

The Office of Pacific Health and Human Services

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The Office of Pacific Health and Human Services (OPHHS) is located within the larger Office of the Regional Health Administrator in San Francisco, California. It was developed in coordination with Dr. Philip Lee, Assistant Secretary for Health, and Dr. Jo Ivey Boufford, the Principal Deputy, within the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The mission of OPHHS is to identify and provide program and policy advice on broad, overarching issues that concern all of the Operating Divisions (OPDIVs) of the US Public Health Service (USPHS), DHHS, and other Departments concerning the Pacific Jurisdictions affiliated with the US and concerning the State of Hawaii.

In summary, OPHHS supports the work of the Centers, Bureaus, Institutes, and Program Offices in the USPHS

and DHHS to define and coordinate assistance delivery and capacity building to meet the need for public health training in both technical and managerial areas; to assure cultural sensitivity in interactions with island populations; to promote communication and information/data systems development; to provide ongoing technical assistance in the management and interpretation of data; to develop appropriate public health and primary care goals and objectives; to coordinate telecommunications, videoconferencing, and telemedicine programs; and to provide for comprehensive health planning support. In addition, OPHHS will provide technical assistance and program oversight for special projects related to the Pacific Jurisdictions.

The current staff includes three positions:

- Joseph P. Iser, MD, Director, who provides overall policy and program direction of OPHHS;
- George Lewis, Senior Public Health Advisor, who relates primarily to the State of Hawaii; and

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- Patrick Rogers, Senior Public Health Advisor, who relates primarily to the Pacific Jurisdictions.

The following represents the OPHHS work plan for 1997. Work plan objectives and outputs will change in response to joint funding of proposed projects by DHHS OPDIVs. The objectives and activities described below are in response to issues generated by the Health Ministers and Health Directors of the US-affiliated Pacific, the Working Group on Pacific Health and Human Services, and knowledge regarding the health issues existing in the Jurisdictions. This work plan will be divided into several objectives to be accomplished without project funding; the final 5 objectives are optional, based on final FY 1997 funding. In addition, OPHHS is currently working with the human services OPDIVs of DHHS (the Administration on Aging, the Administration for Children and Families, and the Health Care Financing Administration) to develop additional goals that better incorporate the functions of these programs.

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Objective 1. Continuing education: Work with the six Jurisdictions, organised clinical associations existing in the Pacific such as the Pacific Basin Medical Association, the Micronesia Human Resource Development Center (the follow on organisation to the Pacific Basin Medical Officers Training Program), DHHS OPDIVs, and other non-governmental organisations to develop continuing education (CE) programs for clinicians in the Jurisdictions.

Objective 2. Regional health issues: Work with the Office on Women's Health (OWH), the Office of Minority Health (OMH), the Office of Emergency Preparedness (OEP), the Regional Immunisation Coordinator, and the Office of Population Affairs (OPA) regional representatives to facilitate their work plans related to the Pacific Jurisdictions. This will encompass many different activities, including:

- Working with the OWH consultant and the Jurisdictions to develop a set of women's health issues pertinent to individual Jurisdictions and the Pacific Basin as a whole.
- Working with the OWH consultant, the Jurisdictions, and interested organisations and individuals in developing a Women's Health Conference.

- Working with the OMH consultant to develop a list of concerns and to collect and analyse data in the Jurisdictions and among immigrants from the Jurisdictions who reside within the continental United States.
- Acting as liaison between the OMH consultant and the Jurisdictions
- Working with the Emergency Preparedness Coordinators of OEP to develop a proposal related to disaster mitigation planning involving the Jurisdictions, and, if funded, working with the Coordinators to implement the proposal.
- Developing a hazard assessment for biological and physical hazards that emergency response personnel may encounter in the various Jurisdictions if deployed there.
- Assisting the Coordinators in efforts related to emergency response within the entire Region and the Nation.
- Working with the Immunisation Outreach Consultant to assess vaccine coverage of infants and adults, especially those in high-risk categories, in the Jurisdictions.
- Working with the Family Planning Consultants to assess family planning objectives in the Jurisdictions.

Objective 3. Surplus equipment: Determine the need and supply of surplus equipment for Jurisdictions' use. This will be accomplished by working with interested Jurisdictions to develop a priority list of needed equipment that each Jurisdiction could use to provide health services; working with the Jurisdictions, the Department of Interior, the Department of State, and the Department of Defence to locate appropriate sources of surplus equipment; working with non-governmental organisations with experience in surplus equipment refurbishing to assure that surplus equipment is appropriate and useable; and working with all interested parties to determine storage, refurbishing, transportation, installation, maintenance, and training in the use of such equipment.

