10 - Essential Public Health Functions

1. Monitor health status to identify and solve community health problems.
2. Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards in the community.
3. Inform, educate, and empower people about health issues.
4. Mobilize community partnerships and action to identify and solve health problems.
5. Develop policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts.
6. Enforce laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety.
7. Link people to needed personal health services and assure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable.
8. Assure competent public and personal health care workforce.
9. Evaluate effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services.
10. Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems.

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As the Director, I am pleased to present the 2014 annual report for the Waco-McLennan County Public Health District (Health District). As you read through this report, it is my hope and intent that the information shared adequately illustrates the resources and efforts that have been invested to help protect the health and safety of individuals, families, and the environment in this wonderful community.

Public health is a multi-faceted system tasked with improving or maintaining healthy conditions for the community. From monitoring health conditions to investigating disease outbreaks, to developing plans and policies, the Health District staff diligently strives daily to excel in providing quality services. We strategically work with numerous partners such as local healthcare providers, schools, businesses, non-profit agencies, community-based organizations, and individuals to promote health initiatives and control disease. Many functions are done without most residents even realizing they occur, and our true success is the absence of disease in our community. These facts sometimes make it difficult to explain why public health is so important. However, it is our goal to promote health, prevent disease, and provide a safe environment by assuring the availability of quality care and accurate, up-to-date health information that will enable McLennan County residents to make informed and healthy choices regarding their own well-being and safety.

We are extremely proud of the implementation of a model Tobacco-Free Campus policy in May 2014. The policy prohibits the use of all tobacco and nicotine containing products including electronic cigarettes. This Tobacco-Free policy seeks to improve the health of employees and clientele by protecting them from exposure to environmental tobacco smoke.

We are also excited about the work that has occurred through the collaborative efforts of the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) Committee. Three priorities resulting from the 2013 Community Health Needs Assessment are being addressed to improve the health of McLennan County residents. Those priorities are Access to Care, Women’s Health and Obesity.

The information in this report represents just a small portion of the many activities, events, and partnerships the Health District participates in every year. The work that we do and the partnerships that we form help make McLennan County a safe and healthy place to live.

I know that I speak not only for myself, but also for the Board of Health and staff when I say thank-you for entrusting us with the responsibility and opportunity of providing you with the very best public health services possible.

Sincerely,

Sherry Williams, APRN
Director
Dr. Verner’s wins the prestigious Gold Cane Award from the McLennan County Medical Society.

The Gold-Headed Cane Award is presented to an outstanding physician who is nominated by their peers. The qualifications of the recipient include professional standing, good citizenship and personal integrity. A gold-headed cane is presented to the recipient based on a tradition that originated in England in the 1600’s, where such a cane designated a physician as the most outstanding London practitioner of the times. It is a symbol of respect, truth, culture and art in the medical profession. Here in the United States, many larger cities have carried on this tradition to honor an outstanding physician with a long history of commitment to quality medicine in their community. To be eligible to receive the award locally, a doctor must be an active or retired member of the McLennan County Medical Society who has not yet received this honor.

Dr. Verner was the 2014 recipient in McLennan County. He has served as Health Authority for the Waco-McLennan County Public Health District since 2003. As an infectious disease specialist, he is uniquely qualified to perform the duties of a Health Authority. He works daily with the Health District staff, local physicians and hospitals to monitor any emerging health issues. Dr. Verner has guided the Health Care community through various outbreaks including TB, Pertussis and Pandemic Flu. He is truly dedicated to promoting the health and well-being of the citizens of McLennan County.
The mission of the Environmental Health Division is to identify and correct conditions in the natural or built environment that may affect human health or cause disease or disease outbreaks. This includes the permitting and inspecting of food establishments, childcare facilities, swimming pools/spas, and on-site sewage facilities. Investigating and correcting sanitation nuisances such as fly, rat and mosquito breeding conditions, and requiring proper disposal of garbage and sewage are part of the Environmental Health component to help assure quality living standards in the community.

