



## **Provide Health Information and Distance Learning Opportunities for South Dakota Public Health Professionals.**

### **Position Statements:**

- Support national efforts to strengthen professional preparation and ongoing education for public health professionals.
- Advocate for partnerships with schools of public health to provide distance learning opportunities for SD public health professionals.
- Advocate for the expansion of public health opportunities within current SD health professional education programs, such as medicine, nursing, pharmacy and dentistry.

### **Background:**

Public health professionals today are faced with both old and new public health challenges—infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS and the pandemic H1N1 influenza, chronic disease epidemics; ranging from heart disease to cancer to obesity, the health of our increasingly elderly populations, high-risk behaviors that endanger our health such as smoking and substance abuse, the safety of our water and our food, as well as the threats of natural and manmade disasters including bioterrorism. With this ever increasing list of disease states and occurrences, the modern public health professional needs an arsenal of timely health information.

### **Overview:**

Continuing education opportunities are essential for public health professionals in South Dakota to stay informed about current and emerging health topics and better-serve the people of South Dakota. Providing these opportunities through web-based technology is rapidly increasing. In a frontier state like South Dakota, the convenience and efficiency of distance learning options are especially favorable.

### **Conclusion:**

Distance education provides several advantages to students. “The Internet is enabling us to address these educational challenges, bringing learning to students instead of bringing students to learning. It is allowing for the creation of learning communities that defy the constraints of time and distance as it provides access to knowledge that was once difficult to obtain” (Web-based Education Commission, 2000).

The Distance Education Training Council (2003) reported decreasing lost work days, travel and living expenses associated with a traditional program, and the flexibility of distance study as important benefits of distance learning. In addition, the students are able to set their own pace and schedule for learning, and experience learning in a one-on-one setting. Additionally, distance education can help address the growing need of training the public health workforce.