	2/1/2001	Dallas
Ramiro R. Casso, M.D.	2/1/1997	McAllen
David L. Collins	2/1/1999	Houston
Ruth F. Stewart, M.S., R.N.C.	2/1/1999	San Antonio
Betsy Triplett-Hurt	2/1/1997	Odessa

Current Organizational Issues

Federal: There are a number of issues that are currently being debated in Congress that will have a direct impact on TDH and, by extension, the clients served by TDH. In the past, most of the battles in Congress had to do with funding levels for various existing programs. This year there has been movement to change the basic foundation of the programs. There is a strong move to change entitlement programs, such as Medicaid and Welfare to block grants. Both the states and the federal government are pressed to cut their budgets and the block grant move is an effort to reduce expenses at both levels of government.

Demographics: Texas has passed New York State to become the nation’s second largest state in population, following California. Texas’ population continue to grow rapidly, due to both natural increases as well as in-migration and immigration. Population projections for the state are 24.1 million by the year 2010. More residents mean more demands on public health services, exacerbating shortages already imposed by fiscal restraint at both the state and federal levels.



Poverty: Often associated with increased health risks, poverty is on the upswing in Texas. Currently, the total Texas poverty population is 3,602,641, or 19.1 percent of the state's population. While Hispanic and black groups continue to represent a disproportionate number of those in Texas living under poverty conditions, children are the most likely to be living in poverty. 31.5 percent of children under the age of six and 26 percent of children/adolescents between the years of six and 18, are living in poverty.

Texas-Mexico Border: The nearly 1,000-mile long Texas-Mexico border (affecting 15 counties) is characterized by high unemployment, acute poverty and disease rates, harmful environmental and wastewater conditions, and a young and growing population that is alarmingly undereducated. A higher degree of contact between the two countries, brought about the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement, will likely have an impact on both regional and statewide public health, particularly the state's already strained emergency medical service/trauma systems.

Notable Accomplishments

Children's Health and Safety Initiative - a TDH-driven investment in the children which plans to combine public and private resources in order to ensure the health and safety of Texas children. TDH will work with other health and human services agencies, business leaders, community leaders and government officials to address the physical and mental health needs of children, their education and level of skills, and their standing in their families and communities.

"Shots Across Texas" - the innovative coalition of state and local groups that was launched in 1993 by TDH to fully immunize at least 90 percent of Texas' children two years and younger by 1996.

Vaccination Efforts - working the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to study a new chickenpox vaccine, educate the public about the needs for immunizations and offering tetanus and diphtheria vaccinations to victims of severe flooding in southeast Texas in the late 1994.

Canine Rabies - In an unprecedented statewide move, in 1995, TDH began air drops of vaccine-laden bait for coyotes, the primary reservoir for a serious South Texas canine rabies threat. In 1996, the drops were expanded to include gray foxes in West Texas. The rabies outbreak had been advancing northward at a rate of 45 miles per year; officials are now optimistic the number of rabies cases has come to a standstill.

Breast Cancer - the second leading cause of cancer death among women in Texas and the nation. Close to 75,000 women who have no other option and/or mean of access have received free screening services through TDH during the past five years. In addition, in 1994, TDH successfully secured more than \$1 million from CDC to further expand the Cancer Registry Division.

HIV - TDH has moved quickly to ensure compliance with new state HIV laws enacted by the 74th Legislature, requiring notification of partners of HIV-infected persons and HIV testing of all pregnant women.



Smoking - The TDH Office of Smoking and Health is aggressively countering the dramatic increases in youth smoking rates across the nation by promoting awareness of the tobacco industry's advertising and promotional activities that are geared toward youth. TDH has carried out statewide surveys that students, student advocates and faculty at schools through the state in support of anti-tobacco activities to restrict youth access to tobacco products and youth-targeted advertising.

Agency Liaison for the Survey of Organizational Excellence

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