



**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES**

Health Resources and Services Administration

Maternal and Child Health Bureau

Rockville, Maryland 2084

Matthew Cartter, M.D., M.P.H.  
President  
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists  
2872 Woodcock Boulevard, Suite 303  
Atlanta, Georgia 30341-4015

NOV 30 2001

Dear Dr. Cartter:

Thank you for your July 20 letter concerning the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists' position statement on "Support for the Development of the National Action Agenda for Building Data Capacity for Maternal and Child Health." The Bureau has supported the National Action Alliance since its inception and will continue to support the National Action Agenda.

While the position statement "Support for the Development of the National Action Agenda for Building Data Capacity for Maternal and Child Health" makes many important points, staff and I believe that the "Statement of the Problem (s)" is not stated as accurately as it could be. The final sentence states "...success has been limited due to a lack of shared vision and communication among public health partners in MCH..." In fact, in the area of maternal and child health (MCH) epidemiology, almost all our efforts have been closely coordinated with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The Bureau has been working with CDC to provide training courses and distance learning and to build data systems. Perhaps, it would be more accurate to state "With the proliferation of professional organizations that have joined in this effort, there is a need and benefit to forge a partnership for advancing capacity building efforts."

In addition to coordinating efforts with CDC, the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) has also supported the development of data capacity in the States for a number of years through various venues. Activities have included the following: training opportunities for State MCH personnel and masters and doctoral students; the State Systems Development Initiatives; data capacity building grants to the States; and the development of surveys which will provide state-level data on child health. MCHB is continuing to devote staff time and resources to this area, because the development of data capacity through a well-trained workforce is a prerequisite for the effective assessment of public health programs.

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Staff and I believe that cooperation is imperative if we are to make the best use of limited funds. Therefore, the Bureau will continue to support the goals of the National Action Agenda in coordination with organizations such as the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Peter C. van Dyck', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

Peter C. van Dyck, M.D., M.P.H.  
Associate Administrator for Maternal  
and Child Health