

Issue #54

PBRN Week in Review | October 1, 2010

PBRN Grantees: Please circulate relevant information to your network members. To request additional information or make suggestions for future items, please contact the National Coordinating Center at publichealthpbrn@uams.edu or 501-551-0106. Newsletter archives are available [here](#).

Notable PBRN Activities

- **2010 Quick Strike Research Projects.** The following studies are underway with funding from the *Public Health PBRN* Quick Strike Research Fund (QSRF) for \$25,000 each for 90 days.

Ohio Public Health PBRN | Variation in Local Enforcement of State Public Health Policy: Ohio's smoke-free workplace act went into effect in May 2007; however, enforcement fell to the public health agencies as the primary source without receiving supportive funding from the state. In addition, the punitive fines prescribed in the law (ORC 3794.07) were graduated and allowed substantial local public health discretion in both the magnitude and frequency of fines. This study will examine the causes and consequences of local variation in public health enforcement of the tobacco law, with particular attention to the effects of the recent economic downturn on public health decision-making regarding enforcement. The study will also set the stage for a larger study examining the consequences of local variation in enforcement with regard to policy impact on exposure to environmental tobacco smoke.

Connecticut Public Health PBRN | Economic Shocks and Public Health Decision-Making: The State of Connecticut has subsidized local public health services for many years under a mechanism called the annual per capita grant. Effective July 1, 2009, 49 of Connecticut's 80 local health departments had their state per capita subsidies eliminated. In part, these cuts were targeted to departments serving populations of 50,000 or less, was motivated by an increased interest in promoting regionalization. The CT PBRN will investigate the impacts and implications of the cuts on decision-making as it relates to delivery of public health programs and services. Specifically, the study will examine whether the funding cuts motivated departments to explore consolidation, change their mix of programs and services, and pursue other funding sources.

Colorado Public Health PBRN | Resource Allocation and Public Health Roles in Safe Routes to Schools: Colorado's PBRN will take advantage of a one-time infusion of federal funds to support local planning and policy development to facilitate the ability of schoolchildren to safely walk and bicycle to and from school. The study will examine local variation in how these funds were distributed across the state, the role of local public health authorities in influencing resource allocation and decision-making concerning local use of funds, and the consequences of these decisions in terms of development and implementation of local plans and policies.

Wisconsin Public Health PBRN | Local Information Systems for Studying Public Health Practice and Outcomes: Wisconsin's PBRN will analyze longitudinal data from an automated, electronic information system used to track community health nursing programs and activities since 1986, in order to evaluate prospects for developing similar information systems to track the outputs and outcomes of other public health programs. The study will determine whether the local public health information system can be used to examine associations between the intensity of programmatic activity and resulting behavioral and health outcomes. Findings will suggest ways of using automated, electronic information systems in public health to strengthen capacity for public health systems and services research.

Florida Public Health PBRN | Variation in Key Inputs and Outputs of a Vaccine Campaign. Florida's Public Health PBRN is conducting a comparative study of variation in approaches to the H1N1 campaign taken by 13 northeast Florida LHDs to begin distinguishing best practices in response to a potential public health emergency. The study seeks to measure and compare key inputs such as expenditures, LHD H1N1 budgets, types of staff and volunteers and their hours, and key outputs such as vaccine doses administered by LHDs overall and to priority populations. Based on survey data, in-depth qualitative data will be collected from a purposeful sample of LHDs to describe vaccine campaign models and best practices. In addition to LHD staff, other key stakeholders such as private providers, pharmacy and hospital staff, volunteers, and community partners will be interviewed.

➤ **2010 Public Health PBRN Research Implementation Awards (RIA).** Round II PBRNs are developing research proposals on the theme of measuring and improving quality in public health practice in response to the RWJF limited competition RFP for 2010 RIAs. This supplemental award of up to \$150,000 offers funded PBRNs the opportunity to pursue large-scale studies over 18 to 24 months, in addition to the smaller projects conducted with initial grants.

