

Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare on SB 160
On behalf of Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department, Lawrence, KS
By Dan Partridge, Director

Chairman and Members of the Committee:

The Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department is on track to submit our application for accreditation this year and I would like to share with you my rationale for making this commitment. Put simply accreditation will enhance our ability to serve the health needs of Douglas County residents. As the cost of health care continues to rise public health is uniquely positioned to be an advocate for health at the community level and accreditation drives us to develop this capacity.

In 2007 and 2008 23% of U.S. adults reported have one chronic medical condition and an additional 31% reported having two or more chronic medical conditions (Shafi et al., 2007, *The Journal of Trauma* 63(5):1138-1142). So long as over half of all adults are using our health care system to manage their chronic disease our ability to control the cost of health care will remain limited. Focusing on prevention supported by a strong local public health system is our best course of action.

Our fiscal responsibility to those we serve compels us to take on the work outlined in the accreditation standards. These standards prescribe that we:

- Assess the health issues facing our communities
- Investigate health problems
- Inform and educate our communities
- Engage the public in addressing health problems
- Develop sound public health policy
- Enforce public health law
- Assess health care service capacity and identify gaps in care
- Maintain a competent workforce
- Evaluate and continuously improve our processes
- Apply evidence based solutions
- Manage people and funds appropriately
- Engage local government in public health issues

Accreditation represents our best hope to improve health outcomes by creating an expectation and structure that defines our work and so I support accreditation not for the Health Department but for the residents of Douglas County.