Objective 4. Impact of the compact: Continue activities in support of DHHS, the Department of the Interior, and other departments' responsibilities to the Jurisdictions impacted by the existing Compacts of Free Association.

Objective 5. Coordination of the Pacific health and human services working group: Continue activities in support of DHHS and PHS goals related to health and human services issues in the Jurisdictions. Some of these activities include:

- Convening the Working Group that represents the DHHS Operating Divisions approximately quarterly to assess the progress each component has made to coordinate their

efforts related to the Jurisdictions internally. Supporting the Policy Group consisting of the OPDIV administrators and the leadership of the USPHS.

- Acting as a conduit of information for each OPDIV, as requested, to the others.
- Represent OPDIVs as requested in meeting with Jurisdictional representatives
- Attend PIHOA meetings to represent DHHS, USPHS, and OPDIVs as requested.

Objective 6. Telecommunications: Monitor the grant activities under Phase II and III of the PIHOA contract to provide upgraded e-mail capability to the Jurisdictions. OPHHS will also continue to meet with telecommunications providers and interested parties to facilitate enhanced telecommunications, including videoconferencing and telemedicine capacity to the Jurisdictions. OPHHS will develop an ongoing set of recommendations regarding telecommunications capacity within the Pacific Basin.

Objective 7. Grants management and grant writing workshops: Assist in the development and implementation of these activities. The Grants Management Workshop was held, with all Jurisdictions invited to participate. The Grant Writing Workshop is under development, and OPHHS plans

on facilitating this workshop around May or June, 1997, in conjunction with other DHHS components.

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Objective 8. Health Planning: Create a short-, medium-, and long-range plan for Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and American Samoa. Funding for this objective has been requested but has not yet been provided. This effort would result in updated comprehensive

health plans for the named Jurisdictions, with health planning for the other three Jurisdictions to be requested for next year.

Objective 9. Environmental health and sanitation: Provide technical assistance to the Jurisdictions in the areas of wastewater management, solid-waste disposal, water treatment systems, restaurant inspections, and other environmental issues. Again, funding has been requested but is not yet available. Requested funding will be used to provide technical assistance at the request of the individual Jurisdictions regarding environmental health issues.

Objective 10. Laboratory training: Develop a plan for providing short-, medium-, and long-range laboratory training the Jurisdictions. Funding has been requested but is not yet available. Building upon the ASTPHLD report from approxi-

mately 2 years ago, OPHHS would work with the National Laboratory Training Network to reassess the current state of individual laboratories in the jurisdictions. A laboratory training program would then be devised, and training would be held in each laboratory facility to provide in-house training. Regional educational programs, such as in quality assurance and other areas that cross all laboratories, would be held to provide additional training. The emphasis would be on providing training to those who can return to their jurisdictions and train others. At the end of each training session, additional needs assessments would be conducted to determine whether and at what frequency to continue training and reassessments.

Objective 11. Laboratory assessment: Determine the effectiveness of both the clinical and the public health capability of the current laboratories in the jurisdictions. Funding has been requested but is not yet available. Requested grants will fund laboratory assessment in each Jurisdiction. The assessment would review various options related to the provision of laboratory services in the Jurisdictions, including the development of a regional laboratory. This would be compared to the utilisation of various other laboratories, such as the clinical laboratory at Tripler Army Medical Center and other facilities in Hawaii, the mainland, or elsewhere, the public

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health laboratory for the state of Hawaii, and the additional public health reference laboratories used in California. The result would be a recommendation and planning document on how to most cost efficiently assure the provision of clinical and public health laboratory services in the jurisdictions.

Objective 12. Pharmaceutical services assessment: Determine the feasibility of a regional pharmaceutical supply facility. Funds have been requested for this objective but have not yet been received. A pharmaceutical services assessment would be conducted in the Jurisdictions. This proposal follows meetings with WHO/WPRO and a larger group of countries in the Pacific, including the Jurisdictions, regarding the feasibility of setting up a centralised pharmaceutical facility somewhere in the Pacific; this was one of the topics at the Ministerial Meeting hosted by WPRO in Fiji in March, 1995. Various options would be reviewed regarding the provision of pharmaceutical services, including the review of current procurement practices, costs, suppliers, and other factors to help determine the feasibility of setting up such a centralised facility in the jurisdictions. The result would be a recommendation and planning document on how to most cost efficiently assure the provision of pharmaceutical services in both the Jurisdictions and in the larger Pacific Basin. A grantee and OPHHS would work with WHO/WPRO on this project. □

“ Health is everything – not just anything ”

*Sione Tau'aki Kofe
Masilamea, Tonga Is.*