

For Immediate Release

Contact: Caitlin Jenney, 303.315.6376, caitlin.jenney@ucdenver.edu

Colorado public health researchers receive grant to understand impact of law on public health practice

AURORA, Colo. (Jan. 5, 2010) – As Colorado’s public health professionals address the health needs of the state, improving the time it takes to translate research into practice improves the access of vital services to Colorado communities. A new grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) is helping a team of researchers do just that. The public health researchers connected with the Colorado School of Public Health is one of 15 groups in the U.S. to receive a \$150,000 RWJF Public Health Law Research grant to analyze the impact and use of law in regional and multi-county approaches to local public health service delivery.

RWJF awarded the grant to the Colorado Public Health Practice-Based Research Network (COPHPBRN), a partnership among Colorado School of Public Health researchers at the Rocky Mountain Prevention Research Center, the Colorado Association of Local Public Health Officials (CALPHO), the Public Health Alliance of Colorado and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

This highly competitive grant is the first research project of the network since its funding began in 2009. The research, which will occur over the next 18 months, will examine regional approaches to providing services among county-based public health agencies in an effort to understand the barriers and driving forces of the development and maintenance of these models. Timing of the grant is significant as the public health agencies begin implementation of the Colorado Public Health Act of 2008, and as counties seek to streamline and cooperate to provide services during difficult economic times.

“You shorten the time it takes to translate research into services provided when you ask and research pertinent questions that the community needs answered,” said co-principal investigator (PI), Julie Marshall, PhD, and professor of epidemiology at the Colorado School of Public Health. Marshall and co-PI Lee Thielen, executive director of the Public Health Alliance of Colorado and CALPHO, will lead the research team.

Regional approaches to public health service delivery exist in Colorado (such as one county providing Women, Infants and Children health and nutrition programs or environmental services in a nearby county), but there has been no inventory of these arrangements and no examination of the components of the models, their legal structures and the successes and challenges encountered by various approaches. As more public health agencies explore the potential

benefits and consequences of regional approaches, a formal examination of existing models will inform public health professionals, community partners, and local and state decision-makers.

In addition, the research will examine Colorado's Public Health Act of 2008 and laws in other states for the impact on regional approaches to public health services. The result will be enhanced knowledge of the statute's impact on delivering public health services at the county level. The basis of this type of practice-based research is to involve those who will use the findings of research in the research process itself.

About the Colorado School of Public Health

The new Colorado School of Public Health is the first and only school of public health in the Rocky Mountain Region, attracting top tier faculty and students from across the country, and providing a vital contribution towards ensuring our region's health and well-being.

Collaboratively formed by the University of Colorado Denver, Colorado State University, and the University of Northern Colorado, the Colorado School of Public Health provides training, innovative research and community service to actively address public health issues, including chronic disease, access to health care, environmental threats, emerging infectious diseases, and costly injuries.

About the Colorado Public Health Practice-Based Research Network

The Colorado Public Health Practice-Based Research Network (COPHPBRN) is a partnership among the Colorado School of Public Health Rocky Mountain Prevention Research Center, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Colorado Association of Local Public Health Officials and the Public Health Alliance of Colorado. The COPHPBRN is part of a national network of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) supported programs studying the reach, effectiveness, efficiency and equity of public health practice.

###