Proposals. Projects must have two components: a *measure development and testing* component that involves specifying, validating, and testing measures of quality in public health practice settings and a *comparative analysis* component that examines variation in the tested measures across organizations and practice settings over time.

Research Interests. Networks have expressed interest in studying quality measures related to:

- ◆ a natural experiment involving development of an integrated HIV and STD field services model where two separate approaches now exist;
- ◆ definition, development and implementation of QI measures for LHDs in rural contexts;
- ◆ LHD use of health information technology, health information exchange, and/or data from electronic health records;
- ◆ factors that have moved LHDs from plan development to implementation/action of state-mandated community health improvement plans;
- ◆ measures of emergency response activities and capacity; and
- ◆ development/validation of new and existing quality measures across settings of a core public health activity derived from evidence-based practice using the LA County model.

Technical Assistance. In preparing their proposals, applicant PBRNs may access up to three days of technical assistance in developing the research plans. Researchers with expertise in the topics above or the theme of measuring and improving quality in public health practice and with interest in providing TA may contact the National Coordinating Center by [email](#).

Deadline: Proposals are due in the RWJF electronic system by Friday, October 15, 6:00 pm ET.

Activities on the Horizon

- **Collaboration to Measure LHD Services.** Public Health PBRNs interested in working together to develop research on measuring LHD services will meet on **October 21 and 22** in Little Rock. Enthusiasm for a multi-network approach to the topic is evident, with 20 participants of 11 PBRNs planning to attend. Meeting objectives are to: 1) identify shared/similar variables related to LHD practice and programs being collected within states; 2) establish criteria for choosing similar practice-related variables to collect, compile, and examine against related outcomes; 3) discuss opportunities for collecting similar/same data and for sharing best data collection strategies and instruments; 4) identify issues for study leaders to consider as the project moves forward; 5) determine individual network interest in and the level of commitment to this multi-network study; and 6) establish a preliminary research team. To learn more about this meeting contact the NCC at publichealthpbrn@uams.edu.
- **Washington State Public Health Conference.** **Karen Hartfield, Hanne Thiede, Betty Bekemeier, and Anthony Chen** will present a 90-minute session entitled "Practice-Based Research Networks: The Washington State Experience" on October 11 at the Washington State Joint Conference on Health in Yakima.
- **Outcomes Conference.** Glen Mays will speak at a Dayton, Ohio conference entitled "Show Me the Outcomes: Put Evidence to Work & Create Healthier Communities" on Thursday, October 28. The conference is jointly sponsored by Wright State University's Center for Global Health Systems, Management & Policy; Public Health-Dayton & Montgomery County; Sinclair Community College, and the Hittner Community Health Event. Conference information and registration [linked here](#).
- **PBRN Publication.** A reminder to Round I Public Health PBRNs that a ten-page, double-spaced manuscript for the *Leadership in Public Health* journal article is due to the National Coordinating Center on **Friday, November 12**, the same week as the APHA annual meeting. The Coordinating Center will combine the submissions into one manuscript and edit for consistency before forwarding to the journal editor.
- **RWJF Reception at APHA.** Save the date of Monday, November 8, for the RWJF Public Health Reception at the Colorado Convention Center in Korbel Ballroom 4. The Public Health team invites grantees to drop by for refreshments and networking between 6 and 8 pm.
- **American Public Health Association (APHA).** The following abstracts from PBRN representatives have been accepted for presentation at APHA:
 - ◆ "Communication Capacity during the Outbreak of Novel Influenza H1N1: An Evaluation of Health Departments in a Public Health Practice-Based Research Network" **Robin Pendley (KY PH PBRN)**
 - ◆ "Resource Allocation and Funding Challenges for Regional Local Health Departments in Nebraska" **Li-Wu Chen and Dave Palm (NE PH PBRN)**
 - ◆ "Effectiveness and Challenges of Regional Community Health Planning Partnerships in Nebraska" **Li-Wu Chen and Dave Palm (NE PH PBRN)**

