



# *Quick Reads*

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## **Budget restrictions a necessary sacrifice**

[Governor Culver](#) recently placed restrictions on the following General Fund appropriations expenditures: filling current and future personnel vacancies; reductions in overtime; use of temporary employees; travel; department-sponsored conferences; equipment purchases and service contracts; and office supplies. The governor also implemented across-the-board reductions of 1.5 percent in General Fund expenditures (with the exception of correction officers and state troopers) to assure there will be no State budget deficit at the end of fiscal year 2009. We suspect that these two actions will reduce the department's budget for fiscal year 2009 by approximately \$1 million. Additional reductions may have to occur yet this year to balance the State's budget.

These restrictions may only be the first in a long process. We have weathered tough times before and I have no doubt that we will pull through this time as well. Your commitment to those you serve tells me as much. I will keep you informed as additional information becomes available.

## **State Assessment site visitors coming January 12**

Since June of this year, a Core Team of 15 IDPH employees has been conducting a [State Assessment](#) of the department's ability to meet the state criteria of the Iowa Public Health Standards. I believe we will find that there are criteria we meet, as well as criteria we don't meet. Both findings are important as we work toward the implementation of these standards by 2011.

To ensure that our findings are objective and complete, IDPH will host a team of national public health leaders next month to review the evidence we have collected and provide feedback to the department. This will bring us a step closer to our goals outlined in the [Public Health Modernization Act](#). We look forward to working with: Lee Theilen of the Colorado Association of Local Public Health Officials; Torney Smith of Spokane County Public Health, Washington; Robert Blake of the Environmental Services Branch, CDC Division of Emergency and Environmental Health Services; and Joy Reed of Local Technical Assistance and Training, North Carolina Division of Public Health. The Iowa representative to the site review team is Webster County Public Health Administrator Kari Prescott.

I look forward to sharing with you the findings of this extraordinary effort when our report is due in March 2009, if not sooner. In the meantime, you can read more about the State Assessment, the Iowa Public Health Standards, and Public Health Modernization efforts at [www.idph.state.ia.us/rphi](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/rphi).

### **TFAH releases 2008 *Ready or Not?* report**

Earlier this month, the [Trust for America's Health](#) (TFAH) released its annual public health emergency preparedness report, *Ready or Not?* Congratulations to everyone who helped Iowa score higher than the national median of 7 out of 10. Thanks to your hard work, Iowa received positive scores in eight categories, including the state's ability to rapidly dispense medications in response to a public health emergency. The report also gave credit for Iowa's electronic disease surveillance system.

The report bears out much of what public health professionals already know based on our response to the severe weather events of this past summer; we are well-prepared when it comes to emergency preparedness and response, but recognize there is room for improvement. While current economic conditions may prevent us from making the kind of improvements we'd like to make, I feel confident that public health partners across the state will be able to use both this report and our recent experiences to strengthen our ability to protect the health of Iowans when called to do so.

For more information about the report, including a map linked to state-specific findings, visit <http://healthyamericans.org/reports/bioterror08>. I also encourage you to check out a companion video to the report produced by the [National Association of County and City Health Officials](#) and the [Association of State and Territorial Health Officials](#). Available at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=EpLJrExXKvw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EpLJrExXKvw), the video is an in-depth look at some of the implications that federal budget cuts and the current economic downturn have on the ability of public health to respond to emergencies.

## **Live Healthy Iowa starts January 14**

Registration is now open for Live Healthy Iowa! Formerly Lighten up Iowa, last year the program helped 36,791 Iowans lose 138,000 pounds and log more than 1 million hours (63,955,545 minutes) of activity. Are you up to the challenge this year? The 100-day event kicks off on January 14. This is another great opportunity for public health partners to lead by example in their families, communities and workplaces. Please consider becoming a team captain now by talking to your friends, family and co-workers. First we talk it. Then we walk it! (Or bike it, or swim it, or ... well, you get the idea.) Change the shape of our state by going to [www.livehealthyiowa.org](http://www.livehealthyiowa.org).

## **DCW Advisory Council submits recommendations**

The [Direct Care Worker Advisory Council](#) recently submitted to me their recommendations for how the vision of the 2006 and 2008 Direct Care Worker Task Forces should be implemented. Their [report](#) includes specifics about a grandfathering process for the existing workforce, a plan for communication and outreach, and several additional recommendations. The council spent many hours in deliberation over the past several months and their work is greatly appreciated. I will be responding to the Council early in 2009 with guidance for their continued work on this portion of House File 2539 Health Care Reform legislation. To read the report, visit [www.idph.state.ia.us/hcr\\_committees/direct\\_care\\_workers.asp](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/hcr_committees/direct_care_workers.asp) and look under "Required Reports." For more information, please contact Michelle Holst at [mholst@idph.state.ia.us](mailto:mholst@idph.state.ia.us) or 515-281-6211.

## **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](mailto:dmccormi@idph.state.ia.us).

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