



Quick Reads

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

January 28, 2010

Legislature works on government efficiencies

In a nearly 300-page bill ([SSB 3030](#)), the Senate has outlined how efficiencies and cost savings will be achieved by reorganizing state government. Last Wednesday, the [Senate State Government Committee](#) passed the bill out of committee by a vote of 10-4 with a large amendment to the bill. Of interest to IDPH, the amendment reinstates the Advisory Council on Brain Injury, the Rural Health and Primary Care Advisory Committee, and the Trauma System advisory council. The amendment eliminates the Hemophilia Advisory Council, the State Medical Examiner Advisory Council, the Anatomical Gift Public Awareness Advisory Committee, the State Substitute Medical Decision Making Board, the Swimming Pool Advisory Committee, and the Technical Advisory Committee for Radiation Machines and Radioactive Materials. The committee amendment also added language that would allow for a second compliance check of retail outlets that sell tobacco products found to be in violation during the first check. Previous bill language limited compliance checks to one per retail outlet for FY 2011.

National training features Iowa cost-savings case study

The recently launched STD Program Management Course from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention contains a resource-allocation case study from Iowa. Designed to provide STD program directors and managers with the essential competencies needed to more effectively manage STD prevention programs, the new course includes an Iowa case study that teaches participants to work with stakeholders and partners to provide essential program functions in the most cost-efficient ways. Many thanks to the STD prevention partners in Iowa for leading the way in creating efficiencies in STD program management!

Bureau of HIV, STD, and Hepatitis joins Behavioral Health

IDPH is always looking for ways to take advantage of the expertise and experience of department staff and I believe we have identified such an opportunity. I am excited to announce that effective Feb. 1, the Bureau of HIV, STD, and Hepatitis will join the [Division of Behavioral Health](#).

There are several ways we anticipate that this will promote collaboration, foster exchange of new ideas, and benefit Iowans. First of all, both the bureau and the division will gain from the opportunity to work more closely on issues that are often intertwined for their clients. Those issues include substance use, sexual health, and how coordinated systems and services can support long-term behavioral change and promote better health. Second, the bureau can take advantage of the division's experience in developing recovery-oriented systems of care that are ongoing, anchored in the community, and comprehensive. Many of these principles can be applied directly to behavior change related to HIV, STDs, and viral hepatitis. Finally, the division will gain from the bureau's strong focus on using epidemiological data to guide prevention and care programming and evaluation. Randy Mayer, bureau chief for HIV, STD, and Hepatitis, and Mary Jones, director of the Division of Acute Disease Prevention and Emergency Response (in which the bureau is currently located) have been working with Behavioral Health Division Director Kathy Stone to ensure a smooth transition.

Health reform councils meet important deadline

I'd like to recognize the hard work of several [health reform committees](#) over the last 12 months. As outlined in house file [2539](#)—the bill passed in 2008, which contains the authorizing language for the advisory bodies—the seven councils or committees coordinated by IDPH had reports due to the General Assembly prior to the start of the current legislative session. Reports were most recently submitted by the [Health and Long-term Care Access Advisory Council](#) and the [Patient Autonomy in Health Care Decisions Pilot Project Advisory Council](#) (IPOST). Thank you to all of the councils and supporting IDPH staff for meeting this important deadline. To view these reports, learn more about each council, and read the monthly *Check Up* newsletter, visit www.idph.state.ia.us/hcr_committees. You can also subscribe to the *Check Up* by sending a blank e-mail to join-CHECKUP@lists.ia.gov.

U.S. County Health Rankings to be released Feb. 17

Public health partners in Iowa and around the nation are looking forward to a new report coming out next month which ranks the health of counties across the United States. Developed through a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the [U.S. County Health Rankings](#) were compiled by taking into account a wide range of health

factors. Those include healthy behaviors, clinical care, social and economic factors, and the physical environment.

Although the forthcoming report is not expected to present a complete picture of what Iowa counties have accomplished, these rankings are sure to illustrate the positive efforts public health partners in Iowa have made in improving the health of their communities. Likewise, the U.S. County Health Rankings will no doubt shed light on areas that need improvement. Regardless of where individual counties rank, I know our local public health partners well enough to assume they will use this information—as they do with many other valuable community health assessment and planning tools—as an opportunity to build upon their successes and as a catalyst to address identified gaps. The Rankings and all relevant data will be available to the public via www.countyhealthrankings.org on February 17.

Kudos to Webster County

I want to share with you a letter to the editor that came my way recently. Published in the Fort Dodge Messenger, a local resident described the hard work of the [Webster County Public Health](#) staff during their H1N1 response. “The hours they have put in to get Webster County residents vaccinated are unreal,” said author C.L. McCarthy, who works in the same building as the Webster County public health team. “The extra hours sometimes show on their tired faces, but they continue to smile and greet each person as if he/she is the only person they have to take care of.” Hats off to Kari Prescott and her staff in Webster County, and to all local partners who put in the long hours necessary to protect the health of their community!

Stay informed, share your story

To get *Quick Reads* directly in your inbox, please send a blank e-mail to join-quick_reads@lists.ia.gov. To contribute a news item or smart practice, please write to Don McCormick at dmccormi@idph.state.ia.us.

To everyone in public health and all our partners, keep up the great work!

— Tom