**Save
the
Date!**

- ◆ "Local Public Health Leadership and Community Efforts to Obtain ARRA Stimulus Funding" **Bill Livingood (FL PH PBRN)**
- ◆ "Formative Evaluation Results for a Local Public Health QI initiative to Improve Immunization Rates" **Bill Livingood (FL PH PBRN)**
- ◆ "A Participatory Approach to Planning for Regional Public Health Services in Massachusetts" **Justeen Hyde (MA PH PBRN)**
- ◆ "Changes in Public Health Programs over Time...and How They Relate to Disparities in Mortality" **Betty Bekemeier (WA PH PBRN)** and colleagues
- ◆ "An Innovative Service Learning Program for MPH Students: Applying Problem-Based Learning in Community Settings" **Karen Hartfield (WA PH PBRN)**
- ◆ "Closing the Quality Chasm in Public Health: Lessons from Practice-Based Research Networks" **(National Coordinating Center)**
- ◆ "Accelerating Evidence-based Management in Public Health: Results from the First Two Years of PBRN Research" **(National Coordinating Center)**

Reminder...

- **APHA Workshop on Practice-Based Research.** Public health practice-based research is the focus of a workshop slated for Sunday, November 7, from 8:00 until 11:30 am during the APHA 2010 Annual Meeting in Denver. The workshop is an opportunity for academic and practice representatives to work together in exploring “selected priority research areas” of public health systems and services research. Hosted by the Yale School of Public Health (a partner in the **Connecticut PH PBRN**), the workshop is free to attendees and breakfast is provided. The venue is the Hyatt Regency Denver, and [Kathi Traugh](#) at Yale can provide more information. To indicate tentative plans to attend and provide input into topic selection, [follow this link](#).
- **Research Methods Skill-Building.** Because of the interest and enthusiasm for the research courses piloted with the Public Health PBRNs earlier this year, the Coordinating Center and AcademyHealth are working together to make additional skill-building opportunities available to networks. Details are being finalized.

Research Dissemination Opportunities

- **Request for Papers: Community-University Partnerships.** *Gateways: International Journal of Community Research and Engagement* is planning a spring 2011 special edition on the topic of "Sustaining Community-University Partnerships." Papers co-authored by a community member and academic researcher will be given preference. Submissions are due by Thursday, **October 14** at 7:00 pm ET. Full details are included in the [call for papers](#).

Resources in Research and Practice

WEBINARS

- **Preparedness and the Kansas H1N1 Experience.** On **Thursday, October 7** at 11 a.m. ET, the webinar “Using Quality Improvement Tools to Advance Public Health Preparedness: The Kansas H1N1 Experience” will be hosted by the St. Louis University School of Public Health. Part of a monthly series on preparedness topics developed in collaboration with health departments and public health preparedness experts, this segment will illustrate the use of quality

improvement tools in H1N1 planning, response and evaluation in Kansas. Registration and series information is [linked here](#).

REPORTS AND PUBLICATIONS

- **Population Health Measures.** The National Priorities Partnership convened by the National Quality Forum recently held a meeting to consider the current state of population health status and measurement. The meeting “developed recommendations for the NPP Partners and other stakeholder groups that: identify key drivers of change and actionable interventions that if implemented would overcome the primary barriers to progressing toward our desired state; inform measure development, considering gaps in performance measurement, as well as issues related to composite measures and community indices; and address key considerations and implications for HIT.” The Population Health Convening Meeting Synthesis Report is now available [here](#).

NEW TOOLS

- **Measures of Well-Being.** America’s Health Insurance Plans, in partnership with Gallup and Healthways, announces “a comprehensive State and Congressional District Resource for Well-Being. The extensive data available within this tool allows users to learn about the health of their particular state or Congressional district using a variety of indicators, including behavioral factors, work quality, and physical health. The [tool](#) also offers state-by-state and district-by-district rankings and comparisons.”

