



SOUTH CENTRAL PUBLIC HEALTH TRAINING CENTER *Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas*

Summary of the PHTC

In response to a pressing need to address the workforce demands of today's public health, the public health departments in Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi, together with the **Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine (TSPHTM)** and the **University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Public Health (UABSPH)** formed a strategic alliance to develop a comprehensive, regional approach to professional workforce development in the late 1990s.

Impact of the PHTC

- The SCPHTC conducted a one-year follow-up to assess how the knowledge, skills, and abilities associated with the *Health Risk Assessment and Taking an Exposure History* course transfer to improved job performance. One hundred forty-six public health practitioners who completed the training were surveyed. Results of the evaluation suggest that successful completion of the course results in enhanced job performance with respect to environmental health issues confronted by many public health professionals.
- *Orientation to Public Health* continues to be a significant resource to the partner states. Partner representatives have commented multiple times that this module has been tremendously helpful in supporting their agency-wide transition from direct client services to population- and community-base public health. Stakeholders say that the module helps them understand their real life roles in practice in terms of the larger picture. In addition, Partner representatives have commented that with the high rates of staff turnover and the increasing numbers of employees who do not have a background in public health, this module helps new and experienced staff gain an understanding of the "big picture" of public health.
- Technology has been, and continues to be, a significant and ongoing challenge and barrier to workforce development. The SCPHTC addresses this challenge in a number of ways:
 - The *Learning to be a Distance Learner* course is an easy-to-use, no-cost resource to the Partners that is consistently cited as a fundamental training component to the state-level workforce development efforts. Public health staff members' overwhelming successes with this module have played a significant role in facilitating their progress toward taking another course, and another, and another. A number of courses have been developed and delivered and we are just beginning to see the rapid progression of staff members' adoption and participation in not one, but multiple web-based courses.
 - Partners continue to be active in providing input about the content and design of SCPHTC courses. Results of the most recent program evaluation revealed that providing alternative course formats and reaching staff who have technological difficulties would be useful (e.g., satellite seminars). These were incorporated into the 2003-2004 activities and they have been highly successful.