

DATE: July 14, 2005

SUBJECT: Status of the Tennessee Public Health Institute

ACTION RECOMMENDED: Information

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: Planning for the Tennessee Institute of Public Health has moved forward through the leadership of Commissioner Kenneth Robinson of the Department of Health and his staff, participating universities, and Commission staff. The purpose of the state-wide, not-for-profit Institute is to provide and broker services aimed at improving the health of Tennesseans through health education, research, and policy analysis. Recently, two significant steps in the development of the Institute have occurred.

The Committee on establishing the Institute consulted National Network of Institutes of Public Health representatives to assess the strength of planning for the Tennessee Institute. These consultants noted the appropriateness of purpose, evidence of solid collaborative support, high potential for success, and concluded that such an entity would mirror comparable efforts in 27 states with others emerging in an additional 15.

At its June 15 meeting, this oversight Committee unanimously endorsed the development of a Memorandum of Understanding among supporting partners to formalize the structure and operation of an interim organization. The Commission staff has drafted the MOU, now under review by the Department of Health, for establishing an interim institute with the purpose of constructing a policy framework, operations procedures, and funding mechanisms for a recognized and sustainable entity. The MOU steps are:

- Constitute a broadly representative board of directors to frame a public policy agenda for the Institute;
- Select an interim director, an individual grounded in public health practice, with good professional contacts, a research background, proven management skills, and skills to be an effective fund raising advocate;
- Build a strategic plan;
- Seek start-up and core funding; and
- Establish auditable accounting and personnel management policies.

Related Public Health Academic Program Activity

East Tennessee State University (ETSU) has arranged for a consultant approved by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) to review plans to establish a college of public health, an academic unit that will house an existing Masters of Public Health (MPH) and proposed doctoral program. The purpose of the review is to ensure consonance with new CEPH criteria for accredited

colleges of public health as these proposals progress to governing board review and Commission consideration.

University of Tennessee Health Sciences Center (UTHSC) Chancellor William F. Owen and University of Memphis (UoM) President Shirley Raines met recently to confirm plans to go forward with a jointly-sponsored, CEPH-accredited college of public health. The UoM is developing MPH curricula for health administration, health behavior, and environmental health which will complement the UTHSC epidemiology and biostatistics specialty areas required for program accreditation.

Tennessee State University has recently filed intent to plan the MPH and a doctoral program in public health with the Tennessee Board of Regents.

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK) continues planning for an institute that will engage several academic units at the UTK campus, including Exercise, Sports and Leisure Studies; Health and Safety; Nutrition; Social Work; Veterinary Medicine; Psychology; Nursing; and several units of the Graduate School of Medicine. Discussions continue regarding establishment of concentrations and dual degrees linked to the accredited MPH program at UTK.