

DATE: April 20, 2006

SUBJECT: Status of the Tennessee Institute of Public Health

ACTION RECOMMENDED: Information

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: The purpose of the Institute of Public Health is to provide a state-wide, free-standing, not-for-profit mechanism whereby universities, the Department of Health, and other entities can work collaboratively on grants and sponsored research, public health education, public service initiatives, and policy analysis. Consultants from the National Network of Public Health Institutes have reviewed planning for the Institute and have found the framework to be sound and very promising. The Institute's development is concurrent with the emergence of graduate programming in public health at Tennessee State University, East Tennessee State University, and a joint effort by the University of Memphis and the University of Tennessee Health Sciences Center.

The purpose and functions of the Institute have been formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding among the primary partners in the endeavor: The University of Tennessee System, the Tennessee Board of Regents System, the Department of Health, and the Tennessee Higher Education Commission. The Institute is in its organizational stage supported through one-time funding from the THEC.

Dr. Jo Edwards will serve as the interim director for the Institute on a part-time basis and through a one-year dual services contract while she continues to hold her position as chair holder of the Middle Tennessee State University Adams Chair of Excellence in Health Care Services. Professor Edwards also directs the MTSU Center for Health and Human Services. Her appointment will begin May 1. Dr. Edwards' extensive experience in public health and human services, her success with securing extramural funds, and her knowledge of national and state public health issues recommend her for this position. To organize the operations of the Institute, Dr. Edwards will work with THEC and Department of Health staff and representatives from academic institutions in developing a strategic plan; establishing auditable management and accounting procedures; constituting a board of directors with appropriate representation from academic institutions, government, and the private sector; and seeking non-state funds to support the entity. Once the Institute is fully operational, a permanent director will be appointed.