Key Strategies for Promoting and Sustaining Environmental Health Programs Through Capacity Building

Editor's note:

This is a very special issue of the *Journal*. It is only on a rare occasion that we target a specific topic and then devote most of the *Journal*'s pages to it.

For years, we have lamented the slow erosion of this nation's environmental health system. We now finally have something to offer that heralds a reversal of this discouraging and decades-old trend. Because the condition of our system is a matter of such fundamental concern to both the practice and cause of environmental health, we have decided to devote this issue of the *Journal* to the work that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have been doing to rebuild the capacity of the environmental health system through its capacity-building cooperative agreement program. We can think of no other initiative that holds such promise for our work as this one does.

We are grateful for the opportunity to present this material. We thank CDC's state, local, and academic partners from around the country for the time they have devoted to writing their stories so that we might share them in this manner with the environmental health community. We consider the work that CDC has been accomplishing through its cooperative-agreement program to build and enhance the capacities of our nation's environmental health system to be nothing less than urgent. This work and your processing of it have the potential to develop even more positive momentum on behalf of the rebuilding of this critical system. In the interests of that cause, we are only too happy to devote this *Journal* to the single topic of environmental health capacity building.

CDC's capacity-building cooperative-agreement program is one of many projects conducted in the agency's Environmental Health Services Branch (EHSB). This work supports the CDC/National Center for Environmental Health's goal of revitalizing the practice of environmental health as outlined in the *National Strategy to Revitalize Environmental Public Health Services*. The capacity-building program has funded state, local, and academic partners since 2001. These capacity-building measures are all based on a framework of the 10 essential services and core competencies of environmental health.

The nine articles featured in this issue describe how various state and local jurisdictions have built capacity and implemented interventions to address environmental health priorities in their communities. You will also find helpful rubrics and tools in these articles that will aid you in building your program's capacity. Examples are

- toolkits for developing environmental health educational programs,
- training modules and materials,
- templates for writing policies and procedures, and
- models for implementing environmental health program activities.

The state and local programs that we are featuring have been innovative in addressing environmental health concerns in their communities. The academic centers have demonstrated the importance of their partnership with environmental health programs in solving issues by providing technical resources and training opportunities not readily available within the practicing environmental health community.

A listing of other interesting and instructive environmental health activities and products can be found on the EHSB Web site (www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs). Information on the cooperative agreement and all of its funded partners can be found on the Building Environmental Health Capacity Web page (www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/CapacityBuilding).

We again thank CDC's state, local, and academic partners for their willingness to prepare this material for the benefit of *Journal* readers everywhere. It is our sincere hope that this special edition of the *Journal* will spur environmental health personnel around the country to use some of the ideas and tools that these articles describe. In that way we can build upon the initial work that CDC has funded and extend our success in capacity building well beyond where these projects have already taken it.

—*Journal* Managing Editor Nelson Fabian

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