RELATED RESEARCH AND PRACTICE ACTIVITIES

- **Research Design in Public Health.** As part of the [American Journal of Public Health](#) Voices from the Past series celebrating the publication's 100th anniversary, Steckler and colleagues excerpted the 1961 work of Rosenstock and Hochbaum that suggested principles "for planning and designing of administrative research in public health." To make the article more meaningful to public health workers of the day, the original authors illustrated the principles with Hochbaum's 1950s study of factors associated with participation in tuberculosis screening. The principles discussed by Rosenstock and Hochbaum included: 1) problem formulation, 2) literature review, 3) formulating hypotheses and making assumptions explicit, 4) data specifications, 5) methods selection, 6) analysis planning, 7) pretest study design, 8) data collection, 9) data analysis, and 10) interpretation and reporting. They noted that these principles should be used when the purpose of a data-gathering activity was "to discover or establish new facts in a way that is generalizable to other situations and free of certain bias." Their effort to apply scientific research principles to practice-based questions and to disseminate their findings in practice-interest terms are fundamental to the work of today's Public Health PBRNs. [Hochbaum earned his Ph.D. at the University of Minnesota and was on faculty at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, both partners in their states' PBRNs.]
- **The Health of Communities.** The September issue of [Preventing Chronic Disease](#) explores population health incentives, using the MATCH rankings, and other topics related to improving and measuring improvement in community health.
- **Effects of Alcohol Tax and Price Policies on Morbidity and Mortality.** In a recent [American Journal of Public Health](#) article, Wagenaar and colleagues shared results of their work to determine the degree to which changes in alcohol prices and taxes of alcohol may influence public health outcomes. Using measures developed through their comprehensive reviews of databases and literature, the researchers found that among the harmful outcomes examined of alcohol-related morbidity and mortality, violence, traffic crash fatalities and drunk driving, rates of STDs and

risky sexual behavior, other drug use, crime, and suicide, all except suicide showed a statistically significant inverse relationship to prices and taxes. Further, data analyses indicated that doubling the taxes on alcohol would be associated with an average reduction of 35% in related mortality, an 11% reduction in traffic deaths, and so on. The investigators emphasized the importance of public policy affecting the price of alcohol because of the demonstrated impact on public health, the existing mechanisms for taxing the products with little cost, and the potential for generating revenue that could be applied to other public health needs.

CONFERENCES

- **Comparative Effectiveness Research Methods Conference.** The National Institutes of Health (NIH) and Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) are co-sponsoring “Methodological Challenges in Comparative Effectiveness Research,” a conference in which participants will use case studies to examine and address the limitations of existing intervention research. According to the announcement, the meeting is designed to "explore current methodologic, data analytic, infrastructure and database research challenges in order to help develop a vision for shaping the methodological tools of tomorrow." Conference dates are December 2 and 3rd on the NIH main campus in Bethesda, Maryland; registration deadline is November 17. [Link](#) to more information, including registration.
- **Modeling for Public Health Action.** CDC's Preparedness Modeling Unit is hosting the 2010 Conference on Modeling for Public Health Action on December 9 and 10 in Atlanta. According to the announcement, the conference is designed to "promote the exchange of information and ideas about modeling uses to shape public health action. Intended audiences include "public health practitioners and policy makers in state and local health departments, state and local health policy makers; scientists and modelers working at CDC and its federal partners in public health; academic researchers, non-government organizations, and international practitioners, modelers and policy makers." Conference details are [linked here](#), and conference organizers [Michael Washington](#) and [Shelby Alexander](#) at CDC are the contact persons for questions.

New Literature and Exemplary Studies of Interest

- **Public Health System Role in Disasters.** From ASPE and fellow PHSSR scholar Nicole Lurie and others, a NEJM [commentary](#) on the public health system’s roles in preparing for and responding to the mental health sequelae of the Gulf oil spill and other disasters.
- **Hierarchy Segmented or Synergistic?** In a new AJPH [letter](#), leading public health scholar Larry Green and colleagues challenge an implication of CDC Director Tom Frieden’s “potential health impact” pyramid, highlighting the importance of “blended hierarchies” of public health strategies deployed and analyzed using a systems perspective.
- **CER Agenda.** In a recent JAMA [editorial](#), population health scholar David Kindig and famed health economist John Mullahy encourage the nation’s comparative effectiveness research enterprise to study the effects not only of clinical interventions but also of public health policies and broad-based population health strategies.

