



## COLLIN COUNTY

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**TO:** Collin County Health Care Board of Trustees

**FROM:** Candy Blair, Manager, Health Care Services

**DATE:** May 27, 2014

**RE:** Department of State Health Services (DSHS)  
Emerging and Acute Infectious Disease Contract #2014-045641

Over the past 10 years, there has been tremendous growth in our county's disease surveillance. As part of the local health department, the epidemiology team has gone from processing 439 disease reports per year in 2003 to over 4000 disease reports per year in 2013. As our county has expanded, and community stakeholders have interacted with our staff members, the epidemiology team has had a significant impact in the management of local public health concerns. In addition to the volume of reports, our team has risen to the challenge of responding to increasingly complex diseases and conditions such as MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome), H1N1, botulism, West Nile, SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), and others that make up the approximately 80 state mandated notifiable conditions.

The factors mentioned above have made it a priority to expand the epidemiology team in order to keep up with the higher level of demands of our community's disease surveillance. Under these circumstances, I had initially planned to propose the approval of county funding for an entry level Epidemiologist position in the upcoming budget (fall 2014).

However, on 4/24/2014, our department received notification of a proposed contract with DSHS focusing on foodborne illness investigation. According to the contract letter, DSHS received an Exceptional Item award from the 83<sup>rd</sup> Legislative Session and those funds would be used to "augment local health department epidemiological capacity for outbreak and disaster response..." Through our communication with DSHS, we were asked to prepare a budget for the current fiscal year (FY2013-2014 ending 8/31/2014) as well as the next fiscal year (FY2014-2015 ending 8/31/2015). At this time, funding has been secured through FY2014-2015, and we have a reasonable expectation that funding

should continue. In our instructions, we were asked to respond with our budget for the two budget years no later than 4/29/2014. After compiling all of the necessary figures for salary, equipment, and travel, I submitted our proposed budgets on Friday 4/25/2014.

In summary, adding an Epidemiologist position for the local health department is necessary and inevitable in the sense that our county continues to grow and our stakeholders, citizens, and state officials expect us enhance our disease surveillance to better protect the health of Collin County residents. Our state legislature and state health department understand the benefit of having a staff member dedicated to foodborne and waterborne surveillance in the local health departments and have shown their support by committing funds to make a position available to us for at least the next year and a half. For that purpose, I respectfully request the approval of DSHS Contract #2014-045641.