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Integrating Professionals for Appalachian Children Receives \$900,000 Grant

(ATHENS, Ohio-May 16, 2014) Integrating Professionals for Appalachian Children (IPAC) has been awarded a federal grant of nearly \$1 million to help connect southeast Ohio families with primary care providers and to strengthen and expand IPAC programs that improve access to essential health care services for children.

Since 2002, the nonprofit group has helped coordinate health and wellness programs involving several community agencies in the region as well as Ohio University's Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine, College of Health Sciences and Professions, Scripps College of Communication, and the Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs.

"IPAC is a rural health network, with the vision of ensuring healthy development for all kids, achieved by integrating and leveraging the resources of our participating community agencies and university colleges," said Jane Hamel-Lambert, Ph.D., M.B.A., principal investigator on the grant. Dr. Hamel-Lambert, an associate professor in the Department of Family Medicine at the Heritage College, has provided leadership for IPAC since its inception. "With these funds, we hope to provide future sustainability for IPAC, enabling us to continue strengthening the system of care in our community to address the social, emotional and health needs of southeast Ohio families."

The Rural Health Network Development Program, which is administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), will provide \$300,000 a year for the next three years to IPAC. In addition to supporting organizational development for the network, the HRSA grant will establish interprofessional care teams to work with families and those providing foster care to address the developmental, behavioral and health concerns of children who have experienced trauma. IPAC will also use this opportunity to inform and educate the community and our regional health systems about situations and events that may lead to emotional and developmental trauma.

Additionally, the funds will promote the healthy development of infants by supporting increased access to lactation services and tobacco cessation intervention for pregnant women. For families who frequently use the local emergency department because they don't have a regular doctor, efforts will be made to connect families with primary care providers.

"Optimal care can only be provided by a primary care physician who manages the child's health, not just his or her illness," said Sue Meeks, R.N.-BC, manager of the Family Navigator Program and member of IPAC's Board of Directors. Meeks has long recognized the need to educate families about the differences in the health delivery system.

Since its inception, IPAC (<http://www.ipacohio.org/>) has received more than \$5 million in federal funding and has developed six clinical initiatives that range from providing education and advocacy for families to addressing the behavioral and emotional health needs of children. A recipient of the Distinguished Rural Health Program Award from the Ohio Department of Health, the IPAC network consists of multiple agencies in southeast Ohio, including several Ohio University departments and clinics. Ohio University is the founding member of the network.

The Ohio University Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine is a leader in training dedicated primary care physicians who are prepared to address the most pervasive medical needs in the state and the nation. Approximately 50 percent of Heritage College alumni practice in primary care and nearly 60 percent practice in Ohio. CARE LEADS HERE.