

Summary of National EPHT Workgroup Activities

December 5, 2006

From the outset of planning, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have encouraged collaboration between itself and its health and environmental partners. As one part of this collaborative effort, the CDC established three workgroups: Program Marketing and Outreach (PMO), Content Workgroup (CWG), and Standards and Network Development (SND), to guide development of the national and state tracking networks. PMO and SND were formed in 2003 when the national and state EPHT programs were involved in planning and demonstration activities. CWG was formed in 2006 to address data and network content issues.

The Oregon EPHT program actively works with all three workgroups via monthly conference calls and participation in face-to-face meetings twice a year. As leaders, co-chairs, and members of the groups, the Oregon EPHT program contributes to workgroup discussions and provides feedback on recommendations from the groups.

Recently, the Oregon Technical Advisory Group (OTAG) established two workgroups called Systems, Logistics, and Applications Management (SLAM) and Data Use and Network Content (DUNC). These Oregon-based workgroups are charged to review recommendations from the national groups (especially from CWG and SND), investigate how these recommendations are compatible with existing systems, methods, and standards used in Oregon, and provide feedback to the National and other State EPHT programs. The work of SLAM and DUNC will help the Oregon EPHT program define and articulate Oregon's perspective in national workgroup discussions.

This document provides members of SLAM and DUNC contextual information on the national workgroups including a summary of the work the national groups have accomplished over the past four years.

PMO

PMO is a group of individuals from state and local EPHT programs, Academic Partners of Excellence, and national agency partners who assist the CDC and its grantees in development and implementation of an outreach and marketing plan for the National EPHT Program.

PMO is currently organized into five target audience teams: data stewards, agencies, advocacy groups, professional associations, and risk communication. PMO recently established a community team focused on environmental health disparities. Some key functions of the group include:

- Determine key program messages
- Assist in developing tools for funding recipients to disseminate messages (e.g., fact sheets, “At-A-Glance” templates)
- Identify and profile key audiences
- Identify various distribution channels, activities, and outreach strategies for promoting program information
- Identify credible spokespeople
- Evaluate communication activities

The work of the PMO is consistent with the CDC’s Strategy for the National Environmental Public Health Tracking Program, which is to disseminate information to guide policy, practice, and other actions to improve the nation’s health, and to foster collaboration among health and environmental programs.

CWG

CDC formed the CWG in 2006 to define appropriate core measures to track, develop, and adopt standards for nationally consistent data, and identify procedures for accessing tracking network information. Specifically, this group will provide a structured approach for organizing and investigating environmental health surveillance data. The tasks associated with developing this structure include:

- ❖ Assess existing information and gaps. Identify where tracking can add value
- ❖ Consider surveillance goals for the content area
- ❖ Identify and evaluate needed data sets
- ❖ Propose measure(s)/indicator(s) for presentation and display
- ❖ Identify needed elements to describe data quality within the metadata template

The CWG created a number of Content teams that will develop recommendations for the above tasks. These teams were organized based on the core data measures that were identified for implementation and are grouped in the three distinct components of the National Network (hazard, exposure, and health outcome data). The teams are as follows:

- Hazard Data Teams
 - Air Quality Team
 - Drinking Water Quality Team
- Exposures Data Team
 - Childhood Lead Exposure Team
- Health Outcomes Data Teams
 - Cancer Team
 - Birth Defects Team
 - Vital Statistics/Birth Outcomes Team
 - Hospitalization Team

One additional non-core data team is the Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Team.

The CWG is currently working on developing meeting procedures, setting team leaderships, finalizing memberships, and working on timelines. Some of the Content Teams are already working on indicators while others are just starting.

SND

The role of the SND group is to identify existing standards for building the technical infrastructure of the network. For example, how will data be transported from one site to the next? After identifying a standard, the SND recommends the adoption of the standard for the National EPHT Network. SND also recommends (to the appropriate standards authorities) the development of standards where they do not exist and that are needed for developing the National EPHT Network. These efforts are done to ensure compatibility with existing and developing efforts such as the Public Health Information Network (PHIN) and EPA's National Environmental Information Exchange Network (NEIEN).

There are a number of subgroups within SND that work on specific topic areas. These groups are:

- Geography and Locational Referencing
- Metadata
- Network Architecture
- Security

The tasks of these groups are as follows:

- The Geospatial and Locational Referencing subgroup released the GeoPrimer guide, a guide that describes what geospatial data is and why it is important to public health. The group is currently reviewing developing geospatial data standards. Geospatial data standards are important to maintain consistency and interoperability in geospatial data originating in differing organizations for different reasons.
- The Metadata subgroup is refining a metadata standard for all datasets published on the EPHT networks. This work is being done in collaboration with the CWG Content Teams to ensure dataset descriptions are compatible with respects to the content. This group also works with PMO to create messages on the importance of metadata and will work on a "Metadata for EPHT" manual.
- The Network Architecture Subgroup is currently refining a recommendation for an architecture for the national network and is determining network standards for transporting data.
- The Security Subgroup is working on refining user roles for role-based security.

Information on the National EPHT Program and Approved Documents from the National Workgroups

For further reading on the National EPHT Program, visit the CDC's website at <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/tracking/>.

Some documents approved for release to the public are at <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/tracking/network.htm>.

Further documents are available from the EPHT national workgroups at <http://ephtn.sharepointsite.com/default.aspx>. However, to access draft documents a user name and password are required. Currently, because these are draft documents, only workgroup members are provided access. Further discussion with the CDC is needed to expand access of this site.