



STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

JOHN J. DREYZEHNER, MD, MPH
COMMISSIONER

BILL HASLAM
GOVERNOR

January 31, 2014

The Honorable Bill Haslam
Governor
State Capitol
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Governor Haslam:

This letter serves as my annual report to outline the Department of Health's activities in regards to the **Federal Block Grant Review Act of 1996** as required per TCA 9-4-5404. This report covers the period of February 1, 2013 through January 31, 2014. The Department has two block grants which fall under the purview of the Federal Block Grant Review Act of 1996. They are the **Maternal and Child Health Block Grant** (approximately \$11.5 million) and the **Preventive Health Services Block Grant** (approximately \$1.2 million) of available grant funds during this reporting period. Both grants are awarded on a federal fiscal year and have not had any significant changes since the Department's last report to you dated February 18, 2013.

Items I would like to highlight:

1. As part of a departmental initiative to promote TDH collaboration with communities, we launched the **Primary Prevention Initiative (PPI)** in FY2013. Local health department staff are engaging community partners around key priority areas such as obesity, infant mortality, tobacco use, and immunizations. To date, 290 projects have been implemented in communities across the state.
2. Block grant funds support our primary prevention efforts. In late 2013, TDH launched the **TN Breastfeeding Hotline**, which provides **round-the-clock access to certified lactation consultants** for anyone in Tennessee who has questions related to breastfeeding.
3. TDH is leveraging public/private partnerships to extend the impact of Block Grant funds. In January 2014, we launched a **hospital-based safe sleep project** to support the development of hospital safe sleep policies and to encourage modeling of safe sleep practices to parents (sleep-related deaths are a major contributor to our high infant mortality rates).

The Department has in place an organizational structure to meet the Federal Block Grant Review Act. Our structure ensures formal and informal participation of concerned

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citizens, regulated entities, religious organizations, non-profit agencies, and local government officials in the decision-making process.

- Both Federal Block Grants require annual public hearings which allow for additional public input into the program and funding decisions. These forums allow any interested party the opportunity to voice concerns directly to the Department, as well as all programs and activities, and to assist in the decision-making process.
- **Community Health Councils serve in an advisory capacity in each county of the State.** These councils have a broad range of individuals with 15 - 20 members who are representative of the community including health departments, hospital administrators, elected officials, physician/medical providers, not-for-profit organizations and local citizens. The councils provide the Department insight to community health needs, possible solutions, and funding requirements. The Department has supported the councils in the preparation of community health assessments across the state in an effort to bolster the councils' capacities to develop local solutions for local challenges based on local data (See attached CDC Publication, The Tennessee Department of Health WORKshops on Use of Secondary Data for Community Health Assessment, 2012).

The **Preventive Health Services Block Grant funding** is used to support prevention activities across the state. Activities are based on evidence-based guidelines as identified in the annual work plan. These activities include:

- Public Health Educators informing, educating, and mobilizing community partnerships to develop policies and plans statewide that address the prevention of cancer, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and obesity. **Seventy-two (72) health educators** across the state work directly in Tennessee communities to promote prevention strategies.
- The **Tennessee Poison Control Hotline operating 24/7** providing information, education, and links statewide to services for poison education and control with over 130,000 calls received annually through the hotline.
- Public Health Educators providing rape and sexual assault awareness activities to at risk individuals statewide. Media campaigns are coordinated and implemented in the general population as well as at-risk communities. **Tennessee rape and sexual assault centers provide a 24-hour crisis hotline** for counseling within their respective service areas with referrals for medical follow-up to individuals calling the 24-hour rape crisis hotline.

The **Maternal and Child Health Block Grant funds** a mix of direct and enabling services as well as infrastructure and capacity-building activities. Examples of projects funded using the MCH Block Grant include:

- A network of **specialty genetic centers** provide medical care and consultation to children with life-threatening illnesses identified through the newborn screening program. Out of approximately 80,000 live births per year, more than 99% of infants receive a newborn screen and over 2,000 require some additional follow-up because of abnormalities identified on the initial newborn screen.
- The **Children's Special Services (CSS) program** supports children with special health care needs and their families. Over 6,000 children with special health care needs receive individualized care coordination services and assistance in paying for medical services not covered by other forms of insurance.
- MCH Block Grant funds were used in conjunction with WIC funds to establish the **TN Breastfeeding Hotline, a 24/7 telephonic hotline** through which anyone in the state can be connected with a certified lactation consultant for advice on breastfeeding. Breastfeeding has been shown to improve infant/child health (including decreased obesity, diabetes, SIDS, and respiratory/gastrointestinal infections) and maternal health (reduced incidence of diabetes and breast/ovarian cancers).

Additionally, public awareness campaigns promote optimal health and well-being for Tennessee women and children. Recent campaigns funded through the MCH Block Grant include the **"Healthy Babies Are Worth the Wait"** effort (a public/private partnership with the TN Hospital Association and the March of Dimes) to reduce early elective deliveries and the **"ABC's of Safe Sleep"** campaign to reduce sleep-related infant deaths (a substantial contributor to our high infant mortality rates).

If you or any members of your staff have any questions or concerns regarding this report or any other matters, I would be pleased to speak to you at your convenience.

Sincerely,



John J. Dreyzehner, MD, MPH, FACOEM
Commissioner

Attachment: CDC Publication, The Tennessee Department of Health WORKshops on Use of Secondary Data for Community Health Assessment, 2012