Funding Opportunities and Announcements

The Coordinating Center maintains a [list of funding opportunities](#) of interest to Public Health PBRNs. Grant opportunities with recurring deadlines are tracked and updated.

NEW TO THIS COLUMN:

- National Institutes of Health
[Systems-Oriented Pediatric Obesity Research and Training \(SPORT\) Center of Excellence \(U54\) Grant](#)

This jointly funded program is accepting grant applications "to establish a center of excellence of childhood obesity research and training based on a transdisciplinary systems science framework and systems-based methodologies, including the use of systems modeling to capture the complexity of the etiology of childhood obesity and the potential impact of environmental and/or policy interventions." The center of excellence will conduct epidemiological research linking multiple factors related to childhood obesity, provide research funding for evaluations and interventions, and develop infrastructure for related postgraduate research. In FY2011, one award of \$4.25M for up to five years is anticipated.

Application Deadline: December 31, 2010.

- Public Health Law Research Rapid Response Studies.
RWJF's *Public Health Law Research* (PHLR) program is accepting proposals for "time-sensitive and opportunistic studies on emerging or anticipated changes in public health laws." The nonpartisan studies should inform policy discussions or contribute to the related evidence base.

Two categories of research are sought:

- ◆ Rapid response evaluation studies where natural experiments are created by changes in law, regulation or policy at any level of government may be funded up to \$100,000 each for 12 months;
- ◆ Public health law mapping projects that produce "state-of-the-art legal datasets of high importance to policy-makers and researchers may be funded up to \$50,000 for 8 months

Proposals will be accepted online on a rolling basis during the next 12 months. Details about the solicitation and the application process are [linked here](#).

PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED HERE:

- **Scholars in Health Policy Research.** RWJF is accepting applications to its *Scholars in Health Policy Research* program. Applicants should have earned a doctoral degree in economics, political science or sociology after January 1, 2006 or have completed degree requirements by July 15, 2011. Preference is given to applicants who have not worked extensively in health or health policy research. Up to nine individuals are selected each year for two-year fellowships at one of three universities to develop creative thinkers in health policy who will make important research contributions to the field.

Application deadline: October 13, 2010. [More information](#)

- HRSA/MCHB
Maternal and Child Health Research Program (R40)
From the RFA: "Research proposals should address critical MCH questions such as public health systems and infrastructure, health disparities, quality of care, and promoting the health of MCH populations, which also support the goals of the Health Resources and Services Administration. [Link](#)."

Deadline: Oct 15, 2010

➤ American Cancer Society

The American Cancer Society invites applications that investigate the impact of healthcare costs, healthcare system and capacity, insurance status, social factors and delivery of health care services on outcomes in cancer prevention, early detection and treatment. [Link](#).

Deadline: Oct 15, 2010

➤ National Institutes of Health

Economics of Prevention (R21)(RFA-RM-10-015)

The success of efforts to reform the American health care system depends on both improving health outcomes and reducing health care costs. Prevention is a key element of both those objectives, but not all prevention measures reduce costs or even improve health. Wise use of resources demands that prevention measures are targeted appropriately and implemented effectively to reduce the burden of ill health throughout the life course. The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 (PPACA) included incentives for expanded use of prevention services that confer net health benefits. Wise use of limited resources also demands consideration of the costs associated with generating those benefits. Economic research is needed to advance our understanding of critical issues pertaining to the allocation of resources to prevention, as distinct from treatment or other services. [Link](#).

