

***PBRN Grantees:** Please circulate relevant information to your network members. For additional information and 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**

- **It's Back!!** After an extended vacation, we welcome back the Public Health PBRN newsletter, and look forward to a more regular distribution schedule.
- **Research Implementation Awards:** The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's RFP for PBRN Research Implementation Awards was released on September 17, 2009. Current grantees of the Public Health PBRN program are eligible to apply for funds to support implementation of larger-scale research projects through their networks. More information is available on the PBRN [website](#). Proposal deadline is October 15, 2009. PBRN grantees are encouraged to share information about their research ideas and approaches on the PBRN web discussion board.
- **H1N1 Research Progress:** PBRNs held a conference call to provide updates on ongoing H1N1 research activities on Wednesday September 16. All five currently funded PBRN networks have research projects underway that involve retrospective analyses of H1N1 response activities and/or prospective examinations of planning and preparedness for future H1N1 responses. A summary of the discussion can be found on the PBRN [website](#), along with instruments currently being used by PBRNs.
- **Presenting H1N1 Research at APHA:** A late-breaking session on H1N1 research has been scheduled for the upcoming APHA Annual Meeting, on Monday November 9 at 9:30am. Presentations will include findings from the North Carolina and Kentucky PBRNs, along with other collaborating researchers.
- **Presenting More PBRN Research at APHA:** A session entirely devoted to the work of the Public Health PBRNs is scheduled for the APHA Annual Meeting on Monday November 9 at 2:30pm-4pm. Speakers from all five PBRNs are anticipated. A planning conference call will be scheduled soon, and we invite you to share your ideas and plans for this session on the PBRN web discussion board.
- **HOLD THE DATE: Reception for PBRNs and other PHSSR Champions:** We anticipate that a reception will be held at the APHA Annual Meeting to celebrate the progress being made in the field of public health services and systems research through the PBRNs and other, related research initiatives. We anticipate that this reception will be held following the PBRN session on Monday evening November 9. And, we anticipate that other exciting developments will be announced at this

reception, so make sure to put it on your calendar if you will be attending APHA. Look for more information and your invitation soon.

## Activities on the Horizon

- ✦ **PBRN One Year Birthdays Approaching.** The first cohort of public health PBRNs will turn one year old in December 2009. The PBRN Coordinating Center anticipates undertaking a modest evaluative activity as this milestone approaches that 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 methods are commonly used for this type of evaluative activity involving multi-organizational networks and partnerships. We are proposing to collect a very limited set of information via a brief survey or structured interview some time during the month of November, as part of our annual progress report to the Foundation. We welcome your thoughts and feedback about this activity over the next few months. For ideas, you may want to review this [brief](#) on cross-cutting research and evaluation themes developed earlier in the year.
- ✦ **PBRN Siblings are on the Way.** A second cohort of public health PBRNs will come into the world of public health services and systems research in December 2009. We are planning a variety of activities to help orient this second cohort to the program and learn from the activities and accomplishments of the first cohort. Lee Thielen of the Colorado PBRN and her colleagues at the National Network of Public Health Institutes have given us some wonderful suggestions for accommodating this type of growth and for capitalizing on the opportunities for learning that result from multiple cohorts of program participants. If you have thoughts about how best to welcome these new networks into the program and orient them to your work, please let us know. We'll be sharing ideas and plans with you in the coming few months.

## Recent Literature and Exemplary Studies of Interest

- ✦ **Special journal issue devoted to PHSSR.** Check out the October issue of the journal [Health Services Research](#), which contains a supplement devoted exclusively to the emerging field of public health services and systems research. Edited by our esteemed colleagues F. Douglas Scutchfield (University of Kentucky) and Nicole Lurie (USDHHS Assistant Secretary for Preparedness), this issue contains a series of new studies that focus on issues of organizing, financing, and delivering public health services. Studies include one by [Mays and Smith](#) of the PBRN Coordinating Center examining geographic variation in public health spending across communities, which finds evidence of significant disparities in spending, along with a ponderous inverse association with medical care spending. Other studies investigate the preparedness capacities of local public health agencies, the network structure of small and rural public health systems, and the effects of quality improvement processes used in local public health settings.
- ✦ **Quality improvement in public health practice.** Another paper in the recent issue of [AJPH](#), by our fellow travelers Deborah Boe, Bill Riley and colleagues in Minnesota, describes the implementation and effects of QI processes used in public health settings in that state. Another excellent example of practice-based research.

- ✦ **Historical trends in public health expenditures.** A new paper from CARE and the American Academy of Pediatrics reviews national trends in public health spending, showing that medical care spending has crowded out public health spending and complicated efforts to achieve national health objectives. The study is in the current issue of the [AJPH](#).
- ✦ **Evidence-based public health.** Ross Brownson and colleagues lay out parameters and processes for implementing evidence-based public health policies to improve population health. Also in [AJPH](#).

## Funding Opportunities

- ✦ **Research Implementation Awards:** The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation RFP for *PBRN Research Implementation Awards* was released on September 17, 2009. Current grantees of the Public Health PBRN program are eligible to apply for funds to support implementation of larger-scale research projects through their networks. More information is available on the PBRN [website](#). Proposal deadline is October 15, 2009.
- ✦ **Community Infrastructure for Health Research:** This week NIH 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:** Last week CDC released a new funding announcement under the first phase of the Prevention and Wellness Trust component of ARRA that makes grants available to communities to support the implementation of evidence-based, community-based public health programs and policies for disease prevention. This initial \$373 million will support *Communities Putting Prevention to Work*, competitively awarded grants for programs and policies implemented in schools, communities, and states that target chronic disease risk factors associated with nutrition, physical activity, and tobacco. Funded projects will emphasize “high-impact, broad-reaching policy, environmental, and systems changes...” We expect this opportunity to create compelling opportunities for PBRNs to study the adoption, implementation, and impact of the prevention strategies supported under this initiative. More information is available [here](#).

## Related Research and Practice Activities

- ✦ **Accreditation Test Sites.** The Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) has announced the local and state health departments selected as [beta test sites](#) for the national accreditation program. These agencies include several located in states with public health PBRNs, potentially creating interesting opportunities for practice-based research.

- ◆ **Implementation Research:** The call for abstracts for NIH's 3rd Annual *Conference on the Science of Dissemination and Implementation*, has a deadline of 5 pm pacific time 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 as yet underdeveloped. A forum is needed to facilitate growth in the science of dissemination and implementation." For details, click [here](#).
- ◆ **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 concludes; no live recording is available.
- ◆ **Economics of Disease Dynamics:** In the wake of the H1N1 outbreak, a new seminar will explore the economic correlates and consequences of pandemics, including approaches for predicting, assessing, and addressing these consequences. The seminar, on Wednesday, October 7, 2009, 12:45 p.m. - 2 p.m., will mark the launch of Resources for the Future's (RFF) new Center for Disease Dynamics, Economics and Policy (CDDEP) in Washington, DC. More information is [here](#).

## Key Upcoming Dates

**October 13: PBRN Monthly Conference Call** -11:30-1:00 ET; 10:30 CT; 9:30 MT; 8:30 PT.

**October 15: PBRN Research Implementation Award Proposal Deadline** 5:00 ET

**November 9: PBRN Sessions at the APHA Annual Meeting.** 9:30-11am (H1N1 Research) and 2:30-4pm (PBRN research)

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

**November 12-30: 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: Second cohort of Public Health PBRNs:** The next group of networks start up their activities.

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

**Next Issue:** October 2, 2009