

Issue #27

## **PBRN Week in Review | Oct 30, 2009**

*PBRN Grantees: Please circulate relevant information to your network members.* For additional information and to make suggestions for future items, please contact Elaine Wootten, [woottenelaineb@uams.edu](mailto:woottenelaineb@uams.edu) or 501-526-6628. Newsletter archives are available [here](#).

### **Notable Recent Activities**

- **Advancing the Science of Complex Community Interventions for Public Health.** Earlier this week several PBRN stakeholders convened in Chicago as part of a meeting to examine the future of complex community interventions for advancing population health. Co-organized by faculty at the University of Illinois-Chicago and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the agenda included a review of the history of research on complex community-level interventions, a look at novel research designs and methodologies for studying the effectiveness of these interventions, and a focus on new strategies for engaging community-based organizations, public health practitioners, and others in community-level research. Among the participants were NAC members Dr. Wayne Giles and Dr. Alice Ammerman, along with Dr. Julie Marshall from the Colorado PBRN and Glen Mays from the NCC. Public Health PBRNs were among the strategies discussed for generating more and better “practice-based evidence” around developing and sustaining complex community-level interventions in real-world public health settings. Many of the theories, methodologies, and research priorities surfaced at this meeting have relevance for the work of public health PBRNs. Stay tuned for information about where to find the proceedings from this meeting.
- **More and Better Data on Local Public Health Practice.** Several PBRN stakeholders convened in Washington this week as part of NACCHO’s advisory committee for the periodic National Profile of Local Health Departments. This data resource historically has been one of the only sources of data on local health departments across the U.S. and has been invaluable in facilitating research on public health systems and services. The most recent iteration of this national census survey was fielded by NACCHO in 2008, and [data](#) are available now to researchers. In addition to data on public health financing, staffing, and service mix, the 2008 survey captured information on quality improvement activities, health disparities, and agency-university relationships (of special interest to PBRNs). Make sure to review NACCHO’s [full report](#) of the 2008 survey for descriptive findings. The advisory committee that convened to begin planning for the 2010 administration of this survey includes Lee Thielen and Lisa VanRaemdonck from the Colorado PBRN and Glen Mays from the NCC. NACCHO Profile data can be a valuable resource for PBRN research activities.
- **North Carolina PBRN Taps Expert Consultant on Producing “Practice-based Evidence.”** On October 29, the North Carolina PBRN hosted a consultation visit from leading public health scholar Dr. Lawrence Green of the University of California-San Francisco. Dr. Green is internationally renowned for his work in health promotion research and community intervention strategies. He is especially valued for his work in developing practice-based research designs for

testing the effectiveness of public health approaches in real-world community settings—designs that often require alternatives to the randomized, controlled trial to generate strong external validity. (Dr. Green also participated in the Chicago meeting on complex community interventions earlier in the week). We look forward to learning about North Carolina’s experience with this consultation, as it may stimulate ideas for technical assistance at other PBRNs.

- **Draft PBRN Network Analysis Instrument Available for Review and Comment.** As mentioned over the past month, we would like to undertake a modest, cross-cutting evaluative activity as the first cohort of PBRNs approach their one-year mark. This activity will allow us collectively to take stock of where we’ve come and the current stage of development of the PBRNs – an EPSDT check of sorts. Social network analysis (SNA) methods are increasingly being used for this type of evaluative activity involving multi-organizational networks and partnerships. We are proposing to collect a limited set of information via a brief SNA survey fielded with the participants of each PBRN network, as part of our annual progress report to the Foundation. We have completed a draft of this SNA survey for your review and comment. The items on this survey are based in part on several similar SNA surveys used with public health agencies, but the items have been adapted to reflect the types of activities that PBRN participants may undertake. We invite you to review and provide feedback on this first draft of the instrument.

