

## **Application to Host an Iowa Public Health Association AmeriCorps HealthCorps member**

### **Section 1.**

Linn County Public Health (LCPH) would like to be considered as a placement site for the AmeriCorps HealthCorps program for 2011 – 2012. LCPH would like to apply for one (1) AmeriCorps HealthCorps member and is committed to contributing a cash match of \$8,700 upon execution of the contract with IPHA. (LCPH may provide this match from a pool of federal funds and has contacted the funding agency to request approval. Given the tight deadline for applications, LCPH is awaiting approval and is submitting this application without written documentation.)

### **Section 2.**

Established in 1958, Linn County Public Health is a county health department directed by the Linn County Board of Health. With a 62-member staff, the agency provides a wide range of direct services, prevention services, and health surveillance to protect the health of Linn County residents. LCPH has engaged the local community through collaboration and developed infrastructure to serve as the coordinator of community disease prevention and health promotion initiatives.

LCPH has the ability to comply with the provisions of the *“Site Supervisor Duties & Responsibilities and Site Expectations”* document. LCPH is a progressive, responsive agency under the direction of interim-Director and Deputy Director Stephanie Neff. Ms. Neff earned a Masters degree in Community Health and maintains a Certified Health Education Specialist certification. Ms. Neff has experience managing grant programs to improve health and wellness, including overseeing the Iowa Healthy Communities Initiative Grant: Community Wellness Grant. LCPH is well qualified to oversee compliance and ensure successful implementation of the IPHA AmeriCorps HealthCorps program.

### **Section 3.**

LCPH has the capacity to identify and respond to community health needs and a proven ability to impact the health of urban and rural Iowans. Located in East Central Iowa, Linn County is comprised of the City of Cedar Rapids and 18 rural communities, which together are home to 208,574 individuals. In June 2008, record flooding besieged Cedar Rapids and the recovery costs are estimated to be as much as \$5 billion dollars. Additionally, minority populations in Linn County are growing at an accelerated rate and these families are disproportionately affected by poverty and have decreased access to health and social services. These circumstances provide numerous opportunities for LCPH to take a leadership role in meeting the constantly changing and ever increasing needs of Linn County residents.

Much like the rest of the United States, Linn County is facing an obesity epidemic that is affecting adults and children. Since 2005, the Cedar Rapids Community School District has been tabulating Body Mass Index data for its Kindergarten and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students. School District data shows that roughly one-third (34%) of kindergarteners consistently weigh more than their doctors recommend (2008).

LCPH would like to participate in the IPHA HealthCorps program in order to reduce the risk of preventable chronic disease and obesity and improve the health and quality of life for Linn County residents. In the Linn County Community Health Improvement Plan (2011-2014), the community identified obesity as one of the top five county health concerns. Based on the identified community needs, LCPH would like a HealthCorps member to provide consistent, evidence-based health education programming at local community organizations that reach children, including WIC, the local farmers

markets, and local faith-based organizations. LCPH has initiated a partnership with F.L.Y (Feeding Lunch to Youth and their Families), a collaboration between eleven local congregations, to help the agency improve the nutritional value of the lunches, incorporate a physical activity component, and initiate a community garden project.

For the last three years, staff from LCPH's Healthy Behaviors Branch have worked with community partners to provide free worksite health assessments to participating Linn County workplaces. In 2011, 34 Linn County workplaces received a free worksite health assessment and technical assistance to become a tobacco free worksite. With the addition of a HealthCorps member, LCPH would have the capacity to expand this program to provide technical assistance on nutrition and physical activity, including advocating for evidence-based nutrition and wellness policies, providing low-cost nutrition and physical activity programs, and promoting support for breastfeeding in the workplace.

Additionally, the HealthCorps member will assist in increasing community outreach, education, and communication to promote healthy behaviors among residents and advocate for policy change among decision makers. The HealthCorps member will improve the health of Linn County residents by conducting education efforts, helping coordinate new and existing wellness activities, organizing, building capacity, collecting data and conducting evaluation.

