

July 2006

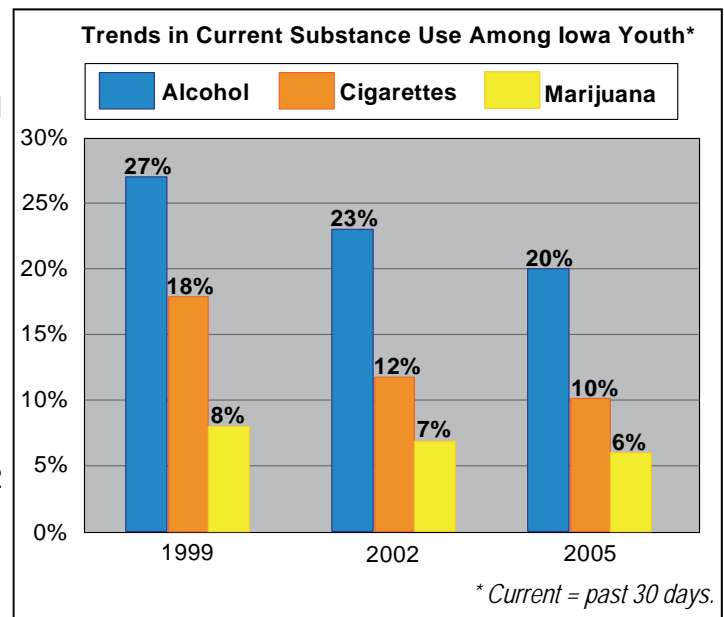
Iowa youth making the right choices

By Katrina Karasch*

Kids in Iowa are making the right choices in regard to cigarettes, alcohol and drugs, Governor Tom Vilsack announced during a June 26 news conference at the John R. Grubb YMCA in Des Moines. His comments were based on the recently released results of the 2005 Iowa Youth Survey (IYS), which show a positive change in the attitudes, beliefs, perceptions and actual substance usage of Iowa 6th, 8th and 11th graders.

According to the survey, taken by more than 98,000 students, the percentage of Iowa youth choosing not to use tobacco has increased from 82 percent in 1999 to 90 percent in 2005. The number of students choosing not to drink alcohol has increased by 7 percent and those choosing not to use marijuana has increased by 2 percent.

"When you look at a 6, 8, or 12 percent increase and multiply it by 98,000, that's thousands of kids who are making the right choices," Vilsack said.



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IDPH home page gets new look, features

If you're viewing this newsletter online, you may have already noticed some differences in the IDPH Web site. If *FOCUS* has come your way on paper, then please make time to look at the upgrades the Bureau of Information Management has built into the department's Web domain. They include:

- Improved searchability powered by Google technology
- An "A to Z Index," which allows users to find a program by its name or its acronym
- Cosmetic changes, such as the location of important links and the ability to change font size
- A department-wide calendar (coming soon)

Visit (www.idph.state.ia.us) and check out the many new features for yourself. Remember also to fill out a short survey (located in "Topics of Interest") to help us better meet your needs. The survey will be available until the end of July.



Brain injury program to ensure greater access to community-based services

By Ben Woodworth*

More than 2,200 Iowans each year experience a traumatic brain injury that requires hospitalization. Of those, more than 750 will experience long-term disability as a result. According to a 2000 CDC report, there are an estimated 50,000 such individuals living in Iowa – a number similar to the population of Ames.

As part of an enterprise-wide effort to ensure that all Iowans, including those with brain injuries, have access to quality healthcare, Governor Tom Vilsack signed the Brain Injury Services program bill on May 23. The bill will allow the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) to implement a one-of-a-kind program to help those with brain injuries and their families in navigating and maximizing the Iowa community-based service system.

Passage of the bill was the result of efforts from Iowans with brain injuries, their families, the Advisory Council on Brain Injuries, the Brain Injury Association of Iowa and key legislators. State representatives Danny Carroll and Jim Kurtenbach co-sponsored the legislation, working closely with survivors and families to create a program that addresses identified service gaps in Iowa.

Specifically, the bill provides funding for Iowans on the waiting list for the Medicaid Home and Community Services Brain Injury (BI) Waiver, as well as funding for services on a cost-share basis for those who have been denied BI Waiver funding.

The BI Waiver currently serves about 660 Iowans. Although many Iowans experiencing brain injury have private insurance, few insurers cover necessary services after hospitalization for these people to return to their community, home and employment.