## Activities on the Horizon

### ➤ PBRNs at APHA

- **ATTENTION PRESENTERS: Upload slides by Monday, November 2!**
- **Session on H1N1 Research** is scheduled for 8:30-10am on Monday, November 9, and will have presenters from Kentucky, North Carolina, and Washington PBRNs.
- **Session focusing on PBRNs** will be Monday afternoon, November 9, and all five PBRNs will share experiences and lessons learned from the first year of the program. [Here is a link](#) to the session.
- **Reception hosted by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s Public Health Team.** Monday, November 9 from 5:30 – 8:30 pm, in the Pennsylvania Convention Center Room 111A.

- **Developing a High Performing Health System.** Begin making plans to join the distinctive gathering of researchers, practitioners and policymakers at the 2010 PHSSR Keeneland Conference scheduled for April 20-22. Presentation abstracts are being accepted now. [Details and submission form](#) are linked here. **Deadline for abstracts is December 3.**

## Recent Literature and Exemplary Studies of Interest

- **A National Examination of Partnerships among Local Health Departments and Faith Communities.** A recent paper in the *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice* by Priscilla Barnes and Amy B. Curtis at Western Michigan University describes the need for local

health department (LHD) and faith based organization (FBO) partnerships in enhancing overall public health status. This study obtained data from the 2005 National Profile of LHDs developed by the National Association of County & City Health Officials. Secondary data analysis was conducted on a stratified sample of 517 LHDs receiving the core questionnaire and a module with questions about partnership and collaboration. This study found 83.1% of LHDs reported partnership activities occurring with FBOs, with the most commonly reported activity as exchanging information. The authors provide an excellent example of how LHD and FBO partnerships can produce effective programs and services.

- **Quality Improvement in Local Health Department Service Delivery.** A recent study published in [AJPH](#) by Debra Thingstad Boa and colleagues examines the role of quality improvement methods and techniques, commonly used by other industries, in improving service delivery and performance in public health settings. The authors analyzed a quality improvement program undertaken at a local Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) clinic at the Dakota County (Minnesota) Health Department. The authors found that overall four predictors: expected lobby wait time, actual lobby wait time, satisfaction with nutrition education services, and whether nutrition staff provided clients with explanation about what to expect in terms of service provided are significantly associated with improved clients' satisfaction with the WIC services.
- Thanks to Sharla Smith (NCC) for the increased emphasis on literature of interest and reviews of exemplary research. The research reviews will be posted to the web site in the near future.

## Funding Opportunities

- **RWJF and the Pew Charitable Trusts** have issued a Call for Proposals on their collaborative [Health Impact Project](#). Funding is available to support up to 15 health impact assessment (HIA) demonstrations with awards expected to range between \$25,000 and \$150,000, in addition to training, mentoring and technical assistance. Grantees will promote the use of HIAs, decision-making tools that assist policy-makers with recognizing health consequences of new policy and ways to incorporate health into the policy of other sectors. **Applicant Web Conference: November 5<sup>th</sup>, 1:30 pm ET.** Letter of interest required; full proposal invited based upon letter of interest. No deadline; rolling submission.
- **Dissemination and Implementation Research.** AHRQ recently announced the availability of funds to support studies that test innovative methods for disseminating Comparative Effectiveness Reviews to consumers, clinicians, and policymakers. Public health agencies could play a role in the dissemination chain, particularly for difficult-to-reach populations who exist outside the formal health care system. AHRQ says, “summary guides are intended to help bridge the gap between research and practice by translating and disseminating findings on the comparative effectiveness of clinical interventions for three broad audiences – patients/consumers, clinicians, and policymakers. For more information click [here](#). Letter of Intent due November 18. Application due December 16.
- **Community Infrastructure for Health Research:** NIH has released a new funding opportunity under ARRA for research infrastructure that is highly relevant for Public Health PBRNs, entitled *Building Sustainable Community-Linked Infrastructure to Enable Health Science Research*. These grants are designed to “support the development, expansion, or reconfiguration of infrastructures

needed to facilitate collaboration between academic health centers and community-based organizations...in order to accelerate the pace, productivity, *dissemination, and implementation* of health research.” Communities are defined to include “neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, *public health departments*, health care providers, community coalitions, local governments, campus-community partnerships...” Public Health PBRNs may be well positioned to compete for this funding in collaboration with their academic health center partners. **Deadlines: 12-Nov-2009 (letter of intent)** and 11-Dec-2009 (full application). More information is [here](#).