This past year the Environmental Health Division implemented a Quality Improvement Initiative (QI). Some of these activities included:

- Updating office procedures to the public to provide a more professional image and demeanor, improved communications, and better transfer and exchange of information with the public.

- A series of information sheets on the importance of consistently maintaining safe conditions was developed and distributed to food handlers and pool operators. By providing regular reminders through the year, safe conditions can be consistently maintained and fewer re-inspections will be needed.

- Refrigerator thermometers attached to a card showing correct temperatures for refrigerators and freezers was developed to promote the message of food safety by using temperatures to slow the growth of bacteria that can cause illness.

- Continuing the Mosquito Control and West Nile Virus Response Plan developed and implemented in 2013. Information packets were distributed with mosquito repellant wipes to improve the message of protecting a person from mosquito bites and West Nile Virus. The Division also participated for the first time in National Mosquito Control Week to promote mosquito control efforts. By October 2014, only one human case of West Nile Virus disease was reported.

- The Off-Site Sewage Facility (OSSF) program received a “no action items required” compliance review by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). The review evaluates processes involving administration, planning material review, permitting, inspections, and complaint resolution. The results of the review shows the Health District is properly administering the OSSF program by effectively enforcing the laws, rules and orders related to OSSF. More importantly, the efforts of the OSSF staff are achieving the purpose of managing on-site sewage facilities to eliminate and prevent health nuisances and water pollution.

- Developing unified approaches for inspections and permitting to meet the increased demand for inspections for the opening of McLane Stadium, the popular trend of food trucks and numerous special events.
In addition to quality improvements, Environmental Health accomplishes the Health District motto of “Promote - Prevent - Protect” in several ways but primarily through inspections. Inspections are the primary method to identify and correct conditions in the environment that may cause disease or disease outbreaks.

At times, other actions are necessary to protect the public health. Providing just an inspection may not always provide desired results. Additional actions are necessary to correct identified violations and correct conditions that could contribute to an illness. These activities include

- Investigating approximately 409 citizen complaints concerning health nuisance conditions. 99% of all complaints were investigated in less than 24 hours. Investigations included inspections at the complaint location.

- Providing additional enforcement and protection
  - Food Establishments received 556 follow up inspections in addition to the approximately 2,678 routine inspections to ensure corrections are provided
    - 54 food establishments were temporarily closed until corrections were provided.
    - 7 food establishments receive permit suspensions for serious and repeated violations
    - 4 establishments received permit revocations and closed for the inability to maintain safe conditions and compliance with food regulations.

  - 18 pools and spas temporarily closed until corrections were provided.

  - The Onsite Sewage Facility program sent 1105 notices of violation to aerobic unit owners for not providing required maintenance and to individuals with failing septic systems.
    - 58 unresolved violations were referred to the Justice of the Peace Courts for resolution.

The activities above demonstrate the effectiveness of the Division to Promote, Protect and Prevent to ensure healthy venues and an enviable quality of life for our communities.
The Epidemiology Division at Waco-McLennan County Public Health District (WMCPHD) works to protect and promote the health of the residents of McLennan County. The Epidemiology Division monitors the prevalence of diseases and conditions that affect public health, provides expertise and analysis of adverse occurrences, investigates disease outbreaks, and makes recommendations pertaining to case management and control of future disease outbreaks.

Fiscal Year (FY) 2013-14 was a busy year for the Epidemiology Division. A total of 283 notifiable disease reports were investigated from September 2013 through September 2014. During this period the Health District also investigated three viral gastrointestinal “stomach bug” outbreaks associated with senior care facilities. All outbreaks were investigated by using surveys and medical record information, and control measures were implemented at the facilities. Overall increased Shigella or “Shigellosis” activity was observed during this time period as shown in the figure below.

