

Birth Defects

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

The Florida Department of Health's Children's Medical Services (CMS) Office and the Florida Birth Defects Registry (FBDR) housed in the Division of Environmental Health, Bureau of Community Environmental Health (CEH) request a fellow and are offering a joint mentorship for a CDC/CSTE Fellow interested in programs serving children with special health care needs and birth defects surveillance to conduct epidemiologic and surveillance activities. The assignment location is Tallahassee, Florida. The Fellow would be placed in CEH and would be mentored by staff from CMS, MCH, and CEH. While CMS and the FBDR are organizationally located in different divisions, the programs have worked collaboratively since the registry's inception in 1998. (Please see attached organizational charts.) CMS, Florida's program for children with special health care needs, coordinates the provision of services to more than 50,000 infants and children through a network of community-based clinics and tertiary centers. The FBDR is a statewide-population based passive surveillance program with a limited active surveillance program funded by the CDC. The FBDR has data for the years 1997-2003 on more than 1 million births and more than 30,000 infants born with major congenital malformations. The passive surveillance component links data from hospital discharge, vital statistics, and CMS programs to create the registry. The active surveillance component is operational in nine counties for selected conditions such as central nervous malformations, genetic conditions, fetal alcohol syndrome, hearing loss and others. The FBDR is at an important crossroad looking for ways to enhance and expand the use of birth defects data at the state and national level. Collaborating with CMS to link programs serving families and children with special health care needs with surveillance data is critical to the continued growth of the registry. Both programs have discussed the potential for linking CMS and birth defects data with Department of Education data to investigate the impact selected birth defects and early intervention services may have on school performance. Additionally, funding was provided by CDC to support Environmental Public Health Tracking activities in Florida including expanded active birth defects surveillance. Florida will be assisting with setting the stage for this new national surveillance effort and staff has been appointed to leadership roles. The Fellow would have the opportunity to participate in this important public health program.

The department is proposing to house the Fellow within the Division of Environmental Health, Bureau of Community Environmental Health in order to provide direct access to the FBDR data sets and to supervise data analysis projects. The Fellow will also receive direct supervision from the Director of CMS Programs in order to facilitate the use of data to assist children with special health care needs and their families. Additionally, the fellow will be able to receive mentoring and consultation from the Department's State MCH Epidemiologist as well as the potential to work on numerous opportunities to identified throughout MCH programs in the department.

Projects may include:

- 1) Assisting with the continued development of a National Environmental Public Health Tracking Program including enhanced birth defects surveillance activities.

- 2) Linking the birth defects registry with programs in Maternal/Child Health and Children's Medical Services such as Healthy Start, Early Steps and Early Hearing Loss and evaluating findings. This would include organizing and leading an intra-agency workgroup for this activity.
- 3) Linking data on low birth weight, birth defects, and school performance data in partnership with Florida Department of Education.
- 4) Evaluating passive surveillance program with active surveillance program to identify strengths, weaknesses, completeness and timeliness of both surveillance methodologies.
- 5) Conducting birth defects surveillance activities such as case ascertainment, database management, data analysis, and report writing.
- 6) Participating in the design, execution, and evaluation of epidemiologic studies and/or county health department investigations.
- 7) Analyze BRFSS and PRAMS data such as folic acid module, alcohol and smoking data and prepare written reports.
- 8) Using Florida's Environmental Equity and Justice Report, analyze birth defects data around communities included in the report to describe possible health outcomes related to birth defects.
- 9) Assisting with active surveillance, health promotion, and recurrence prevention activities funded via CDC Cooperative Agreement. Prepare progress reports to be submitted to CDC.
- 10) Participating at local, state, and national meetings via oral presentation or poster presentation. This includes two meetings of the Florida Birth Defects Advisory Council, as well as Grand Rounds at hospitals and with professional and advocacy organizations.
- 11) Preparing written materials for publication in newsletters and peer-reviewed journals.
- 12) Developing educational materials and assisting with the registry's web site.
- 13) Participating in state emergency preparedness activities. Florida is recognized as one of the nation's leaders in the area of emergency preparedness and hurricanes and other emergencies that affect the state on a frequent basis. Staff within MCH, CMS, and the birth defects registry work on preparedness issues affecting these programs. The Division of Environmental Health provides leadership for the state's emergency preparedness efforts often organizing and sending strike teams into affected areas.

Assignment Location: Tallahassee, FL

Primary Mentor: Phyllis Sloyer, RN, PhD
Director, Children's Medical Services Network and Related Programs

Advanced Degrees: PhD, LaCrosse University (2002)
MPA, Florida State University (1990)

Secondary Mentor: Jane Correia, BS
Coordinator, Florida Birth Defects Registry

Advanced Degrees: Health Education, Florida State University
BS, Florida State University (1980)

Additional Mentor: William Sappenfield, MD, MPH
State MCH Epidemiologist

Advanced Degrees: MPH, Harvard School of Public Health (1984)

Florida-Sloyer

MD, Louisiana State University Medical Center