



Stephanie Bailey, MD, MSHSA, has worked with the Nashville health department since 1981 when she started as medical advisor for the East Nashville Clinic. From that post she advanced to medical director/director of health services administration in 1988 and then as acting director of health in 1995. She was appointed as director of health later that year and has served the public there through her leadership and management skills.

Dr. Bailey was first to convene a group of health care providers to address an estimated 60,000 uninsured Davidson County residents. Bridges to Care (BTC) was launched in February 2002 as a result of the first meeting. BTC's goal is to link uninsured Nashville residents to one of the several member clinics for on-going primary health care. Today, more than 20,000 community members have access to 16 primary medical care clinics that serve patients based on their ability to pay. Prior to BTC many of the uninsured would go to hospital emergency departments seeking non-emergency primary health care. Bridges to Care links the uninsured to an on-going source of primary health care, a "medical home".

One of Bailey's first projects as city health director was to help develop a five-year strategic plan. The plan led to the development of an epidemiology division, and Bailey advocated for a computer-savvy workforce. She also hired a statistician and a toxicologist to address future public health threats. Bailey worked with the Nashville Chamber of Commerce and other business and social service leaders to develop Healthy Nashville 2000. The coalition identified five major health issues in the community and continues today as Healthy Nashville 2010.

Bailey's numerous accomplishments as director of health in Nashville have included: spearheading the Bridges to Care Program, which has linked more than 8,000 residents to health care; leading efforts to reduce Nashville's syphilis ranking from number one in the country to number seven; and starting a public health component to jail health in Nashville in order to decrease the burden of cost and enhance the care system. More than 20,000 uninsured community members today have access to health care thanks to the Bridges to Care program. Nashville's syphilis rate, once highest in the nation, has dropped faster than any other city's thanks to STD FREE. These are just two innovative programs that began under the leadership of Stephanie Bailey, M.D., Director of Health of the Metro Public Health Department.

In November, the American Public Health Association (APHA) awarded Dr. Bailey the prestigious 2004 Roemer Award for these and many other innovative public health initiatives pioneered by Nashville's Director of Health. The Milton & Ruth Roemer Prize for Creative Local Public Health Work is awarded to a local public health officer of a county, city, or other unit of local government, who has been found to be responsible for outstanding creative and innovative public health work. The award was endowed by two devoted members of APHA. The annual award honors those whose public health efforts are intended to protect, advance, or recover the health of the general population or special populations.