On a routine basis, the quarterly reports and annual statistics were sent to over 400 McLennan County contacts. These contacts include McLennan County’s health care providers, nursing homes, day cares and school district staff. The report included the updates and topics on enteric diseases, vaccine preventable illnesses, flu and preparedness. The information is also available for public on the WMCPHD’s web page. www.wacomclennanphd.org
The WMCPHD implements year round surveillance (tracking) of influenza and influenza-like illness (ILI) from hospitals, clinics and schools. During FY2013-2014, WMCPHD staff participated in the Texas Department of State Health Services sponsored Enhanced Influenza Incidence Surveillance Project (IISP). IISP was an enhancement of influenza surveillance activities in the county. Two health care providers participated in the project. The weekly flu and epidemiological surveillance played an important role in identifying and controlling outbreaks in the community.

During the year, WMCPHD partnered with Texas Department of State Health Services to conduct an epidemiologic investigation on injuries caused by the West Texas Fertilizer Explosion. Working with the healthcare community, investigation teams reviewed medical information from area healthcare facilities and conducted patient surveys to collect vital information. The field report of this study is now available on WMCPHD’s website link: www.wacomclennanphd.org. It is hoped that this investigation will provide a better understanding of the public health impact of acute injuries sustained in the April 2013, West Texas Fertilizer Plant explosion tragedy.

In March 2014, the Epidemiology Division presented four abstracts at the Texas Public Health Association Annual Education Conference. The topics included the West Texas Fertilizer Plant Explosion Injury Study, Community Health Needs Assessment Data, Preparedness Assessment of McLennan County residents and a Worksite Tobacco Study which was awarded for “Best Abstract”.

In collaboration with the Baylor School of Social Work and Texas Hunger Initiative, the Epidemiology Division conducted a food environment assessment for the Greater Waco area. The data was collected by students and analyzed and reported by the Epidemiology Division. The report will be used by local stakeholders for grant writing, program evaluation, and initiative startup. The field report of this study is now available on WMCPHD’s website link: www.wacomclennanphd.org.
The Health Education program continues to serve area residents by providing health information geared toward reducing disease burden and promoting good health. The program accomplished many of its goals through work on two grants made available by the Texas Department of State Health Services.

The McLennan County Community Diabetes Program served 7,254 attendees during its diabetes self-management classes, cooking classes, support groups, and physical activity groups. These programs promote self-sufficiency in managing or preventing diabetes particularly for those at high risk for diabetes due to lifestyle factors and family history. The Diabetes Program bridged the gap between education and medical care by establishing a formalized referral system with 8 local Hillcrest Community Clinics. In addition, the Diabetes Program was rated as exemplary and a model Diabetes Community Project program by the Texas Department of State Health Services. As always, all classes, support groups, and activity programs are offered at no cost to participants.

The Transforming Texas / Community Transformation Grant seeks to reduce the burden of secondhand smoke, decrease obesity, and work toward collaborations for quality clinical care for Texas residents. Locally, staff partnered with the Live Well Waco Coalition to support communities in health promotion efforts by ensuring adequate health offerings at work, school and throughout community spaces. Some of this year’s activities included implementing four shared use agreements with schools, organizations, churches, and neighborhood parks which allow community members access to recreational facilities after hours; partnering with area churches, schools, and local organizations to enhance seven community gardens by offering fresh produce in areas of need; and working with area worksites to assess nutrition, physical activity and tobacco policies to ensure employees have adequate support for a healthy lifestyle during working hours.

This year the program continued its service to local School Health Advisory Councils (SHACS). Acting as community advisors, educators provide advice on school health programming and its impact on student health and learning. As SHAC members and Partners in Education stewards, staff contributed to the installation and/or maintenance of school gardens as well as community gardens serving area neighborhoods. Such projects aid in our endeavor to increase access to healthier foods and promote healthy eating.
The **Healthy Babies Coalition** continue their work to reduce preterm births in McLennan County while also working to understand the disparity which exists in populations experiencing premature births and infant loss at significant rates. The group hosted a variety of learning opportunities for women of childbearing age, providers and the community-at-large. The coalition supported the implementation of Centering Pregnancy, which is a model of group prenatal care, at two area clinics. Recently, the coalition has begun surveying women in Waco in order to better understand the perception of women’s health needs as well as learn some of the barriers that exist with accessing health care. Through these activities, HBC strives to improve health outcomes of mothers and babies by positively impacting the care women receive throughout the life cycle.

