

**Galveston County**  
**United Board of Health & 4C's Governing Board**  
*Strategic Health Plan*

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**  
*2004 ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT*

In January 2004, the Galveston County United Board of Health and the 4C's Governing Board adopted its first *Strategic Health Plan* with health priorities and goals to guide the Galveston County Health District's activities through the year 2010. The Plan was developed through a six month process with extensive community participation and comment, outlined in the Plan's executive summary on the District website: [www.gchd.org](http://www.gchd.org). In accordance with Boards' directives, the Health District has prepared this first annual report of progress towards the Galveston County Strategic Health Plan. The following paragraphs summarize significant *Strategic Health Plan* accomplishments by priorities and include areas of focus for the next several years.

**PRIORITY #1:**  
**PUBLIC AWARENESS**

The Health District has worked aggressively to improve public awareness of the many services it offers the public. In 2004, the Health District's website was enhanced with an increase in organized, service-oriented public information and has been the subject of many favorable public comments. In addition, Health District staff have worked with the media to issue timely preventive health advisories regarding a variety of important health topics such as, promoting general health and hygiene, prevention of West Nile virus infections, investigation of a death on a ship voluntarily quarantined off the coast of Galveston island, influenza prevention, the importance of childhood immunizations, and diabetes self management. Health District staff have also issued news releases to inform Galveston County residents about 4C's dental services, senior health programs, Board organizational improvements and policy development, organizational improvements and awards, 4C's Clinic services and *NurseLine*, animal services improvements, beach water quality, laws protecting the public's health, epidemiologic disease investigations, emergency planning and prevention, Galveston EMS' "State Provider of the Year Award", and a variety of public conferences/educational opportunities. The public information office will continue to work to improve its release of timely information to interested community partners and the general public by developing a distribution list to notify participants when new public information is released. In 2004, the Health District was awarded a grant from Mainland

Communities United Way, which has supported a senior-focused volunteer recruitment program with 130 volunteers registered in 2004. The grant will also fund the development of a quality brochure which will outline all services provided by the Health District and will be available for distribution to community groups in early 2005.

**PRIORITY #2:  
ACCESS TO CARE AND HEALTH DISPARITIES**

The 4C's Governing Board and Clinic Leadership Team implemented many initiatives in 2004 to increase access to care and address health disparities among the uninsured. Access to care measures were developed and are being tracked on a monthly basis, with weekly reports to management staff on provider productivity. Pediatric open access was implemented so parents could bring their sick children to the 4C's Clinics without an appointment. *NurseLine* was piloted and implemented to facilitate acute care and improve patient satisfaction. A referral tracking system was implemented to track all specialty referral and diagnostic tests authorized by 4C's providers and to increase the return of medical records from specialty evaluations. Improvements were made in streamlining patient registration and in aligning staff responsibilities to optimize patient care. Finally, a nationally renowned consultant to community health centers has been hired to begin an extensive reengineering project in the clinics. This six-month process will begin in January 2005 with the goals of decreasing waiting times and increasing patient satisfaction. Future efforts will focus on strengthening case management, exploring new clinic access opportunities, and identifying health disparities in the community.

**PRIORITY #3:  
BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT**

In the last year, the Health District's health boards have reviewed and adopted many necessary policies for the Health District, including (1) health, performance improvement, and bioterrorism emergency/disaster plans, (2) twenty-nine operational policies, as well as (3) health policies on rabies vaccine and on-site sewage systems. These policies have been instrumental in improving business practices necessary to recruit and retain competent public health employees, increasing access to technologies that will improve efficiency, improving training programs, improving internal and external communications, preparing for public health disasters/emergencies, and in complying with legal responsibilities.

Noteworthy accomplishments include monthly reviews of financial information by the boards' finance committees; improved collections and budget management in EMS; improvements in the management of animal services, WIC, and the 4C's Clinic; development and implementation of a functional and service-oriented organizational chart; implementation of an employee training tracking system and improved employee evaluations; implementation of bonus awards for exceptional performance, town hall meetings to communicate with employees and seek their feedback; standardized management practices; improved capability to respond to emergencies and disasters; improved fiscal management and monitoring; aligned roles and responsibilities of entities

involved in the indigent healthcare program; improved program quality assurance monitoring to identify deficiencies and implement necessary improvements in a timely and proactive manner, and improvements in information technology infrastructure to improve data capacity and security.

