

\$2 Million Federal Grant Funds Rural Health Research Center at Muskie School

Since 1992, the Muskie School's Institute for Health Policy has been working with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (DHHS) Office of Rural Health Policy on behavioral health research. Due to this 12-year record of productive research and the School's nationally recognized faculty who specialize in this field, the School has recently been awarded \$2 million from DHHS to fund one of eight national rural health research centers.

Over the next four years, the Maine Rural Health Research Center will focus its research on mental health and substance abuse in rural America. "This grant strengthens our national standing as an institution," said Center Director David Hartley, a professor in the Health Policy and Management master's program. "Along with the other centers, our research will be a major influence in the formation of national policy on pressing rural health policy issues." Hartley will meet periodically with center directors to identify research priorities, discuss current policy issues, and explore partnerships.

Projects that the Center has already begun include a national chart book outlining substance abuse by type of drug and geographic area, directed by Research Associate John Gale. This information will

be used to help understand the growing problem of substance abuse in rural areas, and target additional resources where they are most needed. Research Associate Erika Ziller, in another project, will be looking at how uninsured rural families acquire health insurance for family members.

A third project, lead by Assistant Professor Lisa Morris, will focus on measuring the impact of mental health and emotional stress on jobs. "Given the smaller economy, the lack of assistance programs, and the shortage of mental health providers, the effects of mental health problems on employment are likely to be exacerbated in rural areas," said Morris. "A better understanding of how these problems affect rural workers will not only help service providers target interventions to workers needing support, but will also inform employers about how they might help employees on the job."

"Mental health has recently been identified as a top concern of rural health policy makers at the state and national level," said Hartley. "We are gratified that DHHS has acknowledged this priority, and has positioned us at the forefront of research on such an important topic."

State/University Project Receives National Award for Quality

A program developed by Maine's Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Muskie School's Institute for Public Sector Innovation (IPSI) has been awarded a 2004 national award for quality by the National Staff Development and Training Association, the training affiliate of the American Public Human Services Association. The Standard Eligibility Policy Training Program (SEPT) provides specialists in DHHS' Bureau of Family Independence with standardized training on how to implement program policy and utilize the state's online eligibility system.

"The SEPT program has improved BFI's responsiveness and efficiency by ensuring that, for the first time ever, new Family Independence Specialists receive consistent, first-rate training," said Sally Ward, Manager of Public Welfare Training at IPSI. Family Independence Specialists at BFI are

responsible for determining eligibility for the state's Food Stamps, MaineCare, and TANF programs and working with citizens who participate in them.

The Muskie School was asked by HHS to design, implement and deliver the SEPT program due in large part to the School's expertise in instructional design, curriculum development, and adult education. It was created four years ago in anticipation of Maine's adoption of an Automated Client Eligibility System, which greatly improves the way citizens apply for public assistance programs. The new system placed additional responsibilities on specialists that required more extensive, effective training.

"We were fortunate to have the expertise and enthusiasm of Muskie School staff to assist us in the project," said HHS Commissioner, John R. Nicholas.

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The USM Muskie School of Public Service educates leaders, informs public policy and broadens civic participation. The School links scholarship with practice to improve the lives of people of all ages, in every county in Maine, and every state in the nation.

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Upcoming Events

Wed Oct 6

Muskie Policy Forum

*"Maine's Tax Cap Measure:
Understanding the Options"*

Charlie Colgan,

USM Muskie Professor

Bill Becker,

Maine Heritage Policy Center

Christopher St. John,

Maine Center for Economic Policy

Moot Court Room,

First Floor, Law Building

USM Portland Campus

7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

*See article on reverse for more
information about this event.*

Wed Oct 27

Muskie School Research & Public Service Fair

Woodbury Campus Center

USM Portland Campus

3:00 - 7:00 p.m.

*See article on reverse for more
information about this event.*

Thu Oct 28

Policy Soundings

Navigating the Tax Caps

Dr. Thomas A. Sownes,

Tufts University

Eastland Park Hotel

Portland

7:30 - 9:00 a.m.

*a partnership with the Greater
Portland Chambers of Commerce*

To register for this event, visit
www.portlandregion.com, or
call (207) 772-2811.



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"This award speaks to the quality of our training programs and also the importance of the partnership between Muskie and HHS."

"The leadership of BFI Director Barbara Van Burgel along with the collaboration and support of the Bureau's staff have been key to the program's success," said Freda Bernotavicz, IPSI Director. "All involved are to be congratulated for their commitment to excellence and this well-deserved national recognition." The award will be presented at the National Staff Development and Training Association's conference in Chicago on November 2.