In the coming year, the health education program looks forward to continuing work on strategies to reduce and prevent the onset of various preventable diseases through systems, environmental and administrative policy change to positively impact the health of county residents.
The goal of the Waco-McLennan County Public Health District Immunization Program is to immunize and educate the community. This was accomplished this year through various means.

IMMUNIZATION CLINIC
The clinic is open daily for the administration of immunizations and Tuberculosis skin tests (not related to cases). Refer to the graphs below for data regarding the number of vaccines given and the number of patients seen. In addition to this data, 667 TB skin tests were also given during the fiscal year.

By stocking both private and public vaccines and staying open outside of normal business hours, the Immunization Clinic is able serve as many citizens as possible in a manner that is convenient for them. The Health District’s Immunization Clinic is one of 38 provider offices in McLennan County enrolled in the Texas Vaccines for Children program (TVFC) and the Adult Safety Net program (ASN). These programs are funded by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) and provide vaccines at low or no cost to clients who are uninsured, underinsured, or who receive Medicaid. The clinic also increased the number of privately insured clients served by accepting Blue Cross Blue Shield this year.

When community members are preparing to travel outside of the US, it is important that they receive the recommended vaccines to protect against diseases that they may encounter. A total of 841 foreign travel vaccines were administered this year, including Yellow Fever and Typhoid vaccines. For more information, travelers should call the clinic at 254-750-5410 or visit the CDC website at www.CDC.gov/travel.
The Immunization Outreach program exists to spread awareness and educate the public regarding vaccines in an effort to ensure that citizens are fully protected against vaccine-preventable diseases. Staff participated in numerous health fairs, meetings and collaborations with community agencies, and other educational opportunities. An annual Immunization Workshop was held to offer local healthcare providers and school nurses updates and information on the current immunization recommendations.

ImmTrac is the electronic immunization registry for Texas. The system allows information access and retrieval by any enrolled provider. The Immunization Outreach staff monitors this system on a quarterly basis to ensure children are current on all recommended vaccinations. This process ensures a greater level of immunization coverage for county residents, resulting in a healthier McLennan County.
The Preparedness Program of the Waco-McLennan County Public Health District focuses its efforts on planning for, and responding to public health emergencies such as infectious disease outbreaks, bioterrorism, and natural disasters. Throughout the year, Preparedness staff members collaborate with emergency response partners through planning meetings, as well as drills and exercises that allow us to evaluate our plans and revise them as needed.

In the year following the West, TX Fertilizer Plant Explosion, the Preparedness team assisted the Epidemiology Division in conducting a study of the injuries related to the explosion. The results of this study were published in June 2014 and have been presented to public health and medical providers across the country. It is our hope that this information may be useful to the medical community in preparing for and responding to similar incidents in the future.

Preparedness staff members organized a tabletop exercise in the spring of 2014 to simulate a meningitis outbreak. Tabletop exercises are intended to stimulate discussion of various issues regarding a hypothetical situation. Members from the Health District’s Incident Response Team, Department Leadership, Texas Department of State Health Services Region 7, and Waco-McLennan County Office of Emergency Management participated in the exercise. The exercise was used to assess plans, policies and procedures related to our public health emergency response.

The annual Technical Assistance Review for our Strategic National Stockpile Program (SNS) was successfully completed in August 2014. The SNS Program is intended to prepare the county for situations where mass dispensing of medications or vaccination is required. After another successful review of our plans, the Preparedness and SNS team will use this upcoming year to begin focusing our efforts on ensuring that our plans are operational. In order to do this, we will be conducting drills and exercises at our many Point of Dispensing sites across the county. These events will give us the opportunity to increase our ability to quickly and efficiently protect the people of McLennan County in the event of a public health emergency.

