

## **Advancing Accreditation and Quality Improvement in Public Health Agencies**

May 20, 2008 - Princeton, NJ. Sixteen states have been selected to lead a national initiative to advance accreditation efforts and quality improvement strategies in public health departments, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) announced today. The program, managed by the National Network of Public Health Institutes (NNPHI) and the Public Health Leadership Society (PHLS), selected Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Washington and Wisconsin from a pool of 25 states to improve the performance of their local and state public health departments and the health of their communities. These 16 states will implement public health quality improvement activities to achieve specific and measurable goals, such as increasing immunization rates, increasing the number of adults that engage in physical activity or implementing standard procedures to efficiently communicate with community members during disasters and health emergencies.

“These states have demonstrated a commitment to improving the quality of public health services and programs. Their work will lead the way as local and state public health agencies across the nation prepare for accreditation and strive to create healthier communities,” said James S. Marks, M.D., M.P.H., senior vice president and director of the health group at RWJF.

“Quality improvement activities have brought about significant changes in the fields of manufacturing, law enforcement and health care – and we are now taking those important lessons and applying them broadly to public health,” said NNPHI Chief Executive Officer Joseph Kimbrell. Acknowledging the momentum surrounding a national voluntary accreditation program for public health departments, Kimbrell stated, “This project is timed to coincide with the development of the national accreditation standards and will help health departments identify and implement the tools and methods they need to ensure the safety and health of the communities they serve.”

The program, called Lead States in Public Health Quality Improvement: A Multistate Learning Collaborative, is an effort to bring state and local health departments together with other stakeholders including local public health institutes, health care providers and universities to improve public health services and the health of their community by implementing quality improvement practices. Each of the participating states has been awarded a three-year grant of up to \$150,000 per year to implement projects that will help address specific health outcomes like decreasing the incidence of vaccine-preventable diseases or reducing the burden of illness due to tobacco or alcohol usage. Additionally, states will address how they deliver public health services. For example, states may focus on improving how they provide culturally appropriate services to their community, how they collect and use health data or how they integrate customer service into public health programs.

Lead States in Public Health Quality Improvement builds off the momentum of two Multi-State Learning Collaborative (MLC) initiatives also funded by RWJF. States in the first phase of the MLC project explored the use of accreditation as a quality improvement process and helped shape the recommendations that established the Public Health Accreditation Board, the nonprofit group that will administer the voluntary accreditation program for state and local public health departments beginning in 2011. The second phase of the MLC brought together 10 states to explore best practices for teaching and implementing quality improvement practices at the state and local level.

The National Network of Public Health Institutes promotes the development and sustainability of unique non-profit organizations that are making innovative contributions to public health. Public health institutes are committed to collaborating with government, the business community, academia, and other non-profit organizations to improve public health structures, systems and outcomes. Twenty-eight member institutes in twenty-six states currently share NNPHI’s vision to foster innovations in health.

The Public Health Leadership Society is a membership organization comprised of the alumni from the following leadership programs for senior public health professionals: National Public Health Leadership Institute, State and Regional Public Health Leadership Institutes, and the Robert Wood Johnson State Health Leadership Initiative. PHLS provides an opportunity for alumni to continue their learning experiences and leadership development, maintain and develop professional and personal relations, and contribute to innovative thinking about public health issues. Members of PHLS collaborate with other national public health organizations to shape the future of public health.

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 improving the health and health care of all Americans, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change. For more than 35 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.