

NEWS RELEASE

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Public Health Informatics Institute Receives \$3.2 Million Grant from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Collaboration Is Key to Advancing Public Health Information Infrastructure

DECATUR, GA, September 20, 2004 — The Public Health Informatics Institute has been awarded a two-year, \$3.2 million grant from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) to advance public health practitioners' ability to strategically apply and manage information systems.

The goal of the non-profit Public Health Informatics Institute (the Institute) is public health agencies' broad-based adoption of a collaborative approach to developing information systems. Local, state, and federal public health officials use these systems to manage information critical to detection, prevention, and response to public health problems ranging from emerging infectious and chronic diseases to emergencies, disasters, and environmental factors that threaten the public's health.

Institute Director David A. Ross, Sc.D., said, "It is well recognized that the fragmented, categorical nature of the public health system and the equally fragmented medical care system in the U.S. make collaboration very difficult. There currently is no shared understanding of the health problems to be solved, let alone shared systems or shared information that can be applied to solving them. The end result is duplicative efforts, incompatible information systems, and a waste of federal, state and local money."

Strategic, facilitated collaboration is at the core of the Institute's four-step methodology: defining the health problem, defining the work to be done, designing the system, and evaluating its performance. "The public health enterprise can succeed only if it defines tomorrow's information systems together," said Ross.

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Public Health Informatics Institute

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This grant builds on previous Institute work funded by RWJF. All Kids Count, a 13-year national program to foster child health information systems concluded earlier this year. From 2002 to 2004, RWJF provided funding for the Institute to evaluate different strategies to advance state and local public health agencies' informatics capacity. A project to collaboratively define comprehensive requirements and develop a logical design for laboratory information management systems (LIMS), undertaken in partnership with the Association for Public Health Laboratories (APHL) and state and local public health laboratories, proved to have the greatest impact.

The latest round of grant funding supports three new projects that employ collaboration as a lever to improving public health information infrastructure. The Institute will continue its collaboration with APHL and public health laboratories to complete the logical design of public health LIMS, and it will present an analysis of the LIMS options available to public health laboratories that will enable them to develop their information systems strategies.

The grant also supports activities to determine the feasibility of and coordinate a national coalition to determine future directions for child health information systems, and to develop a business case for the integration of child health information systems. The RWJF grant leverages funding from the Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, for projects that promote integration of newborn screening with other child health information systems.

In a third project, the Institute will identify areas of public health in which a collaborative approach to changing public health information infrastructure will have the greatest health impact.

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The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, based in Princeton, NJ, is the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans. For more information, visit www.rwjf.org.

The Public Health Informatics Institute (www.phii.org) is a component of The Task Force for Child Survival and Development, a Decatur, Georgia-based non-profit organization working to improve health and human development around the world. For more information, visit www.taskforce.org.