

# **Comprehensive Assessment of Rural Health in Iowa**

## **Project Title and Amount Requested**

The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) requests \$500,000 for the continuation of the “Comprehensive Assessment of Rural Health in Iowa” (CARHI) surveillance project.

## **Background**

- The health status of rural residents and the impact of environmental effects on the health of this population are poorly documented.
- Existing public health surveillance activities do not consider the effects of the environment on the health status of the public.
- IDPH, in cooperation with the University of Iowa, has developed a highly innovative public health surveillance project that allows for a comprehensive assessment of the health of Iowa’s rural residents which takes into consideration the impact of the environment on human health.
- The CARHI project is the first system of its kind to use Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to monitor relationships between environmental exposures and health with the potential to predict public health risks.
- The CARHI surveillance project is a collaborative effort between CDC, IDPH, and the University of Iowa.

## **CARHI Project Progress**

- Approximately 70 to 80 percent of the 2003 Carroll County health data has been collected. IDPH staff continues to recruit medical providers and to collect the remaining 2003 patient encounter data.
- A review of existing health databases to validate the proposed data collection methodologies.
- A review of existing environmental data sources and transfer of relevant information into the CARHI database.
- Development of geographic information systems (GIS) coverages to be able to analyze health and exposure data from a geographic perspective.
- Development of an analytical plan for the study of possible relationships between specific diseases and certain environmental exposures.

## **Proposal**

The project requires additional funding to accomplish the following critical steps:

- Maintain the existing infrastructure created through the initial three years of the CARHI project, including staff and health encounter data collection.
- Expand the CARHI project geographical area beyond Carroll County to allow for adequate population size, assuring the validity of the survey results and demonstrating that the CARHI project can be replicated in other rural communities.
- Identify and collect environmental exposure data to gain a better understanding of the relationships between the environment and human health.
- Incorporate data from existing health registries to strengthen the human health data set.