



Quick Reads

Thomas Newton, MPP, REHS
Director, Iowa Department of Public Health

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IDSS prepared for October roll out

The IDPH [Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology](#) will begin using the much anticipated [Iowa Disease Surveillance System \(IDSS\)](#) on October 27. Nearly four years in the making, the IDSS will enable local public health, hospitals, laboratories, and IDPH to collaborate electronically as they perform disease reporting and surveillance activities throughout Iowa. This milestone marks the starting point for the scheduled release of IDSS in stages across the state. IDSS will be released first in late November to facilities that participated in the 2007 IDSS pilot. The application will become available to the last of Iowa's 109 participating hospitals and 99 local public health agencies in early February 2009. This approach allows state staff to provide any necessary assistance to the nearly 500 enrolled users and ensure they are able to make a smooth transition from paper-based reporting to electronic surveillance of notifiable diseases.

Redesign funding survey a big success

Thank you to everyone who completed the funding survey sent out by the Redesigning Public Health in Iowa [Funding Implementation Committee](#). With the vast majority of counties participating, your response was tremendous! Thanks to you, we'll be able to begin to explain how public health in Iowa is currently funded. As we move forward with the [Iowa Governmental Public Health System Modernization Act](#), the information gained from this survey will help determine the cost to implement the Iowa Public Health Standards.

The results of the survey will be posted on the Redesign Web site, www.idph.state.ia.us/rphi. They will also be announced through a new mailing

list. To subscribe, send a blank e-mail to Join-REDESIGN@lists.ia.gov. Redesign Coordinator Joy Harris will be responsible for messages sent to the new mailing list, so stay tuned!

Rural health advocates overcome challenges, but there is still work to do

On October 8, President Bush signed the [Health Care Safety Net Act](#). Thanks to public comments submitted by rural health clinics, IDPH, and other partners, an important technicality was amended before the bill was signed. Without this sort of advocacy, there was great potential for health disparities in our state due to differences in designating county-level Health Professional Shortage Areas and rural health clinics. To learn more about the new law, visit www.govtrack.us and enter "Health Care Safety Net Act" into the search engine at the top of the page.

While this victory allows us breathe a bit more easily, the [proposed guideline](#) that accompanies this law remains an area of concern. In particular, it has the potential to impact Medicare reimbursement levels, clinic operations, and quality assurance processes and restrictions. To review the draft guideline, visit www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/retrieve.html and enter "36696" into the search field. To learn more, including what you can do, contact Gloria Vermie at 515-281-7224 or gvermie@idph.state.ia.us.

Twenty-five percent of Des Moines-based IDPH staff "Walk the Talk"

This Monday was not like every other Monday. About 25 percent of our Des Moines-based IDPH staff, myself included, staggered into the office especially tired. If that contributed to a lack of productivity, then I suppose I am to blame. That's because more than 100 employees responded to my challenge to train for and participate in Sunday's [IMT Des Moines Marathon](#). But think of the health benefits to all of those participants! Encouraging and supporting employee wellness means lower health care costs, fewer sick days, and higher productivity.

To these employees, I say well done! About half of you walked or ran the half-marathon, approximately 25 of you ran or walked the full marathon, while the rest ran or walked the 5-kilometer course. What's more, a large number of you were first time marathon participants and encouraged family members to participate as well. (I should mention that I bragged about you at a recent Association of State and Territorial Health Officials meeting in Sacramento. Everyone's jaw just hit the floor when they heard about the commitment you had made to train for this event.)

And to those employers who are committed to worksite wellness, keep up the good work! Please be sure to take advantage of the [Live Healthy Iowa](#) (formerly

Lighten Up Iowa) challenge starting Jan. 14! Visit www.livehealthyiowa.org for more information.

Who's got your back?

Look around your office and find 10 people. How many of them "got your back?" That is, how many are protecting you and others by getting their seasonal influenza vaccine? Unfortunately, we know that only about 4 in 10 health care workers actually get vaccinated against influenza. This is a staggering statistic! Most readers of this publication are on the front lines every day. We need you to stay healthy. The people around you—those you serve, your family members and your co-workers—are counting on you to prevent the spread of influenza this year and every year.

As mentioned above, I recently asked IDPH employees to "walk the talk" by participating in the Des Moines Marathon to be held this weekend. If 25 percent of the Des Moines-based IDPH staff can muster up the dedication to train for and participate in a marathon event, think of what we could accomplish by encouraging one another to simply get a flu shot!

I therefore issue to you this challenge: This week, get vaccinated. Then, talk to 9 people in your office and ask them if they've gotten vaccinated yet. If they seem reluctant, remind them. "I got your back! You got mine?"

Free influenza teleconferences start Nov. 4

Health professionals, lab workers, school staff, and others are encouraged to participate in an upcoming [influenza teleconference](#). Held by IDPH and the University Hygienic Laboratory, the free teleconferences will cover testing, surveillance, educational resources, infection control, and the impact of other respiratory pathogens. To register, visit www.uhl.uiowa.edu/educationoutreach and look in the "Save the Date" box.

Which teleconference would be the most helpful for you?

For Health Professionals

Tuesday, Nov. 4th, 12-1 p.m.

Target audience: Clinicians, infection control professionals, clinic staff and directors, public health professionals

For Laboratories

Tuesday, Nov. 11th, 12-1 p.m.

Target audience: Laboratory staff, lab directors, and infection control professionals

For Schools, Child Care and Social Settings

Tuesday, Nov. 18th, 3-4 p.m.

Target audience: School nurses, school administrators, child care providers, persons supervising or coordinating social gatherings

Mark your calendar: 'Rebalancing Health Care' conference, Dec. 4

The future of health care is consistently ranked as one of the most important public concerns. Iowans share this concern because, although Iowa is regularly ranked as one of the healthiest and best served states in the country, health care affordability, access and quality remain variable. In recognition of this concern, Iowa adopted comprehensive [health care reform legislation](#) during the 2008 session of the General Assembly. Already, [advisory bodies](#) have been established to further investigate and recommend future policy addressing coverage, service integration, information, quality and workforce.

This new environment makes this year's [Rebalancing Health Care in the Heartland](#) policy conference especially important. The third annual gathering, sponsored by the [University of Iowa's colleges of health science](#), is being planned in conjunction with state policymakers and leaders and will feature presentations by many of those leading our state's health reform efforts. In addition, [Dr. Ed Schor](#), vice president of the [Commonwealth Fund](#) and former medical director for Maternal and Child Health Services at the Iowa Department of Public Health, will give an overview of the post-election environment for health system change. For more information, visit www.rebalancinghealthcare.org.

We want your best practices

IDPH is committed to telling the citizens of Iowa about the good things public health is doing to make a difference. To do this, we want to highlight your best practices/success stories. Please send your ideas to Don McCormick at dmccormi@idph.state.ia.us.

*To everyone in public health and all our partners—keep up the great work!
Tom*