"Changing Maine" Features 22 Essays on Maine Life

The Muskie School and Tilbury House Publishers have recently released "Changing Maine: 1960-2010," a collection of 22 essays edited by Muskie professor Richard Barringer that explore Maine's changing economic, political and social landscape. Governor John Baldacci called it, "...the indispensable citizen's guide and traveler's guide to all that is happening in Maine today." Senator Susan Collins said it is, "...a must read for anyone who is concerned for Maine today and wants to make informed and thoughtful choices for Maine's future." The book features essays by 23 policy experts from around the state including Muskie professors Charles Colgan, Beth Kilbreth, Mark Lapping, Dahlia Lynn, and Evan Richert. The essays are based on a public lecture series presented by the Muskie School last spring and fall. To obtain a copy, contact Tilbury House Publishers at (207) 582-1899 or www.tilburyhouse.com.



Muskie School Holds Public Forum on Tax Cap Measure

In response to the active public debate around Maine's upcoming vote on the tax cap measure, the Muskie School will host a public education forum, "Maine's Tax Cap Measure: Understanding the Options," on Wednesday, October 6. The forum will feature Muskie Professor Charles Colgan, Bill Becker from the Maine Heritage Policy Center, and Christopher St. John from the Maine Center for Economic Policy, who will present a variety of research on this topic as well as a diverse range of perspectives on the possible consequences of the tax cap measure if passed on November 2. The Forum will be held from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. in the Moot Court Room on the first floor of the University of Maine School of Law on the USM Portland campus, and is free and open to the public. It is scheduled for later broadcast on Maine Public Radio (90.1FM) on Friday, October 15 at 12:30 p.m.

Muskie School Hosts Research and Public Service Fair

On Wednesday, October 27, 3:00 - 7:00 p.m., the Muskie School is hosting a Research and Public Service Fair to highlight a variety of research projects and provide the public with an opportunity to meet research staff and discover more about the School's applied research activities. At 5:00, the School will also hold an Academic Program Open House for individuals who are interested in learning more about the School's graduate programs. The Fair and Open House will take place in the Woodbury Campus Center on

the USM Portland campus and are free and open to the public. For more information, contact Dan Roach, in the Muskie School Student Affairs Office at (207) 780-4188 or danr@usm.maine.edu.

Faculty, Staff and Student News

Professor Andy Coburn was recently in California to advise the University of California San Francisco Medical School's Institute for Health Policy on their plan to establish a multi-university Health Policy Center that will work with that state's Medicaid program. He presented the Muskie School's 20-year history of working with the Medicaid program in Maine.

Carmen Dorsey, Director of the Maine Criminal Justice Statistical Analysis Center at the Muskie School, has recently been appointed to the board of Volunteers of America for Northern New England, a nonprofit providing local human service programs and opportunities for individual and community involvement.

Professor David Hartley's article, "Rural health disparities, population health, and rural culture," will be published in the October issue of American Journal of Public Health, www.apha.org.

In September, **Eric James**, Financial Specialist II at the Institute for Public Sector Innovation, gave a presentation about grant compliance at the Financial Management Institute for National Service in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

In October, **Professor David Lambert** and **John Gale**, Research Associate at the Institute for Health Policy, will be giving a presentation entitled, "Integrating Behavioral and Physical Health Services: Organizing at the Community Level," at the New England Rural Health Round Table in Nashua, New Hampshire.

Professor Mark Lapping has recently presented the following papers: "The Economy of the Rural Northeast" at the Council of State Governments' Eastern Regional Conference in Springfield, Massachusetts; "Maine's Changing Demographics and Implications for Planners" at the Northern New England Chapter Conference of the American Planning Association in Montpelier, Vermont; and "Farming on the Fringe: Problems and Possibilities" at the Institute for Journalism and Natural Resources in Gorham, Maine.

A \$10,000 community block grant that **students in Professor Mark Lapping's community development class** helped to develop last spring has recently been awarded to Chebeague Island, Maine, to conduct an affordable housing study.

In September, **Professor Evan Richert** presented at the Gulf of Maine Science-to-Management Research Priorities Conference in South Portland, Maine. He and **Professor Charles Colgan** also gave presentations at Maine Governor John Baldacci's Annual Affordable Housing Conference held September 21 in Augusta.

In September, **RuthAnne Spence**, Research Associate II at the Institute for Public Sector Innovation, presented Maine's collaborative case management model to attendees of the National Governor's Association's Policy Academy on Cross-Systems Innovations: Improving Outcomes for Children and Families in Denver, Colorado.