“We (Iowa families) have a brain injury waiver, but very often people are on the waiting list for that waiver for many months,” said Kay Graber chair of Iowa’s Advisory Council on Brain Injuries. “We desperately need continuity of services from



Gov. Tom Vilsack signs the Brain Injury Services program bill designed to help those with brain injuries and their families make the most of the community-based service system. He is joined by (l-r) Lt. Gov. Sally Pederson, Rep. Danny Carroll, Rep. Jim Kurtenbach, and Sen. Daryl Beall.

the hospital setting to community-based services and this program helps to bridge that gap.”

The bill also provides funding for a Resource Facilitation system. This system will offer support to those with a brain injury and their families to cope with lifestyle changes and the transition back to work and the community. It is intended to provide on-going support for consumers and their families by:

- Providing brain injury specific information, support and resources;
- Enhancing natural supports and linking to appropriate services and community resources;
- Training service providers to provide appropriate brain injury services; and
- Accessing, securing and maximizing funding, both private and public.

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Partnerships help IDPH share health messages

By Joyce Allard*

Remember when you were five years old and how you would imitate a galloping horse or jumping frog? It taught you a lot about the way animals move, didn't it? It was also a chance for physical activity.

That is just one of the creative methods the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) has been using this year to connect with the people of Iowa. (See inset.)

Events with statewide attendance IDPH has participated in so far this year include: the Children and Families of Iowa KidsFest, the Asian Heritage Festival, the Iowa American Legion "Hawkeye" Boys State, and the Iowa American Legion Auxiliary Girls State. With these events, the Iowa State Fair and Iowa Latino Heritage Festival, IDPH has the potential to reach more than 1.1 million people this year.

"IDPH is excited to work with our partners to share health messages with citizens of all ages and backgrounds from across Iowa," said IDPH Director, Mary Mincer Hansen, R.N., Ph.D. "The events allow us to share targeted health messages with specific populations in attention-getting venues," said Dr. Hansen. "These partnerships play an important part in achieving IDPH's mission of promoting and protecting the health of Iowans."

Event partners echo Dr. Hansen's enthusiasm for working together. "It was good to have IDPH's professional staff at the Asian Heritage Festival when we both realize it is an opportunity to reach out to underserved populations in the state," said Iowa Asian Alliance Executive Director Kim Poam Logan.

On June 9, IDPH and the Polk County Public Health Department joined the Red Cross for "Friday Night Live," a series of monthly events this summer at the Blank Park Zoo during which exhibits stay open later than usual. The event was promoted across the state and featured health as a theme. The two health departments worked together to create three separate stations near the path around the zoo.

- Katie Dickens, with IDPH's Iowans Fit for Life program, used chalk to show how far certain animals can leap. She encouraged kids to see how many jumps it would take them to go the same distance. "Grasshoppers didn't require too much effort," she said, "but the brown kangaroo's 23-foot jump proved a challenge."
- In addition to delivering the message that walking is good exercise, Polk County Health Department Nurse Health Educator Pam Lester taught kids how to pack the right items for a "healthy hike." Two by two, kids raced toward a basket of items, packed their backpacks with only those that were healthy, and race backed to the starting line. Choices included cookies, raisins, soda, bottled water, sunscreen, and insect repellent.
- IDPH Community Education staff member Don McCormick taught about good nutrition. One of his games encouraged participants to guess whether a food was healthy or not just by placing their hand in a box to feel an apple, bag of chips or ear of corn.

American Legion of Iowa State Program Director, Kathy Nees commented on the importance of targeted educational activities. "Any time we can give our youth the opportunity for education, it's something we

should take advantage of," Nees said. "It's something every organization should consider."

Check future *FOCUS* newsletters for information about upcoming activities at the State Fair and Latino Heritage Festival. To share your best practices or lessons learned from your own outreach activities, write to jallard@idph.state.ia.us.

* Joyce Allard is the Community Education coordinator at IDPH.

"Education is a key factor for our younger guests to learn about issues, and it's fun to see a nontraditional environment used in the process." – Blank Park Zoo CEO, Terry Rich.



“Better snack” campaign picked by other states

By Katrina Karasch*

The Iowa Nutrition Network's *Pick a better snack* (PABS) public education campaign has received nationwide recognition in recent months. “The message and the graphics are simple and consistent, making it easy to adapt them to almost any region,” said Doris Montgomery, coordinator of the PABS campaign in the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) Bureau of Nutrition and Health Promotion.

