

NCDHR receives second 5-year grant from CDC

(April 3, 2009) The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has officially awarded a second 5-year grant to the Rochester Prevention Research Center: National Center for Deaf Health Research. This enables NCDHR's efforts to promote health and prevent disease in the Deaf community to continue through 2014. "One of the key strengths for achieving this major grant," asserts Dr. Thomas Pearson, NCDHR Director, "is our steadfast partnership with the Deaf Health community through our Community Committee."

NCDHR is a part of the Preventive Research Center (PRC) Program which currently consists of 33 centers situated throughout the country. Each center conducts population-based public health research on underserved/understudied groups. In 2004, NCDHR was awarded its first 5-year grant to develop "Deaf-friendly" surveys, including a comprehensive computer-based Deaf Health Survey (DHS) shown in American Sign Language or English-based signing through videos and captions. This was in response to lack of health data in the Deaf population because past public health surveys were conducted by telephone. The NCDHR confidential surveys collected information about the health of the Deaf community, not hearing loss.

Findings from the DHS have revealed health disparities which were shared with the Deaf community during the town hall meetings in late summer 2008. Members from the DHCC and the Deaf community recommended that the 2nd 5-year grant should focus on intervention research to reduce obesity. The new grant project, called "Deaf Weight Wise," involves taking an existing program to help people lose weight and be more active, and adapting it for the Deaf community. The existing program, developed by North Carolina PRC, has worked well there, and the NCDHR wants to find out if it can be adapted to benefit the Deaf community.

The first step, which will start October 2009, will be to take written program materials and convert them into ASL. Next, Deaf community members will be trained as program "coaches." Then, program participants will be recruited from the Deaf community to take part in a test of the program. The Deaf Community Coaches will lead the program. Half of the community members will start the program right away. The other half will start 6 months later. NCDHR researchers will collect data throughout the test to find out if the program works as intended. The center hopes to begin the test sometime in 2011.

The grant also includes plans for building community partnerships, communicating research results to the community and to the academic world, for training programs for community members and students, and evaluating the center's success over time.

"We are thrilled about the prospect of collaborating with NCDHR for another five years," signed Jess Cuculick, Chair of the DHCC. "We have seen tremendous progress in cross-cultural understanding between ASL users, as members of a linguistic minority, and the PRC Program since 2004."