

## **Nomination of LCDR SAMPLE OFFICER, PHS#99999, for the PHS Commendation Medal**

LCDR SAMPLE OFFICER is nominated for the PHS Commendation Medal for exemplary leadership in enhancing [Anonymous State]'s state of emergency preparedness from 06/2004 to 06/2007. This nomination has no overlap with other awards.

### **BACKGROUND**

Epidemiology is critical to public health emergency preparedness. In 2004, a Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists' assessment found that a 50% increase in epidemiologists in the US was needed to fully address essential public health services. Prior to LCDR SAMPLE OFFICER's arrival in [Anonymous State], epidemiologic capacity was limited to two epidemiologists in [Anonymous State]'s Office of Epidemiology and Food Protection (OEFPP), serving a population of 1.3 million in 2004. Since June 2004, CDC-assigned epidemiologist LCDR SAMPLE OFFICER has steadily improved [Anonymous State]'s preparedness and response capabilities by deepening and broadening the state's epidemiologic workforce, leading epidemiology-related aspects of preparedness planning, and filling vacant leadership roles. LCDR SAMPLE OFFICER has proven to be a major force behind the advancement in epidemiologic and preparedness capacity in [Anonymous State], thereby strengthening the emergency preparedness of our nation.

### **ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND IMPACTS**

***Led the expansion of epidemiologic capacity in [Anonymous State]:*** In June 2004, LCDR SAMPLE OFFICER determined that [Anonymous State]'s epidemiologic capacity would be severely taxed during a major public health emergency. To expand this needed capacity, LCDR SAMPLE OFFICER accomplished two critical tasks. First, she led efforts to increase funding to District Health Departments. Although she had no prior contract management experience, in 2004–2006, LCDR SAMPLE OFFICER wrote and monitored the annual OEFPP Preparedness contracts with each of the seven Districts, providing funds for epidemiologic planning, response, and personnel covering all 44 [Anonymous State] counties. These contracts totaled 1.2 million dollars per year, four times the budget of any other OEFPP contract. Secondly, she increased the number of epidemiologists at the state level by three. LCDR SAMPLE OFFICER patiently advocated for, developed, and brought about the establishment of two additional State-level epidemiologist positions. In 2006, she led the hiring process for one newly-crafted position by advertising, interviewing, and making the selection on behalf of the State. [Anonymous State] recently approved the second position. In 2007, she wrote the application for and successfully recruited a CDC Epidemic Intelligence Service Officer to [Anonymous State]. This was a significant achievement in that only state health departments with a strong epidemiology program attract a candidate from this highly competitive epidemiology training program. Finally, she guided the development of a health educator to assume epidemiologic response roles for which the health educator had no previous training, effectively garnering a fourth epidemiologist for the state. ***Impact:*** As a result of LCDR SAMPLE OFFICER's management, funding for epidemiologic support at District Health Departments was increased by 20%. This funding was used to create previously non-existent epidemiologic surge capacity at Districts, enabling them to respond more effectively to public health threats to [Anonymous State]'s currently 1.4 million residents (2007). For example, the additional capacity was used to increase screening of pregnant women to prevent syphilis infections in newborns during an outbreak, to screen over a thousand persons potentially exposed to tuberculosis at a school, and to respond to a multi-state *Salmonella* outbreak associated with an [Anonymous State] vacation ranch. LCDR SAMPLE OFFICER's efforts more than doubled the epidemiologic capacity at the State OEFPP. The newly

recruited epidemiologist had a crucial role in a recent response to prevent transmission of multi-drug resistant tuberculosis from a contagious traveler to [Anonymous State] citizens. The health educator can now lead small investigations and manage data during large outbreaks (e.g., [Anonymous State]'s West Nile virus outbreak of >1,000 cases).

**Planned for response to public health emergencies:** LCDR SAMPLE OFFICER wrote the state health department's response plan for a Biohazard Detection System anthrax alert, and assisted Districts and two United States Postal Service facilities in [Anonymous State] with theirs. She added Biohazard Detection System response planning to OEFPP contracts with Districts. She established a secure web-based site share resources. She led planning efforts for Districts and postal facilities and evaluated their response plans. She led the efforts to place prophylactic antibiotics in Districts in sites where the antibiotics could be distributed quickly and efficiently. She revised [Anonymous State]'s Epidemiology Surveillance and Response Plan annually and improved integration with District plans by identifying gaps and inconsistencies through tabletop exercises she conducted and by reviewing District plans. **Impact:** Under LCDR SAMPLE OFFICER's direction, [Anonymous State] is now prepared with plans and pre-placed prophylactic medications to prevent illness and death from anthrax in over 500 postal workers and the public if the Biohazard Detection System detects anthrax. Because of LCDR SAMPLE OFFICER's revisions, [Anonymous State]'s Epidemiology Surveillance and Response Plans are now consistent with the new national format prescribed by Homeland Security and are easier to follow in an emergency.

**Assumed leadership roles:** LCDR SAMPLE OFFICER demonstrated a level of proficiency and dedication greater than expected of the average officer by assuming additional workloads and various leadership roles as needed in addition to her normal duties. LCDR SAMPLE OFFICER assumed many of the responsibilities of the State Epidemiologist during the incumbent's two extended leaves in 2005 and 2006, of the Deputy State Epidemiologist during the incumbent's emergency leave in Oct. 2005, and of [Anonymous State]'s Public Health Information Network Coordinator from December 2006 through June 2007 after the incumbent resigned. One of her actions on behalf of the State Epidemiologist was to assume the State lead epidemiologist role in a response to an active tuberculosis case in a high school with 1,500 students and staff. She coordinated with the CDC TB Program and provided guidance to the District on contact investigation, TB testing, data analysis, the after-action report, and presentation to all other Districts in the state. **Impact:** Because of LCDR SAMPLE OFFICER's leadership and willingness to assume responsibilities well beyond her normal duties, the State of [Anonymous State] had an increased epidemiological capacity at critical times and operations of the OEFPP continued seamlessly during the absences of top personnel. For example, TB testing of 1,500 students and staff and medical follow-up of 35 TB skin test (TST) reactors, of whom five were recommended for isoniazid therapy, averted development of additional cases of active tuberculosis and prevented panic in the school community; all seven Districts' knowledge of mass screening procedures was enhanced and their mass clinic operational plans improved. LCDR SAMPLE OFFICER's assumption of Public Health Information Network coordination duties allowed uninterrupted progression on National Electronic Disease Surveillance System upgrades, Electronic Laboratory Reporting implementation, and Health Alert Network enhancement.

## CONCLUSION

LCDR SAMPLE OFFICER's sustained efforts, only a few of which have been highlighted above, have been exceptional in quantity and diversity in support of HHS' and CDC's mission to improve public health emergency preparedness and response at the state and local level. Her numerous contributions and leadership in multiple areas have led directly to improvements in public health

emergency preparedness in [Anonymous State] at the local, state, and regional levels. For her accomplishments and leadership, LCDR SAMPLE OFFICER is worthy of the Commendation Medal.