

West Central Georgia (District 7)

Includes the following counties: Chattahoochee, Clay, Crisp, Dooley, Harris, Macon, Marion, Muscogee, Quitman, Randolph, Schley, Stewart, Sumter, Talbot, Taylor, Webster

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Interview conducted via telephone on December 3, 2007, 2:30pm

District 7 is the 2nd largest (340,000 residents) and also the poorest district in Georgia. They have approximately 390 public health workers.

The District engages in a number of quality improvement (QI) measures, including peer review and district inspections of the county departments; however, a number of the state mandates surrounding QI are unfunded and therefore difficult to implement. The District has five counties with no physicians and six counties with no hospitals. Additionally, since so many of the residents are so poor, the health department acts as a “safety net” for direct/primary services and simply does not have the time, staff, or money, to implement widespread QI.

The District sees no benefit to accreditation. It will cost money that they do not have and does not seem to confer any benefits.

One of their biggest problems is being short-staffed. The merit system is a big cause of this and was described as “piss-poor.” Additionally, for public health nurses, training takes 9-12 months and nurses often leave during or shortly after this training for higher paying positions. PH nurses in the District are required to be familiar with 32 different public programs, which for a new hire is very intimidating. Finally, the quality of the applicants is steadily declining, with some people applying who lack even basic certification (such as an associates nursing degree) and any familiarity with public health.

Regarding the Core Competencies, it is one of the QI measures used to meet state demands; however the District feels a general disconnect between what the Competencies require and what is actually possible in such a rural, poor area.