

## **PBRN Week in Review | March 13, 2009**

*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.*

### **Notable Activities this Week**

Public Health PBRN leaders are busy! The **March Conference Call** marked a heightened level of network activity!

- **Justeen Hyde** reported that **MA PBRN** enjoyed a productive first steering committee meeting in February, reviewing their proposal to ensure course direction and deciding to develop a charter. An unexpected twist in the regionalization process has been that two towns have decided to discontinue local funding of public health services because of budget cuts. The towns reportedly believed their cuts were appropriate, thinking regionalization would fill the gap. The PBRN decided to use the misunderstanding as a natural research opportunity to survey town managers about their needs for assistance and to identify how to help local practices advocate to the town managers.
- **Lee Thielen** reported good news for public health in **Colorado**. State government is taking a 10% budget cut in general funds next year, yet the local health department was spared because of the legislation to reorganize public health. **Lisa Van Raemdonck** updated on PBRN organizational efforts, including a founding steering committee which will build an ongoing steering committee. An email mini-survey sent to the practitioner groups to gauge interest in the research network yielded 56 responses. The 3 response options were: (1) Yes, I want to be involved; (2) Interested, but need more information; (3) Not interested in joining but want to stay informed. The researcher group is next to be surveyed.
- **John Graham** reported that **North Carolina** has continued to narrow the focus of its practice-based research agenda, developing a rough list of research questions. [**Rosemary Summers** previously described the broad process used to gather input from practitioner focus groups to get to this point.] With faculty recruitment assistance from the Liaison Committee of NC Public Health Institute, faculty members with related research interests and practitioners will meet for a workshop to refine the research questions and identify specific TA needs. The Liaison Committee meets on April 16.
- **Karen Hartfield** updated **Washington PBRN**'s progress. The core partners have met 3 times, and the first meeting of all the network partners will be a full day on April 30. An agenda is being planned around developing research questions. State budget cuts and employee furloughs are also an issue in Washington. PBRN leaders are examining how to

address a frequent response to presentations, which is that programs are receptive to network participation but feeling overwhelmed with the impact of funding shortages.

- **Kentucky** representatives were delayed in joining the call, but **Sarah Wilding** “Blackberried” a report while chairing the KY Public Health Association annual conference. During the conference, the PBRN met with their local health departments and developed a research agenda. **Angela Dearing** and several network members presented at the conference on the KY PBRN, giving their community experience. An all day meeting is scheduled for April 3 to go through the PHAB draft national public health accreditation standards as part of the vetting process.
- Glen Mays gave an overview of the Technical Assistance survey results, saying the purpose was to capture how grantees perceive the benefit of receiving TA and the ability to provide TA support to other networks. The Coordinating Center will take a careful look at the survey and continue developing opportunities for training, assistance, and consultation from the database of experts based on the needs expressed. A simple request form is being developed and will be posted on the website so that PBRN grantees can easily express TA needs, request customized consultation from specific experts, or request a search for an expert consultant in a particular area of interest. Individual state reports on the TA survey results are being compiled and will be distributed in the near future.
- A great idea surfaced on the call was to develop a mechanism to share TA needs and consultation strategies among network members in case opportunities arise to “share” a consultant between multiple networks, and to share common instruments, metrics, or approaches that are developed as a result of expert consultation. Another idea was to think about how to share evaluations of expert consultants following episodes of consultation (good or not so good). We’re working on mechanisms, web and otherwise, to make this sharing easy.

## **Ongoing PBRN Activities**

- **PBRN Grantee Meeting @Keeneland on Tuesday, April 7.**
  - *Any last minute requests or ideas for meeting agenda items are welcome.* Look for a full meeting agenda next week.
  - **Travel** Please contact Sharla with any questions about travel—[smithsharlaa@uams.edu](mailto:smithsharlaa@uams.edu) or 501-526-6629.
  - **PBRN Panel at Keeneland.** Speakers for the PBRN panel on Wednesday morning April 8 will have a brief phone conference to coordinate on format, content, etc. This call is being scheduled.

## Activities on the Horizon

- This week Trust for America's Health (TFAH) and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) released a report entitled, *Shortchanging America's Health: A State-By-State Look at How Federal Public Health Dollars are Spent*. The report also examines how the economic downturn could lead to serious cuts to disease prevention and emergency preparedness programs at the state level. Are you thinking like a practice-based researcher when you read these news items? What does the report say about your state? What is missing? What are the research opportunities created, especially if your area is experiencing a cut in spending?
- AcademyHealth—the nation's scientific home for health services research—has empanelled a *PHSR Methods Council* that will work to set priorities, standards, and research agendas for advancing methodological rigor in the conduct of public health systems and services research. As a first step, the council will be sending a brief web survey to the 1000+ members of the *AcademyHealth Special Interest Group on Public Health Systems Research* to examine methodological issues, current practices, and challenges faced in this field. If you are a member, look for the brief survey. If not, consider joining the team: <http://www.academyhealth.org/interestgroups>. Results will be presented at the *AcademyHealth Annual Research Meeting* (see below). The PBRN Coordinating Center is represented on this methods council, so let us know if you have issues to raise or requests to make of this new body.

Hurry! The National Conference on Health Communication, Marketing, and Media has extended the deadline to March 23 for submission of 2009 conference abstracts addresses the skills and competencies needed by public health practitioners. According to their website, the abstract submission process has been “enhanced” this year to accommodate three types of abstracts: (1) *research and evaluation*; (2) theoretical; and (3) *practice/program based*. *Panels that engage participants across different sectors are encouraged*. See details at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthmarketing/NCHCMM2009/>.

