

# Meetings of Refugee Health Coordinators Create the Refugee Health Information Network

Support for a meeting of refugee health coordinators to improve the quality and accessibility of refugee health information

## **SUMMARY**

In 2003 and 2005, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) funded two meetings convened by the Center for Public Service Communications (CPSC), which led to the creation of the Refugee Health Information Network (RHIN®) and the April 2007 launch of its website (see Program Results Report on ID#s 048340 and 053555). RHIN is a national collaborative partnership offering public health resources to those who provide care to the diverse refugee population in the United States.

While refugees are entitled to a health assessment within the first three months after entering the United States, not all states have refugee health programs and communities have struggled to provide appropriate care. In addition, with little federal funding, there is a lack of health information in the wide variety of needed languages. RHIN provides an online database of peer-reviewed health information in multiple languages for use by health professionals.

Health-Equity.Org and the CPSC, on behalf of RHIN, hosted a symposium on November 17–18, 2008, to discuss:

- Expanding the collection of available multilingual, multicultural materials
- Establishing best practices for material development
- Addressing emerging issues for refugees and their host communities
- Promoting RHIN in new ways

# **Key Results**

• Approximately 50 people attended the symposium (see the Appendix for a list of attendees).

- The symposium, held at the National Library of Medicine in Bethesda, Md., focused on how to:
  - Access peer-reviewed health information available on the RHIN website—as well
    as from other sources—that reflects patients' languages and cultures. Nearly 150
    languages are spoken by refugees and immigrants nationwide.
  - Enable and encourage a culture of information sharing and communication among health care providers who specialize in refugee health. This can help alleviate the problem of duplicative materials for some topics and languages, and a lack of materials for others.
  - Develop RHIN's partnerships and shape its future in order to better serve the needs of refugee health professionals.
- Symposium participants provided recommendations that continue to inform RHIN network planners in their development efforts. Recommendations included:
  - Creating monthly "look what's new" updates
  - Posting meeting notes and one-page draft summaries of ongoing projects
  - Creating modules for different topics, such as TB, with basic information and materials that delve into the details
  - Creating a listsery to facilitate sharing of information as well as a directory of discussion lists on refugee health issues
  - Coordinating efforts with other organizations in assessing the information needs of refugee populations
  - Sharing guidelines to cultural competence
  - Providing more links to communities and organizations that serve foreignspeaking populations
  - Promoting RHIN to local health departments, and distributing a RHIN promotional packet at conferences and other venues

## **Funding**

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Program area: Vulnerable Populations

## **APPENDIX**

## **Participant List**

(Current as of the end date of the program; provided by the program's management; not verified by RWJF.)

## **Jenny Aguirre**

Center for Minority Services Chicago, Ill.

## **Margaret Allen**

Coordinator Hmong Health Information Network Stratford, Wis.

## **Emily Beauregard**

Refugee Health Coordinator Family Health Centers Louisville, Ky.

#### Renée Bougard

Outreach Librarian National Library of Medicine Bethesda, Md.

#### **Marta Brenden**

Coordinator for Refugee Health Programs Office of Refugee Resettlement, Division of Refugee Assistance Washington, D.C.

#### **Heather Burke**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Atlanta, Ga.

## **Cynthia Cadden**

Lockheed Martin Information Technology Gaithersburg, Md.

## **Pete Chauvette**

Lockheed Martin Information Technology Gaithersburg, Md.

#### **Barbara Clark**

Center for Public Service Communications Arlington, Va.

#### **Eric Cleghorn**

Refugee Health Coordinator NY State Department of Health Albany, N.Y.

## **Jacquelyn Coughlan**

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## Sidneé Dallas

State Refugee Health Coordinator Virginia Department of Health Richmond, Va.

## Susan Dicker, PHN, MS, MPH

Refugee Health Nurse Consultant Minnesota Department of Health St. Paul, Minn.

## **Sarah Donnelly**

Office of Refugee Resettlement Division of Refugee Assistance Washington, D.C.

#### **Gale Dutcher**

Chief

Outreach and Special Populations Branch Division of Specialized Information Services National Library of Medicine Bethesda, Md.

#### **Patricia Erwin**

Program Manager Newcomers Health Program San Francisco Department of Public Health San Francisco, Calif.

## Kate W. Flewelling

National Library of Medicine Associate Fellow Health Sciences Library Inova Fairfax Hospital Falls Church, Va.

#### Mary Alice Gillispie, MD

Director Healthy Roads Media Bozeman, Mt.

#### **Carrie Gould-Kabler**

Director of Community Outreach Center for Public Service Communications Arlington, Va.

#### **Paul Henkel**

State Refugee Health Coordinator Tennessee Office for Refugees Nashville, Tenn.

#### **Ruth Holst**

Associate Director Greater Midwest Region/NNLM Chicago, Ill.

#### Sam Householder

Refugee Health Screening Program Department of Health Austin, Texas

#### **Ellen Howard**

Harborview Medical Center Seattle, Wash.

## Kaleb W. Johnson

Refugee Health Coordinator Department of Health Government of the District of Columbia Washington, D.C.

#### **Thomas Keenan**

Health Screening Coordinator New York City, New York State OTDA/BRIA Albany, N.Y.

#### Paula Kitendaugh

Head, Reference and Web Services National Library of Medicine Bethesda, Md.

#### **Colleen Mahar-Piersma**

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#### Tim Maher, RN

Milwaukee City TB Control Keenan Health Center Milwaukee, Wis.

#### **Jessica Montour**

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#### **Jennifer Morillo**

Refugee Health Program
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#### **Ann O'Fallon**

Refugee Health Coordinator Minnesota Department of Health St Paul, Minn.

#### **Catherine Potter**

Refugee Resettlement Program Catholic Social Services Mobile, Ala.

#### John C. Scott

President Center for Public Service Communications Arlington, Va.

### Carrie A. Senseman, MPA

Refugee Health Coordinator Bureau of Epidemiology and Disease Control Arizona Department of Health Services Phoenix, Ariz.

#### Dipti D. Shah, MPH

Epidemiologist/State Refugee & Migrant Health Coordinator Division of TB Control, Refugee and Migrant Health Maryland Department of Health & Mental Hygiene Baltimore, Md.

## **Laura Smith**

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## Savitri J. Tsering, MSSW

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#### Captain John Tuskan, RN, MSN

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## Maria-Luisa Vallejo

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## **Carlos Zavala, Chief**

Refugee Health Section

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## Irina Zelenskaya

Department of Workforce Development Division of Employment and Training Bureau of Migrant, Refugee and Labor Services Madison, Wis.

# Other National Library of Medicine Invitees

**Laura Bartlett** 

**Alla Keselman** 

**Cassandra Allen** 

**Nicole Dancy** 

**Deena Pers** 

**Karen Falconer** 

**Cynthia Gaines** 

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

(Current as of date of the report; as provided by the grantee organization; not verified by RWJF; items not available from RWJF.)

# **Grantee Websites**

www.rhin.org. The website of the Refugee Health Information Network includes the symposium's agenda, background, presentations and a summary of the group discussions.