



## THE NORTH CAROLINA INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

**June 1, 2007**

### **REPORT OF THE 2007 SITE VISIT TEAM**

For a Pilot Accreditation of the North Carolina Division of Public Health and Division of Environmental Health

#### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Overall, the result of the Division of Public Health's and the Division of Environmental Health's review was excellent, indeed outstanding. The site visit team was pleased by the health department's capacity, its preparations for the review visit and the clarity of the evidence provided, and concluded that if this were an official accreditation, the Divisions would far exceed the requirement of 80% of standards met. The team also praised the courage of both Divisions and its leaders in stepping forward to do this assessment and noted that this was a sentinel event; the first time a state health department invited a national site visit team to take them through an accreditation-type process. The team concluded that the assessment of the North Carolina Division of Public Health and Division of Environmental Health could, in many ways, serve as a prototype for a national voluntary accreditation process. The team also praised the staff of the NC Institute for Public Health for its support and logistical help in making the process a success. The Institute's expertise in the accreditation process was particularly useful.

The team noted that in some cases the performance standards not met were at the far levels of a stem question (i.e., stem questions are three level questions-1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.1.3, etc. but the sub-questions may go to six levels-1.1.1.1.1.2), and the criteria were at a very finite level. This could be a problem with the standards, for example, it could be difficult to decide whether and how 1.1.1 differs from 1.1.1.2. There were also overlap and duplication in some items, and occasionally the language of the items was unclear. The team also noted some systems issues in the assessment. For example, when a criterion was a system criterion and the state health department played a small role, then the health department's responsibility was unclear, and this sometimes meant that a sub-criterion was not met.

A major recommendation was that a narrative self-assessment by the two Divisions would facilitate the work of site reviewers. That is, the

Divisions would draw conclusions about the adequacy of their capacity to meet the stem and sub-questions and describe these conclusions; then a site visit team would review the evidence to validate the self-assessment.

The team also recommended more integration of work across categorical programs and more description of how the agency works as a collective and how the parts come together. Along these lines, the team also recommended more description of how the Division of Public Health fits in the Department of Health and Human Services and how the organization functions in that context.

During the interviews it was made clear that there are regular meetings between the two Secretaries and between the two Division Directors, and that they have an agreed upon plan which outlines each Division's responsibilities under each area where they collaborate, including for example, local accreditation and lab services. The team noted that part of the successful working relationship between the Division of Public Health and the Division of Environmental Health comes from the excellent personal relationships between the Division's leaders and those in other similar capacities within the Department of Environmental and Natural Resources and the Department of Health and Human Services. Since people come and go, the team recommended that some institutional system of collaboration should be established.

## **SITE VISIT TEAM MEMBERS**

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