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PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCIES TO EXPLORE USE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE HEALTH

Princeton, N.J., December 14, 2005 – The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) announced new grants today to support the participation of state and local public health agencies in health information exchanges.

The new program, *InformationLinks*, is designed to accelerate the innovative and effective use of information technology by state and local public health agencies. Twenty-one grants of up to \$100,000 were awarded to state and local health departments and public health institutes for 12-month projects. The grantee sites (see list below) will work with health care providers to improve the use of regional data sharing networks or health information exchanges.

“Information systems can play a vital role in improving the health of our communities by helping to pinpoint disease outbreaks, track chronic disease in communities, and improve communication between health care providers and health departments,” said Stephen Downs, RWJF senior program officer. “*InformationLinks* will help public health agencies participate fully in the development of emerging health information exchanges.”

Developments in health information technology and the emergence of health information exchanges create tremendous opportunities for public health agencies to share information with health care providers. Ready access to patient data and improvements to the timeliness and accuracy of data can lead to better data reporting processes; stronger emergency preparation and response; and more effective monitoring of community health issues, such as cancer, heart disease, tobacco use and flu outbreaks.

“To protect the public from health threats like a flu pandemic, bioterrorism or chronic diseases, we need to do better at sharing information between public health departments, hospitals and clinics and community health organizations,” said Downs. “Health care providers have been leading the way in the use of information technology and it is our goal to help public health agencies apply their ideas and expertise to IT solutions to improve the public’s health.”

(more)

Some examples of *InformationLinks* projects include:

- Developing a model health exchange network that identifies the components, resources and personnel needed in the state and local community to establish an information exchange.
- Identifying barriers and solutions to sharing newborn screening results in a statewide information exchange.
- Initiating a public-private partnership in a metropolitan area to enable a two-way flow of immunization registry data.
- Developing shared disease control protocols between public health and healthcare to support rapid and coordinated diagnosis, treatment and prevention of HIV, STDs, TB, and Hepatitis C.

For more information about *InformationLinks*, please visit www.rwjf.org.

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The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change. For more than 30 years the Foundation has brought experience, commitment, and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those it serves. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, the Foundation expects to make a difference in your lifetime.

RWJF *InformationLinks* Projects

City of Austin Health and Human Services Department, Austin, TX
Commonwealth of Puerto Rico Department of Health, San Juan, PR
County of Ingham Health Department, Lansing, MI
County of Santa Cruz Health Services Agency, Santa Cruz, CA
Denver Health and Hospital Authority, Denver, CO
Hamilton County General Health District, Cincinnati, OH
Imperial County Public Health Department, El Centro, CA
Louisiana Public Health Institute, Baton Rouge, LA
Maine Center for Public Health, Augusta, ME
Mendocino County Department of Public Health, Ukiah, CA
Mesa County Health Department, Grand Junction, CO
New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, New York, NY
State of Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Denver, CO
State of Indiana Department of Health, Indianapolis, IN
State of Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Topeka, KS
State of Minnesota Department of Public Health, Saint Paul, MN
State of Rhode Island Department of Health, Providence, RI
State of Tennessee, Nashville, TN
State of Utah Department of Health, Salt Lake City, UT
State of Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, Madison, WI
State University of New York at Stony Brook Health Sciences Center, Stony Brook, NY