To date, Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, North Carolina and Wisconsin

have implemented some of the PABS campaign components such as billboards, radio PSAs, recipes, classroom lessons, and posters. West Virginia and Nebraska recently decided to include the campaign in their State Nutrition Action Plans. Still others, Montgomery reports, have requested CD-ROMs, which include bookmarks, posters, certificates, logos and graphics that can be used to create their own materials.

Montgomery was quick to point out the importance of partnerships in the Iowa PABS campaign. They include the 5 A Day Coalition of Iowa, Inc., Iowa Department of Education – Team Nutrition, the Iowa Dietetic Association, the Iowa Food Assistance Program, Iowa Public Television and the Iowa State University Extension. “Community partners are essential to the success of the *Pick a better snack* campaign,” Montgomery said.

When the PABS campaign was first launched in the spring of 2000, one of its main objectives was to provide consistent nutrition messages that could be used by multiple programs throughout Iowa and that were appropriate for low-income audiences. In 2004, IDPH received funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for a nutrition and physical activity program to prevent obesity and other chronic diseases. With this additional focus on physical activity, the words “& Act” were added to the PABS message and

some campaign elements, thus making the logo *Pick a better snack & Act*.

The next step in the campaign is accessibility, Montgomery says. Along with providing easy ways to prepare fruits and vegetables, the campaign partners will focus on making it easier for people to obtain them as well. They hope to do this by making food assistance benefits cards usable at farmer's markets and expanding the promotion of fruits and

vegetables as snacks in schools.

To learn more about the campaign,

download educational materials, get recipes and more, visit www.idph.state.ia.us/pickabettersnack.

* Katrina Karasch is an Iowa State University intern in the Office of Community Education at IDPH.



Hebei Provincial Health Bureau General Director, Wang Yumei (left), meets with Jen Van Liew (center) and Kari Lebeda Townsend (right) of Visiting Nurse Services in Des Moines. Yumei was part of a delegation from China that recently participated in an Iowa Sister States exchange that included time with IDPH. During her visit, Yumei also met with representatives from Des Moines University and the Polk County Health Department.



IDPH staff to present at regional TB course in July 19-20

The Iowa Department of Public Health's (IDPH) Tuberculosis (TB) Control Program is partnering with the Heartland National TB Center in bringing the "Nurse Case Management" course to Des Moines July 19 & 20. Held at Embassy Suites on the River, the event is aimed at public health nurses and others responsible for the treatment of TB patients.

Presenters include: Dr. Douglas Hornick, professor, Division of Pulmonary, Critical Care and Occupational Medicine, University of Iowa Hospital and Clinics; Allan Lynch, TB program manager, IDPH; Dr. James McAuley, Pediatric Infectious Disease, Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center; KJ Pass, TB nurse consultant, IDPH; Dr. Mike Pentella, University Hygienic Laboratory; Dr. Patricia Quinlisk, IDPH medical director and state epidemiologist, IDPH; and Dr. Barbara Seaworth, medical director, Heartland National TB Center.

Registration is free but required by close of business on July 11. Write to

mary.long@uthct.edu. Space is limited. For more information, visit www.heartlandntbc.org and go to "Training and Technical Assistance." To learn about the Iowa public health professionals who conduct directly observed TB therapy, see the May 2006 issue of *FOCUS*.



Substance abuse decreases among Iowa youth

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The positive trends in substance abuse can be attributed to several factors: the increase in state and federal funding, the collaboration between state agencies and partners, the redesign of community-based services, and the advancement of community coalitions.

"The Iowa Youth Survey helps us better understand our youth and their needs as we build healthier and safer communities," said Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) Director Mary Mincer Hansen, R.N., Ph.D. "The results demonstrate the power of public health strategies and effective community partnerships. We know healthy kids are better learners, and that ensures a bright future for our state."

The 2005 IYS is the eleventh in a series of youth surveys completed every three years since 1975. It is a collaborative effort among IDPH, the Iowa Department of Human Rights, Division of Criminal Juvenile Justice Program, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Education, the Office of Drug Control

Policy and the Research Institute for Studies in Education at Iowa State University. The survey consists of 190 questions about students' perceptions of their peers, family, school, and neighborhood/community environments. It also looks at their behaviors, attitudes and beliefs.

Cassie Peterson, a recent high school graduate and president of the IDPH Just Eliminate Lies (JEL) youth-led advocacy group against tobacco, spoke about her early encounter with cigarettes at the age of 8. Peterson has been tobacco-free for six years now, and through the JEL movement helps others her age understand the real effects of tobacco use. "We all deserve to live the healthiest and longest life we can," Peterson said. "Let's start through education and understanding, and let's all be free – tobacco free."

