

AMCHP Conference 2009

**A Vision for Transforming our Public Health and Healthcare System
to Better Serve America's Women, Children, and Families**

February 20-27 2009

JOHN NELSON: Thank you, Nan.

I'm not Peter van Dyck. He's taller and better looking [Laughter].

Good evening, everybody. I'm John Nelson. I'm the Deputy Director of the Maternal and Child Health Bureau. And on behalf of Peter, Nan and Michael and the executive committee, I welcome everybody to Washington, D.C.

I'd also like to acknowledge all of the MCHB staff, my colleagues, for all the work that they do in working with the groups here, as well as the organizations that are here as well. Everybody helps make us do our jobs better. I'm pleased to be here, and we'll spend just a couple minutes describing the context for our meeting this year.

First, I'd like to repeat the mission of the Maternal and Child Health Bureau. It grounds us. I'll let Peter give his overview later in the week when he emphasizes the pyramid, an annual feature of our meetings, and a reminder without which no MCH committee or meeting would be complete [Laughter].

Our mission is to provide national leadership and partnership with key stakeholders to improve the physical and mental health, safety, and well-being of the maternal and child health population, which includes all of the nation's women, infants, children, adolescents, and their families, including fathers and children with special healthcare needs.

All of the speakers have commented on the extraordinary challenges we face. The excitement that began in November has been replaced by seemingly pervasive fear over the economy. All of the speakers have commented on the extraordinary challenges we face. The excitement that began in November has been replaced by seemingly pervasive fear over the economy. Everyone here will have to accomplish more with fewer resources. Michael mentioned that. Everyone has as well.

Everyone will have to accomplish more with less, and families who depend on us face assaults from every side. How do we create a responsive system that effectively addresses the needs of our population? Well, I think this may be as much of an opportunity as a challenge. We're in the process of having new leadership in HHS. Just two days ago President Obama announced the selection of a new administrator of the Health Resources and Services Administration, replacing Betty Duke, and I expect that his selection for Secretary will be announced soon. After all, all of the governors are in town this weekend.

Title V programs are unique in their approach to the healthcare needs of the American community. They are systems based, supported by a strong and effective research core, comprehensive, and are managed with strong and vital input from the families who depend on us.

Title V and rest of the MCH programs are uniquely positioned to address the evolving healthcare environment of the 21st century. We must be prepared for the changes that will surely come from the need for comprehensive healthcare under the rubric of healthcare reform, and it deserves all of our attention and participation.

Your agenda and speakers assembled today and through the week offer a unique perspective into how we got where we are and what needs to be done to address the challenges we face. Let me stop at that and simply add that I'll be following the proceedings closely even as the debate over the implementation of the stimulus package advances. Thank you, and Godspeed.

Nan?