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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Grants Aim to Help Shape Difficult Public Health Funding and Service Decisions

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Protecting and improving the public's health in a time of scarce resources means challenging times for public health practitioners and policymakers, who face difficult decisions about addressing the ever-increasing health needs of communities.

Against this backdrop, a series of new public health services and systems research (PHSSR) projects funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) will provide timely insights into the best strategies and practices to enable state and local health departments to be the most effective and efficient in keeping people healthy and safe.

The 11 grants, totaling \$2.7 million, are being facilitated by the National Network of Public Health Institutes (NNPHI), with guidance from the National Coordinating Center for Public Health Services and Systems Research, an RWJF-funded center housed at the University of Kentucky College of Public Health. The grants will support two-year studies examining the impact of budget reductions and program cuts on the health of the population, and key areas such as the recruitment and retention of staff, the structure of health departments, and the delivery of public health services.

"These are trying times in public health and any form of public service," said F. Douglas Scutchfield, M.D., director of the National Coordinating Center. "How best to cope with the changing environment at the state and local levels - in health departments generally and in specific programmatic areas such as maternal and child health - is the goal of these projects. The intent is to inform decision making in a rapidly evolving public health system."

The projects are part of a broad effort by RWJF to support research that hones in on effective strategies to improve the quality and effectiveness of public health practice and policy, improve the performance and impact of the public health system, and increase the demand for and use of public health laws, policies and practices that improve health.

"Public health services and systems research is putting evidence of what works in the hands of those who need it most - policymakers who are making the decisions that ultimately affect our health, and practitioners who must make the most of limited resources to address the needs of their communities," said Debra Joy Perez, M.A., M.P.A., Ph.D., interim vice president for research and evaluation at RWJF. "Both face very difficult decisions, underscoring the critical need for timely, concrete evidence."

The grantees, which include academic institutions and non-profit entities from around the country, and the goals of their research projects, are:

Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health- Measuring the impact of budget reductions on the public's health.

University of Washington- Constructing a new data set to examine how changes in local health department expenditures from 2005-2010 affected population health behaviors and health outcomes on a county level.

University of Illinois at Chicago- Looking at how local health departments are managing to provide maternal, child and adolescent health programs/services in light of cuts to or changes in those programs.

South Carolina Research Foundation- Examining how the transition from providing direct Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment Services (EPSDT) to assuring the provision of these services within existing health delivery systems impacts unmet need for EPSDT services among Medicaid-eligible children.

Washington University- Developing a tool to measure the comprehensiveness of practice in obesity prevention through the inventory of programs and activities in local public health departments.

Center for State and Local Government Excellence- Analyzing the economic, political and organizational issues affecting recruitment and retention by local health departments and identify effective strategies that help to address these challenges.

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill- Examining the effectiveness of four local agency types in North Carolina: county health departments, multi-county district health departments, public health authorities, and consolidated health services agencies.

Colorado Association of Local Public Health Officials- Analyzing the effect of a recent Colorado rule that requires local governmental public health core services.

Kansas Health Institute- Identifying factors that contribute to timeliness and quality of outputs and outcomes of Community Health Assessments and Community Health Improvement Plans.

Minnesota Department of Health- Studying the factors that accelerate population-based intervention implementation by Minnesota's local health departments.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro- Identifying how often local health departments use various evidence-based public health practices and what factors predict their use.

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About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

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 health and health care, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, measurable and timely change. For 40 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. For more information, visit www.rwjf.org.

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About the National Coordinating Center

The goal of the National Coordinating Center is to grow the field of PHSSR by coordinating current PHSSR investments, supporting real-world applications, and strengthening the capacity of researchers and practitioners. The Center also works to determine the future direction of the field's research initiatives; translate that research into practice; increase the visibility of the work; and attract other funders to the field. For more information, visit www.publichealthsystems.org.

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About the National Network of Public Health Institutes

Created in 2001 as a forum for public health institutes (PHIs), today NNPHI convenes its members and partners at the local, state, and national levels in efforts to address critical health issues. NNPHI's mission is to support national public health system initiatives and strengthen PHIs to promote multi-sector activities resulting in measurable improvements of public health structures, systems, and outcomes. Learn more at www.nnphi.org.