Procedures for Reviewing NCHS Programs:
National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES)
Board of Scientific Counselors
October 2007, February 2008

A. Overview and Guiding Principles

NCHS intends to periodically review its programs to assure the continuing vitality of the Center's efforts. The specific goals of these reviews are to examine the current status, scientific quality, and responsiveness of each program within the context of its mission.

The review should:

1. take into account future availability of financial and staffing resources focusing on the effectiveness of the program's use of current and expected resources, especially during periods in which prospects for funding increases in the near term are limited;

2. emphasize forward-thinking and future planning rather than current or past program efforts and achievements to ensure that NCHS remains a vital part of the Nation's health information infrastructure;

3. conduct an interactive review that obtains needed information through both written documentation and in person interaction with program staff.

The final report should address the program's strengths, weaknesses, and future threats and opportunities with emphasis on scientific quality and the program's responsiveness to the user community.

This document is intended to provide general guidelines for the review process. It is understood that review teams will have flexibility in how they perform their tasks. Each review team may prioritize some areas for greater emphasis given the purpose and scope of the program under review.

B. Questions to consider in conjunction with nine review criteria

The review criteria outlined below is intended to guide the reviewers in terms of the program's adherence to general principles of sound science and the requirements of federal statistical agencies as set out in the CNSTAT's Principles and Practices, OMB's Data Quality Guidelines, and OMB's Standards for Statistical Surveys.

The Program and Its Process:	**Scope of the evaluation**		
	Current status/ future plans	*Scientific quality*	*Responsiveness to users' needs*
Capacity/Resources	1	4	7
Information Products	2	5	8
Efforts to Improve	3	6	9

The reviewers may use the questions outlined below as a guide for their deliberations. As noted above, each review needs to be tailored to the particular program and its overall mission. Thus some areas may receive greater emphasis than others. However, the review team should not limit their focus too narrowly.

1. Capacity/Resources

    - Is the program's budget being spent efficiently on current activities?
    - Are personnel resources being used effectively?
    - Are appropriate high quality personnel being recruited and retained?
    - Are current staffing levels appropriate?
    - Does the program have the right mixture of professional expertise?
    - Does program staff collaborate with other federal or state agencies and if so how?
    - How does the program fit within NCHS and the Federal statistical system (i.e., CDC, and other federal agencies)?

2. Information Products

    - What are the program's principal products?
    - Are the reports generated by the program appropriate for the content of the data collection system and mission of the program?
    - Are the program's products meeting user expectations in terms of quality, timeliness, usability, etc.?
    - Are there definable and measurable quality standards set for each program product?
    - Is there an ongoing attempt to improve timeliness of the program's data products?
    - Is there an ongoing effort within the program to review user satisfaction of its products?

3. Efforts to Improve

    - Are there existing mechanisms to maintain and improve the scientific quality of program activities?
    - Are there existing mechanisms for strategic planning of future activities?
    - Are there incentives for staff to conduct long range planning?
    - Are there ongoing efforts to evaluate and improve the quality of data and information products produced by the program?

C. Report to the Board of Scientific Counselors (BSC)

A preliminary report of the review should be submitted to the BSC prior to the submission of the final report. This preliminary report will be scheduled for discussion in a meeting of the full BSC. In this meeting the program staff will have an opportunity to correct any factual errors that may be present in the preliminary report. The final report, which should include a set of prioritized recommendations, will be submitted subsequent to the Board discussion and will reflect the discussion of the preliminary report by the BSC.

TABLE

Prioritized List of Issues Facing the National Health and Nutrition Survey (NHANES) Program
Based on Input from the NCHS Board of Scientific Counselors and NCHS Staff

	Suggested by:		
Issues (In Collective Order of Priority from Highest to Lowest)	**BSC**	**NCHS Director's Office**	**NHANES Program Staff**
1. Study design • Sampling: Implications of over-sampling strategies; definition of PSUs. Retain national representation? • Data collection: Continuous/periodic? Future of longitudinal? • Analysis/dissemination: Timely release of data, enhancing the online user tutorial, avoiding the "scoop factor" due to a slow internal review process, and the need for time/resources to document methods/procedures and ongoing methods research • NHANES-NHIS design integration as a cost-savings strategy: Where: questionnaire, field operation, sample? How and when to do it? Role for CHANES locations? Contractual implications? How to retain scientific integrity of both programs?	X	X	X
2. Strategic/budgetary • Meeting program goals and retaining the scientific integrity of the program: How to best use the limited resources that are likely? • Self-promotion: strategies for marketing certain program assets (e.g., blood samples); attribution/credit for findings/data from NHANES • Who should be doing the fundraising?	X	X	X
3. Future program viability • How to remain relevant to the public health community? • How to more effectively promote the program so that its contributions are more apparent to the scientific community, DHHS, and Congress? • How to maintain the highest quality standards of data and information products?	X	X	X
4. Agency collaborations • Technical services outside NCHS: blessing/curse? Involves key staff. Nurturing competition for limited resources? Competing with private industry? • How to equitably charge for reimbursement from collaborators: Incremental? Per item?			X
5. Administrative/personnel • Impact of retirements in the next 10 years: "succession planning" • Centralization/decentralization of certain professional groups at NCHS • Burden of red tape on personnel matters (taking time away from other pressing tasks)			X
6. DNA privacy issue • Implications for de-identification and consent in taking blood samples? • Need for program policy changes?		X	