Future efforts will focus on (1) developing needed policies, (2) annually reviewing and updating existing policies, and (3) implementing foundational infrastructure necessary for expanding and acquiring new systems for financial management, electronic medical records, pharmacy inventory, and telecommunications. In addition, success in collaborating with public/private partners and volunteers will continue in our effort to enhance public health preparedness and access to care.

#### **PRIORITY #4: HEALTHCARE FINANCING**

Annually the boards contract with an external auditor. In 2004, auditors found no material weakness in their audit of the Health District's fiscal operations. The Health District began work to improve healthcare financing by assessing its existing information technology capabilities to monitor funds and to identify areas for improvements. The assessment found limitations in the ability of program managers to regularly access and monitor program budgets and service data, particularly by city location. For EMS billing, efforts to improve collections were recommended by the United Board of Health's Finance Committee and were implemented with very favorable fiscal outcomes. For the 4C's Clinic, collections data were reviewed and analyzed with improved procedures for educating patients on the billing guidelines and their responsibilities. Efforts to increase clinic revenues have resulted from adding new HMO contracts and streamlining and aligning clinic resources to meet patient care needs which resulted in greater efficiency.

Future financial management improvements are anticipated when new information technology is implemented over the next two years that will enable managers to better monitor costs, services, and utilization. Additional enhancements to information technology infrastructure will be necessary to realize electronic business and medical records as well as pharmacy inventory systems to improve the monitoring of services and costs. The Joint Board Committee on Access to Care met twice in 2004 and (1) identified needs for improvement in the County Indigent Healthcare program which were subsequently implemented, and (2) identified the needs for financial support and expansion of case management services which will be pursued in 2005. Case management services are instrumental to facilitating healthcare for identified population groups and to assist hospital emergency rooms in accessing 4C's outpatient services for patients with non-emergency healthcare needs. In 2005, the Health District will work to carry out the recommendation of the Joint Committee to establish an inclusive forum of key stakeholders of the uninsured healthcare system to discuss and seek to resolve common issues.

**PRIORITY #5:  
MANAGEMENT OF CHRONIC CONDITIONS**

Official clinical practice guidelines were developed and established for diabetes, asthma and hypertension as well as for senior preventive health and prenatal services.

4C's patients with diabetes are being educated on setting goals for self-management of their own condition – a community health initiative supported by a Robert Wood Johnson (RWJ) grant. The RWJ grant has provided a diabetes educator for the clinic who conducts one-on-one and group education sessions for diabetics and their family members. Community Health staff established a “Diabetes Day” during which 4C's patients with diabetes received comprehensive assessments and education on best practices, nutrition, and fitness.

In 2005, the Health District will (1) evaluate the effectiveness of the diabetes self-management program; (2) establish guidelines for identification and treatment of mental health and substance abuse conditions, including counseling, case management, and psychiatric consultations, and inpatient treatment; (3) seek to expand educational and case management services to priority groups and other chronic conditions; and (4) seek grant funding to sustain and enhance the case management functions.

**PRIORITY #6:  
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH IMPROVEMENTS**

Environmental Health implemented operational changes based on recommendations from consumers and partners at an Environmental Summit and other public outreach forums. All environmental health programs were consolidated into the Office of Environmental Health Services under the guidance and direction of one executive manager. Improved public relations among partners and stakeholders resulted from stakeholder “summits,” town hall meetings, public presentations and other community forums. Through reorganization and the relocation of all consumer health inspectors to one centralized county location, managers are better prepared to accomplish the goal of standardizing inspection and enforcement procedures.

In 2005, Health District staff will (1) develop Standard Operating Procedures for inspectors, (2) convene a second Environmental Summit to address a host of environmental issues as well as emergency response plans, (3) continue to implement recommended improvements to animal services including shelter facility upgrades, staff training, a new data base management system, continued collaborations with animal services partners, improvements in data reports to cities under service contracts, development of a new Animal Services Interlocal Agreement, and successful operation of a new Animal Advisory Committee.

