



Republic of the Philippines  
Department of Health  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

SAN LAZARO COMPOUND  
RIZAL AVENUE, STA. CRUZ  
MANILA, PHILIPPINES  
TEL. NO. 711-95-02

November 3, 1997

DEPARTMENT CIRCULAR  
No. 293 Series 1997

**TO: All Regional Health Directors and  
Acting/Designated Heads of RESUs**

**SUBJECT: Strengthening of Regional Epidemiology and  
Surveillance Units (RESUs)**

In line with the devolution of health services to local government units (LGUs) and the need for strengthening the technical capacity of Regional Health Offices (RHOs), Dept. Circular No. 11, s. 1993 mandated the creation of Regional Epidemiology Units (REUs). Since among the functions of such units are the conduct of disease surveillance, these units have subsequently been referred to as Regional Epidemiology and Surveillance Units (RESUs). This circular clarifies the mandate, functions, manpower and logistic requirements of such units.

#### **A. Rationale for creation of RESUs**

In a decentralized health system where public health services are mostly provided by LGUs, there is a need for timely and accurate epidemiologic information from the field in order to identify problems, e.g. disease outbreaks, monitor implementation of health programs, and guide health policy making. Such information will help the DOH-RHO in extending the appropriate technical assistance to LGUs. Local health personnel also need assistance in developing their own epidemiologic expertise, particularly in the areas of public health surveillance and disease prevention and control. To coordinate DOH efforts in these activities, Regional Epidemiology and Surveillance Units (RESUs) were created. RESUs serve as a crucial link between the central office and devolved health units. They can serve as "information service nodes" and can be a platform for capacity building in the field of epidemiology.

#### **B. Mandate of RESUs**

Each RESU should provide "total quality" epidemiologic services. These include services related to health information systems, outbreak investigation and control, health status assessment, program monitoring and evaluation, and training.

### **C. Functions of a RESU**

As part of the technical division of the RHO, the following functions are expected of a RESU:

1. Develop, maintain, and evaluate public health surveillance systems in coordination with LGUs, government and private hospitals, other government and non-government agencies.
2. Assist LGUs and other agencies in outbreak investigation and control.
3. Conduct epidemiologic studies including surveys and program evaluations.
4. Train health personnel in epidemiologic methods including data collection, analysis, and presentation.
5. Collect, process, analyze, and disseminate information on vital health statistics and programs.
6. Develop training materials and information packages on epidemiology and public health.
7. Collect and maintain reference materials on epidemiology and public health for the use of health personnel and other staff in the region.
8. Provide appropriate technical assistance related to epidemiology, particularly disease prevention and control, to regional and local health personnel and others, e.g. students, staff from NGOs.

### **D. RESU staff (qualifications and functions)**

Each RESU should have the following staff.

#### **1. One Full-time Medical or Nurse Epidemiologist**

- Qualifications:
1. licensed physician or registered nurse
  2. FETP-certified Medical Specialist in Field Epidemiology

- Functions:
1. As RESU manager, will
    - a. supervise and assist other RESU staff in the performance of their duties and responsibilities.
    - b. prepare annual work and financial plans for the RESU.
    - c. be accountable for all outputs of the RESU.
  2. As epidemiologist, will
    - a. design, manage, conduct, evaluate public health surveillance systems and epidemiologic studies (surveys, program evaluations, and other research studies).
    - b. conduct and assist other health personnel in conducting outbreak investigations.
    - c. conduct rapid health assessment and assist in establishing a surveillance system during times of disaster.

- d. design, develop, and conduct training programs in epidemiology and public health in co-ordination with the training division.
- e. produce and disseminate timely and relevant health updates.

## **2. One full-time Epidemiology Nurse**

- Qualifications:**
- 1. registered nurse
  - 2. with at least 6 months formal training in epidemiology
  - 3. with at least 2 years experience in public health surveillance and epidemiologic studies
  - 4. computer literate

- Functions:**
- 1. Implement public health surveillance.
  - 2. Monitor local health personnel conducting disease surveillance.
  - 3. Conduct and/or assist other health personnel in outbreak investigations.
  - 4. Assist in the conduct of rapid surveys and surveillance during disasters.
  - 5. Assist in the conduct of surveys, program evaluations, and other epidemiologic studies.
  - 6. Assist in the conduct of training courses in epidemiology.
  - 7. Assist the Medical or Nurse Epidemiologist in preparing the annual work and financial plan for the RESU.

## **3. One Epidemiology Assistant**

- Qualifications:**
- 1. College graduate with Civil Service Eligibility, preferably with medical/paramedical background
  - 2. with at least 2 years related work-experience in epidemiology.
  - 3. computer literate (with certificate)

- Functions:**
- 1. Assist in conducting disease surveillance, outbreak investigations, and surveys.
  - 2. Do data entry and encoding in computer.
  - 3. Produce tables, graphs and other visual aids.
  - 4. Assist in training courses conducted by the RESU.
  - 5. Be responsible for maintenance of RESU equipment, e.g. computer, printer, fax machine.

#### **4. One Administrative Clerk**

Qualifications: 1. with Civil Service Eligibility  
2. with at least 1 year experience working in DOH  
3. computer literate

Functions: 1. Process vouchers and other papers.  
2. Be responsible for inventory and maintenance of RESU supplies and materials.  
3. File reports and correspondence.  
4. Act as secretariat during training courses.  
5. Reproduce materials needed by the RESU.

#### **E. Logistics**

In order for the RESU staff to function efficiently and effectively, the unit should be provided with the following:

1. An office with the following equipment:
  - a. computer and printer (preferably with modem and access to the Internet)
  - b. phone and fax machine
  - c. cellular phone/radio or some mobile communication system and regular access to the following:
  - d. reproduction equipment (e.g. photocopier, mimeo, duplo machines)
  - e. typewriter
  - f. documentation equipment (e.g. camera, tape recorders)
  - g. presentation equipment (e.g. overhead, opaque, slide projector)
  - h. refrigerator with freezer (for storage of specimens)
2. Office and laboratory supplies and materials, and
3. Vehicle with driver.

#### **F. Capability Building of RESU Staff**

In order to upgrade their capabilities, RESU staff should be allowed to attend appropriate training courses and participate in the Annual FETP Scientific Conference and upgrading seminars, provided that their attendance in such courses does not disrupt the delivery of vital health services.

All Regional Directors and RESU heads are hereby ordered to take the necessary steps to ensure that their RESU is able to meet the above requirements and perform the functions expected of such units. Regional Directors should designate and detail qualified personnel to man the unit. RESU staff are encouraged to coordinate with the Field Epidemiology Training Program, Office for Special Concerns for technical assistance.

  
CARMENCITA NORIEGA-REODICA, MD, MPH  
Secretary of Health