#### **Section 4.**

Linn County Public Health is committed to collecting the statistics required by the IPHA AmeriCorps program. The AmeriCorps member, in cooperation with Stephanie Neff, will design an evaluation plan to document project progress. The evaluation plan will include the analysis of primary and secondary data for both process- and outcome-indicators. The evaluation plan will likely include interviews, surveys, and focus groups to evaluate individual behavior changes and community changes in policies, programs, and the physical environment.

- a. LCPH will document the number of unduplicated Iowans reached by tracking attendance at health education programs and services for local businesses, organizations, and individuals.
- b. LCPH will track the percentage of unduplicated Iowans who indicate an increase in knowledge on wellness or intent to increase physical activity after attending locally organized programs.
- c. During the program year, LCPH will work with the HealthCorps Program Director to determine the feasibility of establishing a baseline for the BMI of students in local school districts.

#### **Section 5.**

LCPH will use their existing community infrastructure to achieve the goals of this grant. The Healthy Living Coalition (HLC) was formed in November 2004 in response to the Community Health Needs Assessment, which ranked obesity and related chronic disease (diabetes, cardiovascular disease) as one of the top five health concerns in the county. LCPH has been a contributing partner since the inception of the HLC. The HLC is comprised of local businesses, government and health care agencies, faith-based entities, schools and volunteers who envision a community that actively practices and promotes health, nutrition and physical activity. One of the most recent successful collaborations has been with the City of Cedar Rapids Bicycle Advisory Committee to improve the accessibility and safety of the Cedar Rapids Trail System.

In addition to the members of the community coalition, Linn County Public Health will call upon a variety of local stakeholders and supporting agencies to fulfill the goals of this grant, including: Healthy Linn Care Network, local farmers markets, Municipal and County Parks, local school districts, WIC Office, YMCA, and faith-based organizations.

#### **Section 6.**

LCPH has experience working with diverse populations and faith-based communities. An essential component of effectively meeting the core function of public health is partnership and collaboration. LCPH engages multiple partners including those who work primarily with underserved and disparate populations and faith-based organizations, such as His Hands Free Medical Clinic, the Catholic Worker House, and The Catherine McAuley Center. The HealthCorps member will enhance current relationships while identifying new opportunities for partnership.

#### **Section 7.**

LCPH is committed to designating staff to provide local leadership, recruitment, training, and supervision to their HealthCorps member. Multiple managers at LCPH have experience supervising AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps VISTA, and other national public service program members. Proposed HealthCorps supervisor Stephanie Neff has five years of experience supervising AmeriCorps members and complying with the regulation related to national public service programs. Currently, Ms. Neff supervises the two-year CDC Public Health Apprentice position focused on disease surveillance and community outreach initiatives.

Ms. Neff has supervisory experience and responsibility in multiple areas of the host agency. Ms. Neff is the former Executive Director of the Healthy Linn Care Network, the current Deputy Director and interim-Director of Linn County Public Health; currently serves as the Division Director for the agency's Community Health Services Division and has served as the Personal Health Services Division Director. Ms. Neff has an understanding of the National Service and AmeriCorps mission and is willing to articulate the AmeriCorps roles and responsibilities to other staff. Ms. Neff possesses the qualifications to provide growth and support to the AmeriCorps member and is willing to devote the required time to managing and evaluating the AmeriCorps member.

#### **Section 8.**

LCPH has a wealth of experience partnering with AmeriCorps and other national public service programs. In the past two years, LCPH has served as a host site for three AmeriCorps VISTA members. In FY09, two AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers worked to help build capacity for Childhood Asthma Management, Indoor Air Quality, and Ambient Air Quality. In FY10, an additional AmeriCorps VISTA member helped build radon awareness and a minimum housing program in Linn County. In 2011, the LCPH Healthy Homes Branch received recognition from the IPHA for advancement of public health through these innovative approaches to eliminating environmental health hazards in the home.