

United States-México Border Health Commission



2009 Accomplishments

Our Mission: To provide international leadership to optimize health and quality of life along the United States-México border.

Promoting Sustainable Cross-Border Partnerships

The Border Health Commission (BHC) sponsored the *Sixth Annual Border Binational Health Week (BBHW)* in October 2009, which focused on promoting sustainable partnerships along both sides of the border. This year the BHC incorporated obesity and diabetes prevention as a complementary theme to the message of “Families in Action for Health.” Activities in support of BBHW included over 130 health fairs, forums, training events, and other binational activities, including a movie premier on obesity and diabetes. Other activities included the launching of *Leaders across Borders*, a new advanced leadership development program directed by the Arizona Department of Health Services, Office of Border Health, and the BHC Outreach Offices of Arizona, Sonora, and Baja California, and coordinated through the University of Arizona Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health’s Southwest Public Health Leadership Institute. Over 160 participating institutions, including federal, state, and local private and non-profit partners, academic institutions, and key U.S. and México leaders from both public and private sectors joined in the celebration of BBHW.

The BHC partnered with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), and the ten border states to celebrate the *Sixth Annual National Infant Immunization Week and Vaccination Week in the Americas (NIW/VWA)* in April 2009. The inaugural event was organized by the California Office of Binational Border Health and the BHC Outreach Offices of California and Baja California and hosted by the San Ysidro Community Health Center. Activities for the week included a binational training workshop for nurses and community health workers which focused on México’s Universal Vaccination Program and CDC’s Global Goals for Measles and Rubella Elimination. The week included over 60 sponsored activities throughout the border region that included training events, health fairs, and numerous other immunization-related community activities. This annual event provides an exciting opportunity to unite communities throughout the border and both nations to ensure all children have a healthy and safe childhood free from vaccine-preventable diseases. The campaign theme, “Love Them, Protect Them, Immunize Them,” encourages communities to help increase infant-immunization rates along the U.S.-México border.

The BHC continued to support the 15 binational health councils (COBINAS) that stretch along the border region of the 10 border states, which includes associated binational sister cities and two Native-American tribes. These councils are critical to the BHC because they serve as the essential framework for acting on binational health issues and priorities and are positioned as the local and regional voices for public health along the entire border region.

2009 Accomplishments

The National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, CDC, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Office of Global Health Affairs (OGHA) to assign Dr. Jill McDonald, a Senior Maternal and Child Health Epidemiology Program (MCHEP) Epidemiologist to the BHC. Ms. Dyanne Herrera, a Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologist (CSTE) Fellow, has also been assigned to the MCHEP and BHC to work with Dr. McDonald over the next two years to strengthen partnerships and data capacity in maternal and child health in the border region. The MCHEP is a collaborative effort between CDC and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) / Maternal Child Health Bureau to promote and improve the health and well-being of women, children, and families at state, local, and tribal levels and to use and apply sound epidemiologic research and scientific information to maternal and child health programs and policies. Dr. McDonald and Ms. Herrera are the only two CDC-MCH assignees in the U.S.-México border region.



Focusing on Strategic Priorities

In an effort to combat the rise of obesity and diabetes, the New Mexico Department of Health, Office of Border Health, and the New Mexico BHC Outreach Office, in partnership with the Chihuahua BHC Outreach Office, created a film entitled *I Wish I Had Known*. The film, produced in English and dubbed in Spanish, is a chronicle of a Mexican-American family facing the challenges associated with obesity and diabetes—including such behavioral problems of improper nutrition and lack of physical activity, and clinical implications associated with diabetes, such as foot care, blindness, dialysis, and amputations. The film, targeted to both youth and adults on both sides of the U.S.-México border, imparts an understanding about the risks of obesity and complications of associated chronic diseases. The production also promotes practical strategies and actions to prevent obesity and reduce the risks of onset diabetes. Still photographs were extracted from the film and a companion bilingual *fotonovela* (photonovel) was produced and distributed throughout the border region.

The *U.S.-México Border Child and Adolescent Health Forum* was hosted by the New Mexico and Texas Offices of Border Health and BHC Outreach Offices in partnership with the México states. The overall objective of the forum, which took place in El Paso, Texas, in June 2009, focused on the status of children's health along the U.S.-México border and generated discussions along the areas of policy, research, and best practices for improving children's health. The forum brought together over 140 health professionals and policy makers from the U.S.-México border region, as well as representatives of federal, national, regional, and local health agencies and organizations. Among the priorities identified, obesity and diabetes were recognized as a critical problem that cut across all other health issues.

