Epidemiology-Laboratory Capacity Grants

One of the tasks of county health departments is to conduct public health surveillance by collecting and analyzing health-related data, which is an important way to identify and monitor public health issues, such as detecting disease outbreaks and assessing disease risk factors.

To support these efforts, the law establishes the Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity Grant Program to award funding to eligible entities for efforts to improve surveillance for and response to infectious diseases and other conditions of public health importance. The grants will be issued from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and will help strengthen national epidemiology, laboratory and information management system capacity, as well as provide funding to help plan for disease outbreak control strategies.

Eligible entities for the grants include state, local, or tribal health departments, tribal jurisdictions, or academic centers that meet CDC-specified criteria.

The law has authorized but not specifically appropriated $190 million for each year of fiscal years 2010-2013, with the following requirements for funding projects so that each fiscal year:

- At least $95 million be allocated for epidemiology functions, such as improving capacity to track infectious diseases and other public health issues and designing and carrying out prevention and control strategies
- At least $60 million for enhancing information management systems
- At least $32 million for improving laboratory practice and electronic reporting

Any funding that may be appropriated could be taken from the Prevention and Public Health Fund. In FY2010, the CDC allocated a total of $26.4 million to support health departments build capacity in epidemiology, laboratory and health information systems. The funding was provided through the Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity for Infectious Diseases (ELC) and the Emerging Infections Program (EIP) cooperative agreements, and provides support for the hiring and training of epidemiologists, laboratory scientists and health information specialists, helping public health departments build capacity to engage in meaningful use of electronic health records and develop better equipped public health laboratories.

In FY2011, $40 million was allocated and in August 2011 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention awarded $49 million in grants to state and local health departments to improve public health infrastructure, which included some funding from the ACA. The funding will increase epidemiology, lab and health information systems capacity at health departments in all 50 states, two territories and the six large metropolitan jurisdictions.

Additional Information & Resources
Brief from Health Reform GPS on Epidemiology-Laboratory Capacity grants:

1 PPACA Section 4304