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PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Tuesday, September 12, 2006

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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September is National Preparedness Month
**Pinellas County Health Department Earns National
Recognition for Public Health Emergency Preparedness**

As local health departments nationwide work to protect the public from health emergencies, infectious disease outbreaks and other public health threats, the Florida Department of Health and the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) recently recognized the Pinellas County Health Department for its ability to respond to public health emergencies.

The health department underwent a rigorous review process conducted by the Project Public Health Ready (PPHR) Review Committee and the Florida Department of Health. Project Public Health Ready is a unique partnership program between NACCHO and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In 2005, the Florida Department of Health adopted the PPHR standards of the NACCHO/CDC program, and continues to implement the recognition standards for health departments statewide.

Local health departments underwent an evaluation process that included reviews by three members of the Project Public Health Ready Review Committee. To gain recognition, the PPHR program required the Pinellas County Health Department to meet expectations of public health preparedness in three key areas: preparedness planning; individual worker competence and demonstration of all-hazards readiness through exercises. The recognition confirms that the Pinellas County Health Department has an emergency response plan in place, the plan is appropriately connected to other jurisdictional emergency response plans, agency staff members are trained and the plan is exercised and used during public health and other community emergencies.

Florida is the first state to coordinate this national public health program at a statewide level. The Pinellas County Health Department and the Indian River County Health Department are the first two health departments to be recognized as Public Health Ready through this collaboration. For more information on all Project Public Health Ready sites and project tools and resources, go to <http://www.naccho.org/topics/emergency/pphr.cfm>.

“We are proud to have been recognized by Project Public Health Ready for our high level of preparedness,” said Claude Dharamraj, MD, MPH, director of the Pinellas County Health Department. “We will continue to improve our ability to quickly and effectively respond to any public health crisis in Pinellas County.”

“NACCHO commends the Pinellas County Health Department for being a model of public health emergency preparedness,” said Patrick Libbey, executive director of NACCHO. “The public health system still has work to do when it comes to preparedness, but we are making great strides as evidenced by the good work of the Pinellas County Health Department.”

The mission of the Pinellas County Health Department is to promote, protect and improve the health and safety of the community through public and private partnerships in an environment that respects diversity. For more information about preparedness and other public health activities, visit www.PinellasHealth.com

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