



# *Understanding State Public Health Project*

ASTHO's Understanding State Public Health Project, now in its second phase is funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. During Phase I of this project the advisory taskforce provided guidance to project activities leading to a consensus that a common description of state public health is desirable and valuable. Receiving support from over 20 public health partners, it was determined that this project should move forward.

The goal of the project is to define the purposes, functions, roles and responsibilities of state governmental public health agencies and other entities engaged in state public health action to improve health outcomes for all and the conditions in which improvements can occur. This project will accomplish the following deliverables: 1) creation of a database that will be a comprehensive resource on the structure, activities and responsibilities of state public health; 2) development of a description of state public health services that can be used by public health practitioners, elected officials, funders, and other stakeholders to develop improvement plans and accountability processes; 3) conduct a statutory review of state public health system organizational structures; and 4) conduct marketing research and develop a comprehensive marketing strategy to improve the public's understanding of state governmental public health. Information produced by this project will provide the basis for the development of performance standards for the Voluntary National Accreditation Program.

This project will make a major contribution to strengthening the nation's public health infrastructure by creating a common understanding of the scope and responsibilities of state public health. The project will

- Promote empirical analysis of the relationship of state public health infrastructure to health outcomes.
- Provide evidence for decisions about organizational structure and comparison data for assessing outcomes.
- Assure clear, consistent messages about state public health in an effort to align public expectation with state public health activities.
- Enhance public support for state public health through consistent, understandable communication and marketing.
- Develop processes to deliver the message about high quality state public health performance to our constituencies and demonstrate the value of state public health.

The taskforce is chaired by David Gifford, MD, MPH, Director of the Rhode Island Department of Health. Other members include Jerry Allison, Ed Davidson, Susan Gerard, Paul Halverson, Doneen Hollingsworth, C. Earl Hunter, Joan Miles, Dick Schultz and Robert Stroube.

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