- AcademyHealth recently released its preliminary conference agenda, and multiple sessions each day will appeal to PBRN practitioners and researchers. Log on to <http://www.academyhealth.org/arm/agenda/index.htm> to see what is offered in the overarching themes of public health, organizational performance and management, health care workforce, and several quality topics. Methods workshops for health services research are available at all skill levels. The conference is June 28-30 in Chicago.
- Don't forget about the *Special Interest Group Meeting on Public Health Systems Research* scheduled at the end of the AcademyHealth conference June 30 and July 1 in Chicago. There is currently a call for student scholarships to attend this meeting, and a call for nominations for the Article of the Year in public health systems research. All the information is at: <http://www.academyhealth.org/interestgroups/phsr/2009.htm>
- Details continue to emerge about America's Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2009 (ARRA), or “the stimulus money.” Members of our National Advisory Group suggest that PBRNs look carefully for opportunities from the Prevention and Wellness Fund and

the Health IT programs in DHHS, as well as the Comparative Effectiveness Research (CER) allocation to AHRQ. The Health IT program may be a particularly good opportunity for PBRN members to assist affiliated public health agencies with funding applications to modernize computing infrastructure and for evidence-based technologies such as electronic disease surveillance systems. And of course, PBRNs may be excellent vehicles for studying the utilization and impact of these infrastructure infusions. **To register for email updates on AHRQ's CER funding, go to <http://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/>.**

## Key Upcoming Dates

**March 13** - Deadline for registration for the *Keeneland Conference on Public Health Systems and Services Research*. [www.publichealthsystems.org/media/file/2009KCRegistrationFormPDF.pdf](http://www.publichealthsystems.org/media/file/2009KCRegistrationFormPDF.pdf)

**April 7** - *PBRN Grantee Meeting* held in conjunction with the Keeneland Conference, Lexington KY.

**April 8-9:** *Keeneland Conference on Public Health Systems and Services Research*. Lexington, KY. [www.publichealthsystems.org/media/file/2009KCRegistrationFormPDF.pdf](http://www.publichealthsystems.org/media/file/2009KCRegistrationFormPDF.pdf)

## Funding Opportunities for Public Health Systems Research

- **UPDATE!** RWJF announced its new program focus area on public health law that will open new opportunities for research on the design, implementation, and impact of public health law and policy. Public Health Law Research will be managed by the **Beasley School of Law** at Temple University and will be led by Temple law professor Scott Burris, an internationally recognized expert on the influence of laws on public health. According to Burris, the research funded through the program will seek to answer fundamental questions such as how laws influence health and health behavior; which laws have the greatest impact, and whether current laws can be made more effective through better implementation or revision. The funding also will support efforts to improve scientific methods for studying the impact of laws on health. **The first Call for Proposals will be issued in early spring.**
- **UPDATE!** All the NIH Challenge Grants announced so far under the federal stimulus package can be found at <http://grants.nih.gov/recovery/>. Click on the link and subscribe to email updates if you so desire. Thus far, the email traffic is not unbearable. **We are finding that the individual NIH research institute web pages have more and clearer descriptions about their research priorities than does this web page.** You may also want to keep an eye on the CDC, HRSA, and AHRQ web pages – and of course [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov)
- CDC has released a new FOA for R18 translational research projects that appears particularly well-suited for public health PBRNs, entitled, *Translating Research to Protect Health through Health Promotion, Prevention, and Preparedness*. Critical to CDC's mission is new scientific knowledge that can accelerate the translation of research findings into public health practice. Moving the best science into practice is essential to protect and improve health. To

that end, the purpose of this FOA is to accelerate the translation of proven effective interventions into public health practice through implementation, dissemination, and diffusion research.

LOI Date: March 23, 2009

Submission Date: April 21, 2009

More information is available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/od/pgo/funding/CD09-001.htm>

- Grantees may qualify for Wal-Mart Foundation's State Giving Program Grant in the areas of Health and Wellness and Workforce Development. Their announcement reads: "Through the State Giving Program, the Wal-Mart Foundation supports organizations that create opportunities so people can live better. The Foundation has four areas of focus: Education, Health and Wellness, Environmental Sustainability and Workforce Development/Economic Opportunity. Deadline: April 17, 2009  
More specific grant information is available at:  
<http://walmartstores.com/CommunityGiving/8169.aspx?p=8168>
- A new National Collaborative on Childhood Obesity Research (NCCOR) was recently announced. The partnership between CDC, NIH and RWJF is intended to synergize the efforts of the three organizations and have an impact on obesity more quickly by addressing the efficiency and effectiveness of obesity research. The website is [www.nccor.org](http://www.nccor.org).
- The William T. Grant Foundation has issued a RFP for research "on the factors that affect policy makers' and practitioners' acquisition, interpretation, and use of research evidence. Grant awards ranging from \$100,000 to \$600,000 for direct and indirect costs for two to three years of work are anticipated. Interdisciplinary projects are welcome. Visit [www.wtgrantfoundation.org/](http://www.wtgrantfoundation.org/) for complete program guidelines. Letters of inquiry are due by May 12, 2009.
- A new program announcement from the National Institutes of Health looks particularly well suited for practice-based research in public health. *Using Systems Science Methodologies to Protect and Improve Population Health (R21)*. This FOA solicits Exploratory/Developmental (R21) applications from institutions/organizations that propose to apply one or more specific system science methodologies to "policy resistant" public health problems and contribute knowledge that will enhance effective decision making around the development of and prioritization of policies, interventions, and programs to improve population health in the U.S. and abroad, especially where resources are limited and only a limited number of programs/policies/interventions can be implemented. Standard NIH submission deadlines apply. <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-08-224.html>

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