**PRIORITY #7:  
SENIOR HEALTH IMPROVEMENT**

The Health District has funded a senior health coordinator to work with other community health staff. To assist in establishing senior volunteer activities a volunteer coordinator

was hired this year and has actively recruited seven (7) senior volunteers to assist with various Health District services and initiatives. During 2004, two hundred (200) seniors attended the Senior Health Fall Fests that were held in five (5) different community locations. Three hundred thirty six (336) seniors participated in a series of "Cooking Schools" provided through collaborative efforts with the Houston Food Bank, Jesse Tree, and Galveston County Parks and Senior Services. Under the 4C's Governing Board's initiative, ten (10) employees and one team of employees in the Galveston 4C's Clinic were awarded Senior Health Improvement Awards for exemplary service to seniors.

The Senior Health Advisory Council was formed this year and the focus of the senior health program has shifted to promoting a healthy lifestyle and preventing illness and/or complications through community activities and support. The Council has developed, pre-tested, and begun administering a survey to assess countywide senior needs. The final needs assessment will help guide activities in 2005 and will be posted on the Council website.

In 2005, a senior- friendly brochure, being developed with funding from Mainland Communities United Way, will spotlight all Health District services and be disseminated in the community. In addition, the Health District will develop a senior health website with assessment reports, resources, and other information useful to seniors and agencies that serve them. In addition, (1) grant funding will be sought to support and sustain nutrition and fitness initiatives and (2) case management services for seniors in the 4C's Clinic to better manage chronic conditions and to increase preventive health visits.

### **PRIORITY #8: PREVENTION BY IMMUNIZATION**

The Health District received the Texas Public Health Association's "Thinking Progressively for Health Award" in 2004 for aggressive strategies to improve immunization rates. 4C's Clinics' random reviews of children's medical records have indicated a steady increase in immunization compliance from 49% in 1996 to 86% in 2004. In 2000, the initial compliance rate for day care centers was 74% compared with a rate of 82.4% in 2004. Thirty (30) days after Health District staff provided education to daycare parents and employees, follow-up rates increased to approximately 98%. While difficult to accurately compare Galveston county rates with other jurisdictions (due to varying survey methodologies), the 2004 CDC telephone surveys *suggest* that Galveston county rates exceeded statewide rates recently estimated at 78.5% as well as exceeded Houston rates estimated at 75%.

The Galveston County Immunization Advisory Council was developed in 2004 to advise the United Board of Health and Health District staff on ways to improve immunizations services and rates in the county. The Council has (1) provided useful feedback and support of the Health District's three major public immunization campaigns: National Infant Immunization Week in April, Kid's Health Fest back-to-school in August, and Influenza Prevention in the Fall; (2) identified local barriers to immunization compliance and coordination; and (3) reviewed and recommended adoption of an Immunization Services Policy for approval by the United Board of Health.

Volunteers from numerous agencies have been instrumental to making immunization campaigns more successful.

Other 2004 accomplishments include: technical assistance to the Galveston Island Immunization Coalition lead by UTMB, on-going distribution of the flu vaccine in this season's initial flu shot shortage, assisting the Texas Medical Foundation with follow-up visits to Vaccine for Children (VFC) providers, implementing an immunization reminder system, and taking a leadership role in coordinating with community partners to plan for mass vaccination clinics in the event of an emergency.

During 2005, the Health District will (1) monitor the effectiveness of its new immunization reminder system, (2) continue to convene and develop its Immunization Advisory Council, and (3) continue to seek resources and partnerships to help improve the quality and accessibility of public immunizations and to help increase the county's childhood immunizations rates.

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As Chief Executive Officer, I am proud to submit this first annual report to the Boards, local elected officials, and citizens of Galveston County. In the past year, Health District staff, advisory groups, and community stakeholders have worked deliberately on the eight health priorities and diligently towards accomplishing the goals adopted under each health priority. Goals accomplished in this first year of the Strategic Health Plan have in essence laid the foundation necessary to achieve the more challenging goals over the next several years.

The Strategic Health Plan has been embraced by employees of the Health District and used as a guide for all activities and services provided through the Health District. I commend the staff for dedicated and deliberate work towards the plan and exceptional progress in just one year. A special appreciation to the Health District's Strategic Plan Evaluator and Public Health Planner for extensive work in coordinating with staff and compiling the data and information needed for completion of a comprehensive report.

Finally, I look forward to future years of collaborative work towards addressing the health priorities of Galveston County and towards assuring a healthier community.

Sincerely,

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**Harlan "Mark" Guidry, MD, MPH**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Galveston County Health District**  
**January 26, 2005**