

**DATE:** November 16, 2006

**SUBJECT:** Status of the Tennessee Institute of Public Health

**ACTION RECOMMENDED:** Information

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**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:** The purpose of the Tennessee Institute of Public Health (TNIPH) is to promote health education, cooperative research, and workforce development in public health related fields. The Institute is being developed through the efforts of the Department of Health, the University of Tennessee, the Tennessee Board of Regents, and the Tennessee Higher Education Commission. Dr. Jo Edwards, Interim Director, has worked with representatives from these partners to make progress toward realizing a fully-functioning Institute. In its construction, TNIPH partners are adopting selected features of existing institutes in 26 states and practices recommended by the National Network of Institute of Public Health. Through Dr. Edwards' leadership, Institute partners have made significant progress toward Institute start up, including:

**TNIPH website** (<http://www.state.tn.us/tniph>). The TNIPH website, carrying the logo and branding designed for the Institute, posts information on public health events and initiatives occurring across the state, regionally, and nationally. The website will host a number of Institute products, including the County Public Health Index, an inventory of public health research activity at Tennessee universities, and a public health-related workforce development supply and demand study.

**October 30 Research America Conference.** The TNIPH held its inaugural public service event October 30, in Nashville. The conference, "Today, Tomorrow, Together: Advocating for Public Health in Tennessee," was sponsored by *Research America* through Robert Wood Johnson funding. Fifty public health professionals, state and private university representatives, and practitioners in the field attended the morning session on advocacy for public health which was conducted by *Research America* staff. Approximately 25 additional supporters of the Institute joined the advocacy session participants for a luncheon where Dr. Henry Foster, M.D., Professor Emeritus, Meharry College of Medicine provided the keynote address. Department of Health Commissioner Kenneth Robinson and THEC Executive Director Dr. Richard G. Rhoda also spoke about the potential for the THIPH as a partnership of academic institutions and the Department of Health.

**County Public Health Index.** The Index will be released in late November, 2006 and will be updated annually. The Index will use health outcome measures such as mortality, birth weight, and health status along with health determinates, including educational attainment, socioeconomic status, health care access, and physical environments to assist counties and metropolitan areas in targeting programs and resources for improvement. As a

comprehensive information source, the Index is intended for use by health professionals and county governments in policy change and decision making. The Index has been generated through the close cooperation between the Department of Health and THEC, following a proven model developed by the Wisconsin Institute of Public Health and with the assistance of that agency.

The next steps in establishing the TNIPH will include:

- Constituting a board of directors
- Developing a strategic plan
- Instituting by-laws and operational policies
- Seeking legislative authorization
- Seeking external funding through grants and contracts
- Conducting outreach services, including session on the Index use