The *Second Binational Border Health Research Forum* was hosted by the California and Arizona Offices of Border Health and BHC Outreach Offices. The event, which took place in La Jolla, California, at the Neurosciences Institute in July 2009, is part of an ongoing effort to highlight binational health research critical to the U.S.-México border region. Presentation topics included violence at the border, immigration and stress, drug use among migrant youth, obesity and diabetes, and healthy lifestyles among Latinos. The forum provided an opportunity to convene researchers and health officials from the U.S. and México to learn about current research findings and participate in discussions on key areas for future study. The forum, which joined a distinguished panel of U.S. and México federal partners, also focused on the identification of gaps in border health research and recommendations for defining a border health research agenda. In conjunction with the research forum, the BHC also convened the *Binational Border Health Research Work Group and Expert Panel* which led to the identification of a need for assessing issues surrounding Institutional Review Board (IRB) methods impacting binational research.



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Impacting Border Health Discussion

This year the BHC published the following white papers and reports examining current and relevant border health issues unique to the U.S.-México border region:

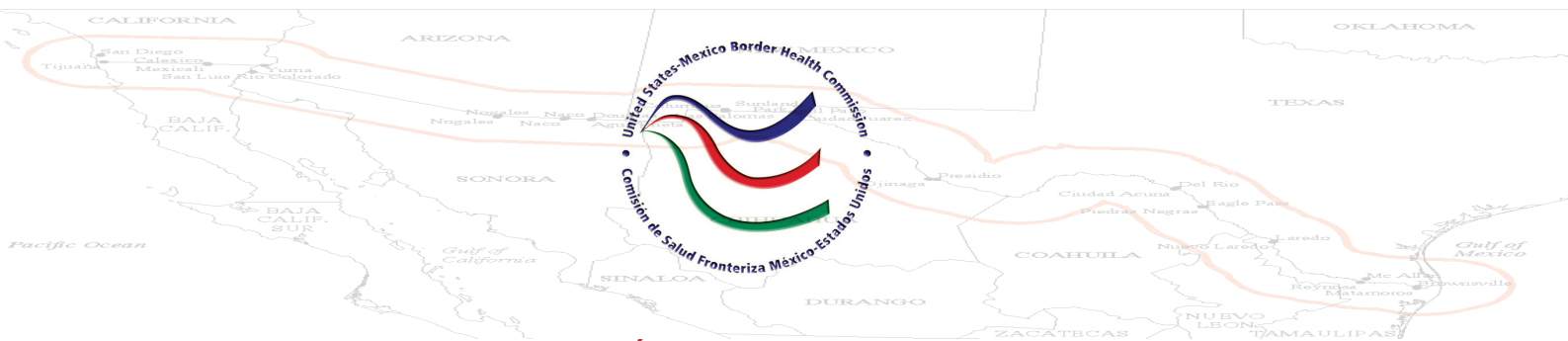
Childhood Obesity and the U.S.-México Border - In support of and in response to the XXVI U.S.-México Border Governor's Conference Joint Declaration, the BHC published this white paper examining the prevalence, risk factors, and health outcomes of the childhood obesity epidemic along the U.S. side of the U.S.-México border.

Tuberculosis along the U.S.-México Border - This white paper summarizes tuberculosis prevention and control activities and further addresses a number of critical challenges involved in tackling the binational TB problem along the U.S.-México border.

U.S. Border States Early Warning Infectious Disease Surveillance (EWIDS) Project - This white paper reviews the overall EWIDS project, with emphasis on program accomplishments along the U.S.-México border. The EWIDS project was proposed formally by the BHC in 2003 and initiated by HHS to enhance the ability of border states and border jurisdictions (including tribes) to rapidly detect and respond to infectious disease outbreaks along the international border.

Researching Border Health: A Review of Initiatives to Develop a Border Health Research Agenda - This report examines previous efforts from border health experts to develop a border health research agenda for the purpose of continuing to identify strategies towards guiding the development and implementation of a comprehensive research agenda for the border region.

Healthy Border 2010 Midterm Review: U.S. Border Area - This report reviews the progress of Healthy Border 2010 and its objectives, which aims to improve the health of border residents and eliminate health disparities through an effort that focuses attention on major health issues in the region at mid-decade. The report makes recommendations on the current set of objectives of Healthy Border 2010.



The United States-México Border Health Commission

Providing Leadership on Border Health Issues—
Facilitate Identification, Study, and Research
Be a Catalyst to Raise Awareness
Promote Sustainable Partnerships for Action
Serve as an Information Portal

* On October 22, 1994, Public Law (PL) §103-400 of 1994 established the U.S. Section of the United States-México Border Health Commission (BHC). On July 24, 2000, the Agreement between the United States of America and the United Mexican States established the full Commission. The Agreement delineates the functions, composition, operation, and legal status of the U.S. and Mexican Sections. With regard to duties and composition, the Agreement aligns closely with PL 103-400. U.S. President George W. Bush signed an Executive Order on December 21, 2004, to designate the BHC as a public international organization with limited provisions for the purposes of the International Organizations Immunities Act.