- **Communities Putting Prevention to Work:** HHS recently announced its comprehensive \$650 million initiative under the Prevention and Wellness Trust component of the ARRA allotted for chronic disease prevention. *Communities Putting Prevention to Work* has four components, two announced thus far, that make grants available to support the implementation of evidence-based public health programs and policies to reduce risk factors, prevent/delay chronic disease, promote wellness, and provide positive, sustainable health changes in communities. We expect this opportunity to create compelling situations for PBRNs to study the adoption, implementation, and impact of the prevention strategies supported under this initiative.
  - **Community Initiative:** The initial \$373 million cornerstone component will fund urban and rural communities “to achieve the following prevention outcomes: increased levels of physical activity; improved nutrition; decreased overweight/obesity prevalence; decreased tobacco use; and decreased exposure to secondhand smoke.” A revised [Full Announcement](#) further specifies the number of communities per state that may apply, etc. Closing date for applications: December 1.
  - **State and Territory Initiative:** HHS has also announced the second component of the initiative, \$120 million for which states may apply. The three major elements include: (1) statewide policy and environmental change; (2) tobacco cessation through quitlines and media campaigns; and (3) a competitive category of high impact health-promoting policy and environmental change with awards based on potential for health impact. According to the announcement, “Funded projects will emphasize state-level policy and environmental changes that will help communities and schools support healthy choices.” Application linked [here](#). Closing date: November 24, 2009.
- **Implementation of Quality Improvement Processes:** AHRQ has announced the Agency’s interest in supporting grants to rigorously study the implementation of quality improvement strategies and provide generalizable scientific findings about the implementation of the quality improvement strategy, related organizational changes, and their impact. There is increasing evidence that success in achieving quality improvement goals is at least partially attributable to implementation processes and contexts and not just to the nature of the quality improvement strategy. Research design and execution will yield results providing AHRQ, providers, patients, payers, policymakers, and the public with contextual details and high level of confidence about what works and what doesn’t in improving health care in the United States. More information is [here](#). The next application deadline is January 25, 2010.
- **Pfizer Fellowships in Public Health Research:** Pfizer offers career development awards for junior faculty pursuing careers in public health systems and services research. Research collaboration with state and/or local public health agencies is required. The [2010 announcement](#)

was released last week, and the application deadline is January 31, 2010. Glen Mays is on the academic advisory board for this fellowship and can answer questions.

- **Dissemination and Implementation of Evidence-based HIV Prevention:** NIH invites research to enhance the science of technology transfer, dissemination, implementation, and operational research for evidence-based HIV-prevention interventions in the United States. More information is [here](#). The next application due date is February 5, 2010.

## Related Research and Practice Activities

- **Public Health Strategies to Improve Health.** The Institute of Medicine has developed a 17-member committee to conduct a consensus study examining ways to strengthen the public health system. The committee, which includes PBRN NAC member Dr. David Fleming and NCC leader Glen Mays, will address a series of three topics and produce three consensus reports over the next two years. The topics include: recommendations for state and local funding mechanisms, public health statutes and regulations in injury prevention and disease, and the role of score cards and other assessment tools in summarizing the impact of the public health system. This [project](#) is sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.
- **Community-Based Participatory Research.** A paper by Anya Y. Spector in [Health Promotion Practices](#) conducted a book and media review on the 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. *Community-Based Participatory Research for Health: From Process to Outcomes*. The author recommends the book for practitioners, scholars and other public health researchers interested in health disparities research. This [book](#) provides a complete and practical overview of the theory and application of community based participatory research in public health.
- **Impact of a Smoking (Public Health) Ordinance.** The Institute of Medicine has released the findings of its committee that examined the association between smoking bans and heart attacks. Based on a systematic review of the literature and a focus on eleven key studies, the report notes that all the key studies showed a decrease in heart attacks *after* the smoking ban was in place. While acknowledging the considerable contextual variation in the smoking bans, the committee still concluded that there is a causal association between smoking bans and decrease in heart attacks. This report suggests that given the prevalence of heart attacks and resulting deaths, smoking bans can have a substantial impact on public health. The study was requested by the CDC, and the [report brief](#) is available here.
- **Global Climate Change: Implications for Public Health.** Catch this webcast and the live online discussion afterward to hear CDC's distinguished experts share the potential health effects of climate change. On **Thursday, November 5<sup>th</sup>**, the presentation is from 2:00 – 2:45 ET, with the online discussion forum with the experts from 2:45 – 4:00. Here is the [program information](#).
- **Implementation Research Call for Abstracts:** The call for abstracts for NIH's 3rd Annual *Conference on the Science of Dissemination and Implementation*, has a deadline of 5:00 pm PT on **Nov 6, 2009**. The conference will be held March 15-16, 2010 in Bethesda, MD. NIH says, "There is a recognized need to close the gap between research evidence and clinical and *public health practice*, but how is this best accomplished? Although emerging as a field of research in health

