



# Quick Reads

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

July 14, 2009

## **Staff make it through flood of plumbing and mechanical systems licenses**

After processing nearly 14,600 plumbing and mechanical systems licenses from March 4 to June 30, staff in the Division of Environmental Health deserve more than a pat on the back—they've earned a vacation! As of July 1, all licensing responsibilities for individuals working in the plumbing, HVAC (heating, ventilating, and air conditioning), refrigeration, or hydronics (using water to transfer heat) trades have been transferred from city and local jurisdictions to the [Iowa Plumbing and Mechanical Systems Board](#). The next steps are to finalize some administrative rules required by the [legislation](#) that outlined the responsibilities of the board. Also, rules must be created to accompany new legislation, [Senate File 224](#), which introduces additional classifications of licenses, such as those for contractors and those who work with geothermal systems and in other specialty areas.

## **Celebrating a full year of smokefree environments**

Thank you to everyone who made the first year of the [Smokefree Air Act](#) such a success. Because of your tremendous efforts to educate the public and business owners about the Act, only about 1 percent of Iowa's more than 82,000 businesses subject to the law have received a Notice of Potential Violation from IDPH since the law went into effect July 1, 2008. Furthermore, I think it is a good sign that 79 percent of those businesses did not receive a second notice. Nice job everyone!

## **More details coming soon on \$10.5 million SAMHSA grant**

The federal [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#) (SAMHSA) recently awarded Iowa \$10.5 million over a 5-year period to reduce binge and underage drinking. IDPH will distribute the funding to substance abuse prevention coalitions in

Iowa counties that demonstrate the greatest need. Criteria will include needs assessment data related to binge drinking and underage alcohol use and related problems and a willingness to employ SAMHSA's five-step Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF). Application details will be finalized when IDPH's revised budget for substance abuse prevention services is approved by SAMHSA. In the meantime, you can learn more about the SPF by visiting <http://prevention.samhsa.gov>.

### **Connecting the dots: Lt. Gov tour and health professional retention**

Lt. Governor Patty Judge is visiting nearly 70 Iowa attractions and events this summer to encourage tourism that supports local economies. The Lt. Governor's [Travel Iowa '09 Tour](#), which began last week, is also a great opportunity for you to promote the community amenities that are so important for the recruitment and retention of health professionals, especially in areas where more are needed. To see a [map](#) of tour locations as well as summaries and pictures of the Lt. Governor's visits, go to [www.traveliowa.blogspot.com](http://www.traveliowa.blogspot.com). Please consider sharing information about these visits through your recruiters, in your newsletters, and on your Web site. For more information about recruiting health professionals to underserved communities, including resources available through [www.3RNet.org](http://www.3RNet.org), contact IDPH Workforce Programs Manager Michelle Holst at [mholst@idph.state.ia.us](mailto:mholst@idph.state.ia.us).

### **Modernization committee summaries now available**

Last month, the Modernizing Public Health [Work Group](#) and the five [Implementation Committees](#) met for the last time. I attended this meeting and can tell you that it was a gathering like none other. Although the purpose was to allow committees and the Work Group an opportunity to "report out" on their achievements, lessons learned, and recommendations collected during the past 15 months, there was an incredible sense of energy and excitement in the room. If I'd asked them to continue working for another six months, I'm sure I would have gotten a resounding yes! To see the recommendations and supporting material the implementation committees have produced for the Public Health Advisory Council and the Public Health Evaluation Committee, visit [www.idph.state.ia.us/mphi](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/mphi) and click on Committees.

### **Open wide... for BP checks and tobacco use interventions**

IDPH is pleased to partner with the University of Iowa [College of Dentistry](#) in an innovative project called The Role of Dental Health Professionals in Blood Pressure Screening and Tobacco Cessation. With more than \$118,000 in funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Iowa's project is the first of its kind in the nation. The idea is that dentists and other oral health professionals are well-positioned to speak to patients about their blood pressure and the harmful effects of tobacco. By the end of the three-year program, IDPH and our partners hope to engage a new action framework to provide health care in under-utilized settings and improve access to

health care in rural communities by involving oral health professionals. The project will also expand preventive health curricula at dental and dental hygiene training programs in Iowa.

### **Iowa gets seed money for stroke registry**

The IDPH [Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Program](#) recently received more than \$113,000 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to help establish an Iowa stroke registry. This is a great step forward for our state, where stroke remains the third leading cause of death. Designed to be compatible with the [Paul Coverdell National Acute Stroke Registry](#), the forthcoming Iowa registry will be designed by our partners at the University of Iowa [College of Public Health](#). IDPH hopes to get a working design of the registry in place this year. Pilots are also planned so that partners can help test the new data collection system. For more information, contact AJ Johnson at [ajohnson@idph.state.ia.us](mailto:ajohnson@idph.state.ia.us).

### **We want your best practices**

IDPH is committed to telling Iowans about the good things public health is doing to make a difference. To do this, we want to highlight your smart practices and 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*