

Tracks: National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network Announces New State Grantees

[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC— safer, healthier people.

Narrator: Hello everyone. Thank you for tuning in to the Tracks Podcast, where we explore topics related to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network.

Joining us this episode is Dr. Judith Qualters, Chief of the Environmental Public Health Tracking Branch. Thank you for joining us today, Judy.

Dr. Qualters: It's a pleasure.

Narrator: Since launching in July 2009, CDC's Tracking Network is already growing. Can you please share how the Tracking Network is expanding?

Dr. Qualters: Well actually, we're expanding in two ways that we're very excited about. The first is that we received additional funding this year from Congress. So, we were able to add six new states to the Tracking Network. Previously we had funded 16 states and New York City to create statewide networks or a local network that would be components of the national Network. And now, in addition, we have 22 states total and New York City still. And, the new states include Colorado, Kansas, Minnesota, Louisiana, Vermont, and South Carolina. So we're really starting to fill in the U.S. map and push towards our goal of being nationwide.

And I guess the other way thing we are excited about is that we are working on adding additional data to the Network and while it's not up there yet, we anticipate in the next couple months we'll be adding in data on reproductive health outcomes, birth defects, and additional cancers, and also some data on ozone and PM_{2.5} that we've been working on with EPA to try and fill in some of the gaps in the data that's already there.

Narrator: How will the expansion of state members and data improve the Tracking Network? For example, what new information can Tracking Network users expect to see as a result of the new states' involvement, and how will the current states work with the new states to improve the Network?

Dr. Qualters: Well I would say that really where it impacts data is where we have been collecting data directly from states. And so, some data that currently isn't available nationwide, like asthma hospitalizations, heart attack hospitalizations, carbon monoxide emergency department visits and hospitalizations; those sorts of things are going to be available for more states—for the 22 states eventually. Still not something that's nationwide but certainly expanding to have more information for the U.S. and to get a better picture of what's going on across the U.S. We also will have additional data on from state water systems. So those are some of the new data that'll be available.

Narrator: Is there an estimated timeline when you expect the new grantees to launch their state tracking networks?

Dr. Qualters: Let's see, all of them will actually be launching their networks within the next three years. We had four, when we did the funding we had four states that applied for basically a period of planning before they implement. And then we have two states, Minnesota and South Carolina, that actually were funded for immediate implementation, so they'll be launching probably within the next year.

Narrator: What's next for the future of the Tracking Network?

Dr. Qualters: Wow, I think that next; we have a couple of next steps and certainly a couple of priorities. One is that we're going to be continuing to enhance the Network itself, in terms of both the data that's on there, what you can do with that data, the types of functionality the Network provides.

We've launched our public portal and a big next step for us is to launch the secure portal, which is basically a place for authorized users to be able to access data and use data.

Narrator: That's all the time we have for this episode. I would like to thank Dr. Judith Qualters for joining us today, and I encourage everyone to visit the National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network at www.cdc.gov/ephtracking.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO 24/7.