

**Procedures for Reviewing NCHS Programs:**  
**Office of Analysis and Epidemiology**  
 Board of Scientific Counselors  
 January 2011

### A. Overview and Guiding Principles

NCHS intends to periodically review its programs to assure the continuing vitality of the Center's efforts. The specific goals of these reviews are to examine the current status, scientific quality, and responsiveness of each program within the context of its mission.

The review should:

1. take into account future availability of financial and staffing resources focusing on the effectiveness of the program's use of current and expected resources, especially during periods in which prospects for funding increases in the near term are limited;
2. emphasize forward-thinking and future planning rather than current or past program efforts and achievements to ensure that NCHS remains a vital part of the Nation's health information infrastructure;
3. conduct an interactive review that obtains needed information through both written documentation and in person interaction with program staff.

The final report should address the program's strengths, weaknesses, and future threats and opportunities with emphasis on scientific quality and the program's responsiveness to the user community.

This document is intended to provide general guidelines for the review process. It is understood that review teams will have flexibility in how they perform their tasks. Each review team may prioritize some areas for greater emphasis given the purpose and scope of the program under review.

### B. Questions to consider in conjunction with nine review criteria

The review criteria outlined below is intended to guide the reviewers in terms of the program's adherence to general principles of sound science and the requirements of federal statistical agencies as set out in the CNSTAT's Principles and Practices, OMB's Data Quality Guidelines, and OMB's Standards for Statistical Surveys.

<b>The Program and Its Process:</b>	<b>Scope of the evaluation</b>		
	<i>Current status/ future plans</i>	<i>Scientific quality</i>	<i>Responsiveness to users' needs</i>
<i>Capacity/Resources</i>	1	4	7
<i>Information Products</i>	2	5	8
<i>Efforts to Improve</i>	3	6	9

**The reviewers may use the questions outlined below as a guide for their deliberations. As noted above, each review needs to be tailored to the particular program and its overall mission. Thus some areas may receive greater emphasis than others. However, the review team should not limit their focus too narrowly.**

1. Capacity/Resources

- Is the program's budget being spent efficiently on current activities?
- Are personnel resources being used effectively?
- Are appropriate high quality personnel being recruited and retained?
- Are current staffing levels appropriate?
- Does the program have the right mixture of professional expertise?
- Does program staff collaborate with other federal or state agencies and if so how?
- How does the program fit within NCHS and the Federal statistical system (i.e., CDC, and other federal agencies)?
- Does OAE take advantage of the complementarity of some of its major data development and dissemination activities in making resource allocation decisions?

2. Information Products

- Do the wide variety of OAE information products and tools use NCHS and other health data appropriately, and highlight the importance of NCHS data for population health and healthcare research?
- Do OAE research studies and reports use data from different data systems to provide a cross-cutting view of health issues?
- Do OAE's products and tools meet user expectations in terms of quality, timeliness, usability, etc?
- Does OAE have systems in place for assessing the quality of its different products and tools?
- Is there an ongoing attempt to improve the timeliness and relevance of OAE's information products and tools?
- Does OAE effectively promote the use of its data products among the research and policy communities?

3. Efforts to Improve

- Are there existing mechanisms to maintain and improve the scientific quality of program activities?
- Are there existing mechanisms for strategic planning of future activities?
- Are there incentives for staff to conduct long range planning?
- Are there ongoing efforts to evaluate and improve the quality of data and information products produced by the program?

**C. Report to the Board of Scientific Counselors (BSC)**

A preliminary report of the review should be submitted to the BSC prior to the submission of the final report. This preliminary report will be scheduled for discussion in a meeting of the full BSC. In this meeting, the program staff will have an opportunity to correct any factual errors that may be present in the preliminary report. The final report, which should include a set of prioritized recommendations, will be submitted subsequent to the Board discussion and will reflect the discussion of the preliminary report by the BSC.