

public health preparedness and function

state epidemiologist

A TRUE TALE

At the conclusion of his first year of medical school at the University of Rochester, Dale Morse, MD, MS, spent the summer on a Navajo Indian reservation investigating disease patterns. He enjoyed epidemiology so much



Dale L. Morse, MD, MS

that as a fourth year medical student he set up his own four-week elective at a county health department “just to see what people in public health do.” Serendipitously, he happened to be there when two important health issues emerged. The first was a small outbreak of an allergic reaction among children to a dye in popular “tattoos” they bought. The second was a huge community outbreak of giardiasis, a gastrointestinal illness caused by a parasite found in water. The giardiasis outbreak was so serious that a team from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) came up from Atlanta to investigate. The Epidemic Intelligence

Service (EIS) officer on the scene asked Dr. Morse if he wanted to help with the investigation. After that experience, he knew he would be an epidemiologist.

After graduating from medical school, Dr. Morse interned in internal medicine, and then joined the CDC as an EIS officer. Upon completing his residency, he joined the New York State Department of Health. Except for “sabbaticals” at Harvard to earn his master’s in epidemiology, and a year as a consultant for the British government at their communicable disease surveillance center in London, he spent the next 20 years at the New York State Department of Health as an epidemiologist, rising through the ranks from Assistant Bureau Director to Director of Infectious Disease, to his current position as Director, Office of Science and Public Health.

“Working through a disaster is like transitioning from working on a general medical floor to a busy hospital emergency room. You’re doing some of the same things you might do in your routine as an epidemiologist, but everything is intensely time-driven.”



State Epidemiologist Checkpoint

Do you enjoy solving difficult and involved puzzles?

Would you find it exciting to track down the cause of infectious disease outbreaks?

Would you enjoy the challenge of working through a public health disaster?

If so, read on