

Emory Grants Aim to Build Research Capacity in Communities

ATLANTA – Communities in the metro Atlanta area and in Albany will soon become part of the research process from the very beginning, through grants being awarded by the Atlanta Clinical and Translational Science Institute's Community Engagement and Research Program (CERP) to local community-based organizations (CBOs).

Three CBOs in Metro Atlanta and one in medically underserved Southwest Georgia will receive \$60,000 in grant support from the CERP to build capacity and skills to conduct research in collaboration with academic researchers. The Collaborative Research Capacity Grants Program is designed to engage community organizations in the research process to speed the translation of research from academic findings into practical application.

The grants program includes two phases, March to September 2010 and October 2010 to September 2011. In Phase 1, grantees will attend a series of workshops to build skills and capacity of their staff. The workshops will cover community assessment, program planning, evaluation and grant writing. The grantee organizations will also work in collaboration with one or more academic researchers to design a pilot study on a health disparity issue the community rates as important. The pilot studies will lay the groundwork for larger research grant proposals. In Phase 2, the grantees and researchers will conduct the pilot project and work together to write a grant proposal to fund further research on their health disparity issue. These grant proposals will ultimately be submitted to a government agency or to a foundation.

The Community Engagement and Research Program (CERP) is a core component of the Atlanta Clinical Translational Science Institute, a collaborative effort of Emory University, Morehouse School of Medicine, and Georgia Institute of Technology. The CERP, co-led by the Morehouse and Emory Prevention Research Centers, aims to support community-university research partnerships, to facilitate community input into university research, and to increase health research in community settings that is both responsive and relevant to the health needs of the community.

According to Michelle Kegler, DrPH, MPH, Director of the Emory Prevention Research Center and associate professor of behavioral sciences and health education at Emory's Rollins School of Public Health, "The Collaborative Research Capacity Grants Program seeks to bridge a gap between the academy and the community. We see these grants as an opportunity to pair community organizations with academic researchers around questions and topics of interest to both parties. By making these matches, we can ensure the resulting research projects are answering questions of interest to the community."

The grantee organizations are:

- AIDS Alliance for Faith and Health (AAFH), based in Atlanta. The mission of the Alliance is to enhance the quality of life and extend long-term survival for people living with HIV disease. AAFH's proposed research project topic is to identify effective case management interventions that would serve to re-engage individuals into services and to reach those who refuse treatment or who are unaware of their HIV status.
- Atlanta Lesbian Health Initiative, based in Atlanta. ALHI's mission is improving the health

and well-being of lesbians and other members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer community through education, advocacy, support and access to care. ALHI's proposed topic is breast cancer prevention in LGBT populations or tobacco prevention and control in LGBT adolescents, young adults, and adults.

- BPSOS, located in Doraville. The mission of BPSOS is to empower, organize, and equip Vietnamese individuals and communities in their pursuit of liberty and dignity. The proposed research topic is identifying the motivational and prohibitive factors that shape Hepatitis B screening, vaccination, and treatment behaviors.
- Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital, in Albany. The hospital provides clinical research capabilities to the communities of Southwest Georgia, and the proposed research topic is increasing patient understanding of informed consent for clinical studies.

The capacity-building grants are made possible as part of a \$600,000 grant award from the National Center for Research Resources at the National Institutes of Health, issued under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.