and medicine, dissemination and implementation science is yet underdeveloped. A forum is needed to facilitate growth in the science of dissemination and implementation.” For details, click [here](#).

- **Planning for a Pandemic – Can History Inform Action?** This installment in the *Public Health Reports Meet the Author* webcast series brings public health historians and practitioners together to bring the 1918 flu pandemic alongside today’s practice issues for influenza preparedness planning. Monday, November 30, 1:00 pm ET. [Get the info here](#).
- **Strategies to Prevent Childhood Obesity.** The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices recently published *Shaping a Healthier Generation: Successful State Strategies to Prevent Childhood Obesity*, which includes an overview of related socioeconomic and environmental risk factors. State policy examples that promote healthy behaviors in a variety of settings are also highlighted. The [publication](#) was sponsored by RWJF.
- **Research Methods Resources:** AcademyHealth has launched a dedicated [website](#) containing resources on methods for health services research. Of course, these methods are highly relevant to the study of public health services and systems through PBRNs. Among the many resources are on-demand [webinars](#) accessible through the website for a modest fee. As an organizational affiliate of AcademyHealth, the PBRN National Coordinating Center may be able to secure preferred pricing or even coordinated viewing of these webinars. Check out the website and let us know if you see resources that are of interest.
- **Social Science Research and Public Health:** Throughout the fall and winter the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research at NIH is sponsoring symposia on understanding health through the tools of the social sciences. Each symposium will address an important health issue from four scientific perspectives: economics, health services, sociology and anthropology. Presentations will provide background on the concepts, definitions, methods, and theories through which social scientists study the causes of health problems and the application of this science for improving health. Lectures in this series are video cast and can be viewed [here](#). Video casts are archive only and posted approximately one week after the lecture; no live recording is available.
  - **Behavioral Economics and Health:** Describes a behavioral economics approach to human behavior with a focus on health. According to the website description, “our strategy combines research (infusion of new ideas, testing, and evaluation) with action (program implementation, service delivery, attention to process and on-the ground details) to design effective solutions to our most pressing health and social problems.” (87 minutes)

## Upcoming Key Dates

### November 9: PBRN-related sessions at the APHA Annual Meeting

- 9:30-11am (H1N1 research)
- 2:30-4 pm (PBRN research)
- 5:30-8 pm (PHSSR reception)

### November 10: PBRN Monthly Conference Call: cancelled due to APHA

**November–December 2009: Year One PBRN Data/Reporting.** These are our target dates for collecting data from the PBRNs about their development over the first year. Details to come.

**November 18: PBRN Quarterly Webinar,** 2-3:30pm EST

**December 1: Start date for second cohort of Public Health PBRNs.** The next group of networks begins their activities.

**December 9: PBRN Monthly Conference Call**

**January 12: PBRN Monthly Conference Call**

**January 15, 2010: Annual Progress Reports** due to RWJF.

**Next Issue:** November 6, 2009