**Medical Reserve Corps**

The Waco-McLennan County Public Health District is the sponsoring agency for the Central Texas Medical Reserve Corps (CTMRC.) The mission of the CTMRC is to recruit, specifically train, and retain volunteers to expand health and medical response capabilities, and preparedness information presentations within McLennan County.

Annual Psychosocial Intervention Team training was conducted on January 17-18, 2014. Over 50 students were trained, and interested graduates joined with past classmates to form the CTMRC Psychosocial Intervention Teams (PIT). During real incidents or an exercise event, PIT can be activated to alleviate anxiety and refer any clients with psychosocial needs to professionals.
For many people, sexual health is often a sensitive or embarrassing topic; however the prevention of the spread of HIV and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD) is a major public health issue. The Waco-McLennan County Public Health District provides services for several Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) HIV and STD programs. HIV Prevention is one such program.

The primary goal for HIV Prevention is to target and reach high-risk individuals (people who are having unprotected sex with multiple partners) and test them for HIV and Syphilis. The CDC states that 1 in 5 individuals with HIV don’t know they are positive because they have not taken a HIV test. During the test the staff is also counseling the individuals about their high risk choices and how to reduce those high risks to protect themselves as well as their partners.

Another task of the HIV Prevention staff is community condom distribution. Traditionally, condom distribution has been conducted at an individual level however the CDC states that HIV intervention programs that partake in community condom distribution show the greatest efficacy for reducing the spread of this disease. Condom distribution programs have also been shown to be cost-effective by saving millions of dollars in future medical care cost by preventing HIV infections.

The purpose of a community level condom distribution program is to support the use of condoms through **AVAILABILITY, ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCEPTABILITY.**

The target is:
1) individuals at high risk
2) venues and businesses frequented by high-risk individuals
3) communities at greatest risk for HIV infection, especially those marginalized by social, economic or other structural condition.

Free condoms (provided by DSHS and distributed by the HIV Prevention staff) are displayed in several local businesses such as tattoo parlors, liquor stores, drug treatment facilities, clothing stores, smoke shops and bars. Having these free condoms in various businesses addresses the three main barriers of condom use: availability, accessibility and acceptability. By providing ongoing risk reduction health education and removing as many barriers as possible the Waco-McLennan County Public Health District’s HIV Prevention program hopes to promote healthy lifestyles, prevent the spread of HIV or other STD and protect the overall health of our community.
The primary purpose of the Tuberculosis Control (TB) Program of the Waco-McLennan County Public Health District is to identify, educate, and treat individuals suspected or known to have Tuberculosis. Services provided include: skin testing, contact investigations, appropriate referrals, monthly follow up, and tuberculosis medical evaluation by an infectious disease physician. Our specially trained staff is also available for presentations to community organizations and health care agencies since awareness is very important in halting the spread of this disease. The TB Program staff is also available to train others on the proper administration and reading of tuberculosis skin testing, proper reporting forms, and identification of signs and symptoms of tuberculosis infection or disease. People with active disease are placed on Directly Observed Therapy (DOT) as required by the Texas Department of State Health Services as a method of TB control. During the year, the TB staff worked with 94 clients, 6 of which were active cases of TB. Also, during this fiscal year, the TB control clinic implemented the use of T-Spot TB testing to screen for tuberculosis on high-risk individuals. The T-Spot is a blood test, also known as an Interferon Gamma Release Assay, or IGRA, used to screen for TB infection. The T-Spot test is particularly advantageous in challenging testing populations such as, foreign born persons who have had the TB vaccination, also known as the BCG vaccination and for immunocompromised individuals. The T-Spot test only requires one office visit and one standard collection tube.

Active Tuberculosis Cases 6
Suspects/Non-Mycobacterium Tuberculosis 3
Directly Observed Preventative Therapy (DOPT) 3
Latent Tuberculosis Infection 82
The Vital Statistics Division of the Waco-McLennan County Public Health District is a legal branch of the Texas Department of State Health Services, Texas Vital Statistics, in Austin. The division is the local registry for all birth and deaths occurring within the City of Waco. All Vital Statistics procedures are regulated by state statutes. The records for the City of Waco begin with the year 1910 to the present. This office also has access to birth certificates for the State of Texas through a computer link to the Department of State Health Services. The records for the State of Texas begin with the year 1926 to the present.