To view the complete report online, go to www.state.ia.us/government/dhr/cjpp/iys/ and click on "Iowa Youth Survey Website."

* Katrina Karasch is an Iowa State University intern in the Office of Community Education at IDPH.



Health in Iowa: a historical perspective

During this 125th year of organized public health in Iowa, *FOCUS* is proud to highlight major historic events in public health. This month's installment comes from Tom Boeckmann, chief of the Health Alert Network and president-elect of the National HAN Coordinators. Boeckmann has been with IDPH for 17 years and is a former paramedic and peace officer.

The day public health communications changed

On Sept. 10, 2001, things were somewhat routine at the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) when it came to notifying our partners of a health issue. We had been using email, the IDPH Web site, fax machines, home/office phones, cell phones, and even satellite phones when necessary.

The following day, things began to change.

Like the rest of the country's health departments, IDPH immediately saw a need for a better communications system that could be used to disseminate information to all its partners – not just local public health agencies. We knew we needed to communicate with hospitals, laboratories, emergency management, and a number of state agencies. In the past, each of these had to be called individually.

Soon after the attacks on American soil, IDPH reached an agreement with the Iowa Department of Public

Safety to use the Iowa Online Warrants and Articles (IOWA) system. This computer system, previously known as "teletype," could be used

to send messages to local law enforcement agencies requesting that they in turn notify the public health agency and hospitals in their county.

IDPH also purchased alphanumeric pagers for all hospitals and local public health agencies so that mass e-mail messages could be sent. It was not the best system, however, since one wrong number resulted in 100+ pagers going off. Nevertheless, it met the short-term needs at the time by allowing mass notification of public health partners.



This marked the beginning of a system that would come to be named the Iowa Health Alert Network (HAN).

A committee made up of representatives from local public health, hospitals, laboratories, emergency management, and state agencies was formed in 2003 to look at the communications systems at IDPH and recommend improvements. The committee agreed that the department needed a redundant, robust, and internet-based alerting system, a public health directory and an efficient method for partners to collaborate. It also discovered that IDPH needed to improve voice communications with hospitals, local public health agencies and federal partners.

After reviewing the merits of several different systems, IDPH decided in the fall of 2003 on a

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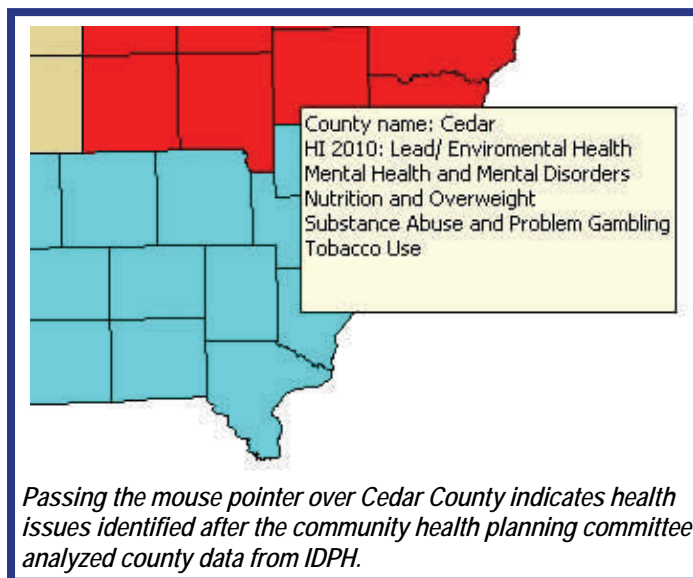
Interactive maps a “paradigm” for other states

By Louise Lex*

When it comes to health planning, Iowa has achieved another first in the nation with its publication of maps that link local health plans with the state health plan, *Healthy Iowans 2010*. According to Emmeline Ochiai, public health advisor in the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “Iowa once again has become the paradigm for other states.”

The maps, which *FOCUS* reported on in May of this year, have now been made interactive with the assistance of Simon Geletta, professor of epidemiology and statistics at DMU. Passing the computer mouse over individual counties on a map of Iowa will show a brief synopsis of the county’s programs. Clicking on a county will display additional information on the county’s health improvement plans and its locally identified health issues.

The achievement is the result of a collaborative effort between the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) Center for Health Statistics and Des



Moines University (DMU).

A future addition to the maps will come from Cindy Swoyer, a DMU graduate student intern, who has worked on strategies that counties are using to tackle their issues. This information will be helpful to IDPH staff in providing technical assistance, and to the counties in sharing what they have learned about what’s working

and what isn’t.