Application Receipt Date(s): October 26, 2010

Letters of Intent Receipt Date(s): September 28, 2010

Application Due Date(s): October 26, 2010

➤ National Institutes of Health

Science of Structure, Organization and Practice Design in the Efficient Delivery of Effective Healthcare (R21)(RFA-RM-10-016)

This FOA solicits R21 applications for exploratory and developmental research projects that will lead to increased efficiency in the production of health and delivery of health care. Specifically, research sought under this announcement should inform 1) the identification of specific, modifiable causes of high and increasing health care costs related to the structure, organization, and production of health care; and 2) the development and refinement of interventions, practices, or policies that can address these causes while maintaining or enhancing outcomes. This initiative is part of the Health Economics Common Fund Program. [Link](#).

Letters of Intent Receipt Date(s): September 26, 2010

Application Due Date(s): October 26, 2010

National Institutes of Health

Effects of the Social Environment on Health: Measurement, Methods and Mechanisms (R01)
RFA-DA-11-003

This FOA, issued as part of the NIH Basic Behavioral and Social Science Opportunity Network (OppNet), solicits proposals to investigate structural, behavioral, sociocultural, environmental, cognitive, emotional, and/or biological mechanisms through which the social environment affects health outcomes. Proposed research should: (1) deepen our understanding of which aspects of social environments affect health outcomes for women and men at different stages of the lifecourse and in different social, economic, geographic, racial and ethnic sub-populations; (2) lead to clearer understanding of mechanisms through which social environments have such effects; or (3) improve measurement methods and/or contribute to advances in analytic methods used in the study of social environments and health. [Link](#).

Opening Date: December 6, 2010

Letters of Intent Receipt Date: December 6, 2010

Application Due Date: January 6, 2011

- **Research in Innovation.** The National Science Foundation (NSF), the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation and the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation are emphasizing research to expand understanding of the influence of innovation. The three organizations have funding opportunities “to inform the future development of a data infrastructure for the study of innovation within and across organizations.” An NSF [Dear Colleague Letter](#) details the offerings of these organizations and includes links to contact persons.
- **RWJF Rapid-Response Call for Proposals.** [Active Living Research](#) is an RWJF national program supporting research to inform policy and environmental strategies for increasing physical activity and preventing obesity in children and adolescents, particularly among those at highest risk. Similar to the *Public Health PBRN* Quick Strike Research Fund (QSRF) format, this CFP seeks proposals for "opportunistic, time-sensitive studies on emerging or anticipated changes in physical activity-related policies or environments. Rapid-response grants are expected to accelerate progress toward policy and environmental strategies to prevent and reduce childhood obesity. For maximum impact, studies should be completed in as short a time frame as realistically possible, and results disseminated using methods designed to reach local, state or national decision-makers in time to help inform key policy decisions." **Deadline:** Awards made on **rolling basis**. Letter of Intent required and accepted until July 1, 2011.
- **RWJF PHSSR Call for Proposals.** The RWJF CFP for investigator-initiated research in PHSSR is in the drafting phase. Look for the CFP around November 30 with brief proposals due in early January. Preference is given to researchers new to the field.

Career Opportunity

- **PHSSR Faculty Search.** The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences is seeking candidates for a tenure-track, open-rank faculty position in the Health Policy and Management Department to advance its research program in public health systems and services research. Candidates should have a successful record of research relevant to the organization, financing, and delivery of public health services or the ability to develop such a record. For more information contact gpmays@uams.edu.

Key Dates

Oct 12	Round I PBRN Monthly Conference Call 11:30-12:30 ET
Oct 15:	RIA Proposals due in RWJF online system by 6:00 pm ET
Oct 21	Round II PBRN Monthly Conference Call 1:00-2:30 ET
Oct 21-22	STiNC Working Group meeting in Little Rock
Nov 6-10:	2011 APHA Annual Meeting in Denver
Nov 9	CANCELLED for APHA: Round I PBRN Monthly Conference Call
Nov 17	Quarterly webinar (date subject to change depending upon speaker)
Nov 18	Round II PBRN Monthly Conference Call 1:00-2:30 ET
April 10-12	2011 Annual Grantee and NAC Meetings in Lexington
April 12-14	2011 PHSSR Keeneland Conference in Lexington (conference changes to a Noon kick-off in 2011)

Next Issue

October 8, 2010