In 2013, the Division processed 4,182 birth records and 1,650 death records. Birth and death certificates are considered confidential and are exempt from the Open Records Act. Birth certificates are confidential for the first 75 years and death certificates for the first 25 years. These vital records can be issued to the person or the person’s immediate family or to an applicant with a tangible interest.

The Vital Statistics office has won the 2014 Exemplary 5 Star Award from the Texas Department of State Health Services. This is the sixth year the office has won the award. Only twenty one registrar and county clerk offices in the State of Texas will receive this award.

The Department of State Health Services Texas Vital Statistics is working with local registrars and other stakeholders on the implementation of a new system for the filing of birth and death records in the State of Texas. Currently, the Texas Electronic Registrar (TER) is used by local registrar offices, hospitals, birthing centers, funeral homes, medical examiners and justices of the peace.

The new system, Texas Electronic Vital Events Registrar (TxEVER), would be a comprehensive system that could include:

- Birth certification and amendments
- Death certification and amendments
- Fetal death certification
- Marriage issuance
- Divorce issuance
- Adoption registries
- Paternity registries
- Acknowledgements of paternity
- Suits impacting parent/child relationships

The Department of State Health Services has begun meeting with local registrars and other stakeholders across the state to get their input into the design of the system. At this time, the plans are for TxEVER to go live on January 1, 2016.
WIC is the nutrition program that helps pregnant women, new mothers, and young children eat well, learn about nutrition, and stay healthy. Nutrition education and counseling, nutritious foods, and help accessing health care are provided to low-income women, infants, and children through the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program, popularly known as WIC.

Qualifications for participation include one who is:
- Pregnant, breastfeeding or postpartum
- Infant or child under 5 years old
- Income eligible

Income guidelines for the WIC program are considerably higher than many other federal assistance programs. For instance, for a family of four to income qualify their total household income cannot exceed $44,123.

Approximately 7600 WIC participants receive monthly services/benefits from the Waco-McLennan County Public Health District’s WIC Program’s 6 locations. The chart below shows the average monthly number of participants based on category:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Monthly WIC Participants by Category</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women - Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pregnant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Breastfeeding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Postpartum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Services and benefits of the WIC program include receiving monthly food benefits, nutrition education and health care resources. Children are the focus of the WIC program therefore our clinic settings and nutrition education activities are designed with them in mind.
An informative and positive activity provided this year was a “milk taste test.” We had each level of fat content in milk available for tasting without knowing the fat content (whole, 2%, 1% and skim). Of the approximate 1200 parents/caregivers that took the test:

- 24% usually buy whole milk
- 63% usually buy 2%
- 11% usually buy 1%
- 2% usually buy skim

After the taste test, 83% said they would start buying either 1% or skim milk.

A major component of WIC’s Nutrition Education program is breastfeeding. Support and education for breastfeeding is provided to all women participating in the WIC Program. This August – National Breastfeeding Month – the Waco-McLennan County Public Health District’s WIC Program joined forces with Texas WIC to help promote the awareness and benefits of breastfeeding. Texas WIC sponsored several billboards, TV and radio ads in and around Waco promoting the breastfeeding campaign “Breastmilk. Every Ounce Counts”. We reinforced the promotion of this campaign by featuring the Every Ounce Counts poster babies on the sides of the Waco Transit buses.

WIC knows when it comes to health and well being of mom and baby, breastfeeding is the best choice!

2014 marks the 40th Anniversary of the WIC Program. Over the years WIC has consistently and successfully improved health outcomes in the population it serves. To learn more about WIC please visit TexasWIC.org or the National WIC Association at nwica.org or http://www.waco-texas.com/cms-healthdepartment