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Researchers to Examine Impact of System Changes on Public Health

Studies to Focus on Areas Such as Disease Surveillance, Emergency Response

LEXINGTON, KY- A new round of research supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) will examine how recent dramatic changes in the operation of the nation's public health system impact its effectiveness in such critical roles as emergency preparedness and reporting of disease outbreaks.

The seven new research awards are part of an initiative on "natural experiments" in public health delivery developed by the National Coordinating Center for Public Health Services and Systems Research (PHSSR), a RWJF-funded center housed at the University of Kentucky College of Public Health.

"Public health has experienced powerful economic, environmental, and informational shocks to the system in recent years," said Glen Mays, Ph.D., M.P.H., professor of public health at the University of Kentucky and co-principal investigator of the National Coordinating Center. "Through these natural experiment studies, we can accelerate system improvements by carefully examining which responses work best, for which populations, and under what circumstances."

The economic recession, innovations in information technology, and new policy initiatives are just some of the forces changing how public health services are organized, financed, and delivered across the nation. These shifts create "natural experiments" – changes in public health delivery that occur in some communities, but not others – that researchers can use to study the effects of public health strategies on population health.

The awards of \$200,000 each, to be used over the course of two years, are being administered by the National Network of Public Health Institutes (NNPHI). The research

resulting from these awards will provide relevant information to public health practitioners and policy-makers, contributing evidence that is urgently needed to improve the population's health and the quality, efficiency, and equity in public health practice, improving population health.

Recipients of the awards and their projects are (in alphabetical order):

- **Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Lainie Rutkow and Daniel Barnett**
Goal: Assess whether state laws influence the public health workforce's willingness to respond in emergencies.
- **Public Health Institute, Dawn Jacobson and Marta Induni**
Goal: Examine the impact of federal investments in health information technologies and the adoption of meaningful use criteria on the capabilities of state and local public health departments to collect, share and report data related to communicable and chronic disease surveillance.
- **RAND Corporation, Malcolm Williams and Anita Chandra**
Goal: Measure the effectiveness of partnerships developed among community based organizations and the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health to build community resilience to disasters.
- **South Carolina Research Foundation, Nathan Hale**
Goal: Examine the impact of changes in the scale of operations and scope of public health activities for reproductive health services on utilization, outcomes and quality among South Carolina women enrolled in Medicaid.
- **University of Georgia Research Foundation, Inc., Phaedra Corso**
Goal: Evaluate the impact of reallocating Georgia's funding for local public health infrastructure, which will result in significant changes in the amount of resources provided by the state to counties for public health.
- **University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Anna Schenck and Anne-Marie Meyer**
Goal: Explore new methods and measures to assess the impact of the economic

recession on public health outcomes.

- **University of Washington, Janet Baseman**

Goal: Investigate the impact of a health information exchange innovation that will streamline provider-based notifiable condition reporting on the efficiency of public health disease investigations.

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About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to health and health care, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, measurable and timely change. For 40 years, the Foundation has brought experience, commitment and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those it serves. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, the Foundation expects to make a difference in your lifetime. For more information, visit <http://www.rwjf.org>.

About the National Coordinating Center for Public Health Services and Systems Research

The goal of the National Coordinating Center is to grow the field of PHSSR by coordinating current PHSSR investments, supporting real-world applications, and strengthening the capacity of researchers and practitioners. The Center also works to determine the future direction of the field's research initiatives; translate that research into practice; increase the visibility of the work; and attract other funders to the field. For more information, visit www.publichealthsystems.org.

About the National Network of Public Health Institutes

Created in 2001 as a forum for public health institutes (PHIs), today NNPHI convenes its members and partners at the local, state, and national levels in efforts to address critical health issues. NNPHI's mission is to support national public health system initiatives and strengthen PHIs to promote multi-sector activities resulting in measurable improvements of public health structures, systems, and outcomes. Since 2009, NNPHI has provided support for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Public Health Services and Systems Research (PHSSR) program. In this role, NNPHI facilitates several PHSSR calls for proposals, provides technical assistance to applicants and grantees, and coordinates grants management. Learn more at www.nnphi.org/re.