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### **Coalitions and Administration**

One of my new responsibilities as a public health nurse was to serve on a pregnancy task force. Our coalition needed information and numbers related to pregnancy. I located some great data on pregnant women in our state and county through a sympathetic ear at the state health department for the task force. I was pretty proud of that unpublished data and my tenacity in obtaining it (this was long before such data became easy to obtain via the internet). And so thrilled was I with my find, I shared my story enthusiastically at meeting of other personnel in my same field. To my great surprise and disappointment, a well-respected administrator at my agency chastised me for not going through the proper person at our own agency for this information Great. (I didn't even know there was a 'proper person or a proper channel' within our agency). Yep, it was pretty embarrassing. My enthusiasm turned to embarrassment and I suddenly felt like I was "knee deep in alligators with only thongs on my feet"!!

What did I learn? I learned I was still proud of the data I collected and of my tenacity in finding the data. It was important for the guiding our coalition. And in the end, the incident had some unexpected but positive outcomes. In my hunt, I made some important contacts at the state health department that I could call on in the future. And although I had asked different people within my agency for the data before contacting the state, I hadn't found the "correct person". Sometimes it just takes a while to find out 'who does what' (but be aware, it can change in a moment's notice)! Another unexpected outcome was, I often used my "chastiser" as a frequent resource on 'who does what'. So if you find yourself "knee deep in alligators while wearing thongs", just remember, many of us have been there before you and we survived intact and stronger for the battle. And we made some good contacts along the way.