Visit www.idph.state.ia.us/chnahip and click on “2005 County Health Priority Maps.” To learn more about linking local health plans to the state plan, go to www.idph.state.ia.us/do/focus.asp and click on May 2006.

* Louise Lex is the *Healthy Iowans 2010* coordinator at IDPH.

Got your attention?

Page County Public Health employees (l-r) Wendy Moyer, Tracy Wiig, and Administrator Belinda DeBolt remind people of the importance of staying home to avoid spreading mumps. Although the three wore their shirts during a child fair, it was parents who took the most notice. “When people see you in a shirt like this, they want to ask you about it,” DeBolt said. “It’s a great opportunity to do community education.” DeBolt added that she and her co-workers sometimes wear their shirts into restaurants and elsewhere in Page County, attracting the same amount of attention.



Web site helps recruit health pros to rural areas

By Patricia Kehoe*

Access to the Web and a few spare minutes are the essential ingredients. With those simple tools, you can search 3R Net, a rural health job Web site at www.3rnet.org.

The three R's stand for "rural recruitment and retention." The Bureau of Health Care Access at the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) supports 3R Net membership and maintains job postings to attract additional providers to rural and medically underserved areas of the state.

To view the full menu of opportunities, health care professionals are encouraged to log in as a candidate on 3R Net's home page. The site lists openings for physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, certified nurse midwives, EMS providers, dentists, dental hygienists, psychologists, social workers and pharmacists.

For Iowa employers, the site is a valuable tool for staffing their organization. For some, like Renea Seagren at United Community Health Center in Storm Lake, response is nearly as fast as the Web itself. "I had a call from a nurse practitioner in Missouri this morning," Seagren reported. "She had already seen my posting on 3R Net (from the previous day) and is interested in our position!"

The wide audience for 3R Net can reduce the recruitment timeline in professions where providers are in particularly short supply. Through successful postings on the site, Parkersburg hired a dentist, Oskaloosa attracted a urologist, and an internist joined a hospital in Decatur County.



To ensure a steady flow of new opportunities, rural hospitals and clinics are encouraged to participate. Employers are invited to log onto the 3R Net home page for easy job-posting instructions, or transmit job descriptions directly to the IDPH Bureau of Health Care Access staff by fax or e-mail.

Whether you are looking for a change yourself, recruiting a health professional to your organization, or just want to learn more about the regions of Iowa, visit www.3rnet.org today. You may also contact IDPH bureau staff at 515-281-5069 or via e-mail at pkehoe@idph.state.ia.us.

* Patricia Kehoe is a program planner in the Bureau of Health Care Access at IDPH.

New funds to help those with brain injuries, families

(Continued from page 2)

As the lead government agency for brain injury, IDPH will act as fiscal agent and contract administrator and provide program oversight. The appropriation of funds for the 2007 fiscal year is \$2.4 million. Access will be based on the dollars available; it is not an entitlement program. The Advisory Council on Brain Injuries will be responsible for oversight of this program and will ensure that the program will recognize and respect the unique needs of each individual with brain injury and his or her family.

* Ben Woodworth is the Brain Injury Program manager in the IDPH Division of Behavioral Health & Professional Licensure.



Iowa Department of Public Health

Advancing Health Through the Generations

Multiple devices, infrastructures contribute to HAN

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product that would work best for Iowa: the Bioterrorism Readiness Suite (BTRS) by Virtual Alert. The department then began the complex task of installing the system and testing it frequently. Most bugs in the system were resolved easily, but other issues required more time and resources. Thanks to the state and local partners' understanding of the importance of such a system and their contributions of time and energy, the HAN was fully functional by late summer 2004.

Another major project for IDPH and the committee was to establish a voice communications system for the entire state. So that a costly infrastructure would not have to be built, radios were installed in every hospital and local public health agency in the state. The radio system, the hardware for which comes from a family-owned company in Marshalltown, has a number of advantages. It allows for interoperability with other systems, it is redundant in that it uses multiple tower sites, and its



reliability is the result of years of customer service and minimal down time.

IDPH now has access to a high-frequency radio system for communications with other states and federal agencies through an agreement with Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management. Thanks to the Iowa Department of Public Safety, IDPH also has access to state VHF frequencies on the many portable and mobile radios purchased by IDPH for times of deployment.

The department has come a long way since the events of Sept. 11, 2001.

That day changed our lives forever, and public health in our state strives daily to meet the needs of Iowans by constantly looking at ways to improve communications.



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Iowa Department of Public Health

Advancing Health Through the Generations