



Meeting Summary, April 21, 2009

**Commission Attendees:** Kenneth Alleyne for Cato Laurencin (Director, UConn Health Center), Nancy Berger (Department of Public Health), David Carlow (Department of Developmental Services), Lorraine Carrano (St. Vincent's Hospital), Jeannette DeJesus (Hispanic Health Council), Kelson Ettienne-Modeste (Hartford Public Schools), Mary Eberle (UConn Center for Public Health and Health Policy), Paul Flinter (Department of Education), Cheryl Harris Forbes (African-American Affairs Commission), Colleen Gallagher (Department of Corrections), James Gatling (public member – New Opportunities, Inc.), Andres Martin (Yale University Medical School), Jose Ortiz (Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services), Stephanie Paulmeno (public member--Greenwich Department of Health), Natasha Pierre (PCSW), Jim Rawlings (Connecticut NAACP), Marie Spivey (public member—Capitol Workforce Partners), Gregory Stanton (public member--Lawrence & Memorial Hospital), Rev. Michael Williams, Robert Zavoski (DSS)

**Other Attendees:** Elizabeth Brown (Commission on Children), Elizabeth Krause (Connecticut Health Foundation)

**Administrative Attendees:** Victoria Veltri and Michael Mitchell (Office of the Healthcare Advocate)

All members were provided with a copy of the meeting agenda. All members and other attendees were asked to sign-in to confirm attendance.

Attendance was taken by Michael Mitchell at the request of the Chair/

Motion was made and seconded to approve the agenda. Agenda was approved.

First item for review was the retreat summary from March 2009. All were agreement that retreat summary was accurate. Jim stated that the commission is working on retaining the facilitator throughout the commission's process of developing a report for the Governor and legislature.

Deliverables from the retreat were summarized.

Kelson summarized the communication committee's efforts –

- First item, creating collaborations with like agencies and having 10-25 MOAs with agencies by the end of the calendar year.
- Second item, bring the public together in forums across the state to make folks aware and become informed of health equity issues. Connecticut Health Foundation Fellows have agreed to assist in this effort. Voter voice will be used in four cities around the state
- Provide public exposure to issues pertaining to health equity—there was discussion about an interactive website.

Jeannette summarized the policy workgroup's group

- Established guidelines for policy work and how it would be formulated
- Focus of policy on systems change no individual issues
- Group would make recommendations to the commission as a whole for adaptation
- Policy group decided to set-up a temporarily separated but related legislative group headed by Natasha for which guidelines are being developed

Jeannette stated that both the policy workgroup and its sub-workgroup, the legislative workgroup, need more members.

Paul Cleary heads the data group. Elizabeth Krause reported on it because Paul was not in attendance.

- The work group needs additional members including another co-convenor.
- The group will look at existing data in Connecticut and data collection practices and policies.
- Elizabeth mentioned that some members of the commission have expressed interest in a webinar on the data that is currently available. She is awaiting an answer from DPH.

Retreat summary was moved and seconded and adopted as the final summary since quorum was now met.

Jim addressed the proposed letter that the commission meant to send to the Governor. Jeannette explained that the letter would allow the commission to have a voice in the current discussion on budget issues that would send a message of cooperation and partnership on but would allow the commission to address its concerns of the effects of the proposals on health equity.

Jeannette forwarded the letter to the executive committee for approval. After receiving approval, the letter was forwarded to other members of the commission. There was

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concern by the state agency officials about signing on to a letter addressed to the Governor. This triggered a discussion among the members about how to handle these kinds of issues.

After a lengthy discussion about the issue of state agency designees' ability to actually participate or represent the agency at the commission or to authorize participation in a letter or other matters that might advocate for items that are possibly in conflict with the executive branch.

The consensus was that agencies could abstain from voting and have it noted in the record, but that if the majority still voted in favor of the measure that the measure would be adopted.

The by-laws committee was directed to bring some language forward at the next meeting to resolve this issue concerning public agencies.

As to the specific letter to the Governor authored by Jeannette, a motion was made to approve and send the letter to the Governor. The motion was made, seconded and approved, with abstentions by state agency officials. The letter will be sent as soon as possible after the meeting.

Next item of the agenda was the legislative updates. Overarching goal is to make recommendations on specific legislation to the policy group which will then make recommendations to the commission. The report of the legislative group was approved by voice vote.

The finance and funding committee then reported. Jim Rawlings reported on retaining the facilitator through assistance of the Universal Health Care Foundation. Jim reported that he heard that some funding might be coming to the commission. Vicki reported that in the Appropriations Committee budget, one staff person was provided, but that is subject to the negotiations. Vicki also explained that the commission cannot get direct funding without going through OHA. A grant awarded through a third-party fiduciary would be acceptable. Jim acknowledged that this would be the case through the next couple of years. Committee report was approved.

Elizabeth Krause announced that her unofficial participation in the commission would end after the meeting, but she will participate in informal ways. Her appointment has remained stagnant for six months.

Jim commented on the distribution on the DPH 2009 Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Report. Nancy Berger pointed to items in the report that commissioner could use to guide their review of the current landscape of disparities at this time. Nancy

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offered a DPH presentation on the report for the commission. Nancy mentioned that DPH developed a policy statement on data collection and has met with other agencies to make data collection more consistent across agencies. Right now data collection processes are inconsistent within and without agencies.

Stephanie Paulmeno mentioned that a recent report highlighted the problem of the high number of preventable hospital readmissions. She suggested that the commission examine whether there's a component of racial and ethnic health disparities. Liz Brown referenced the Office of Health Care Access Report on the same issue.

Some commissioners commented on the need for a statewide plan on multicultural health that is adequately resourced by public funding in addition to private funding. Jeannette mentioned that community based organizations have developed reports that can be used to provide analysis and direction in the future. She suggested that we need to take advantage of our collective resources in the community to take advantage of that experience.

Nancy Berger said the Ct Multicultural Health Partnership is putting forth a plan on the CLAS standards to focus on one issue at a time and then expand to other issues.

Kelson reminded the commission that there are a significant number of unrepresented groups at the commission and that the commission needs to be mindful of those groups.

Jim Rawlings announced that Rev. Michael Williams is now Kevin Lembo's designee to the commission. Vicki introduced Jim Gatling as one of Senator McKinney's three appointments. Both gentlemen provided the commission with a brief biography.

Stephanie Paulmeno announced her participation in the development of a statewide heart health plan. She informally will bring her interests from this commission to that project.

Vicki announced that Martha Burr has left the commission.

Vicki reminded the commission that the website is updated with new reports, meeting agendas and summaries.

Nancy Berger announced that the CT Health Partnership is conducting a CT health disparities initiative inventory – a survey that will be sent out shortly to a diverse group of organizations. She requested that commissioners ask those they know that have received surveys to return them.

Jim announced that NAACP's Health Fair would take place on May 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup>.

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Elizabeth Krause announced Connecticut Health Equity Week during the week of May 18<sup>th</sup>. She invited presenters and organizations to participate.

Michael Williams announced that there would be a healthcare summit that weekend by Hartford's interfaith community at Emanuel Congregational Church to mobilize around the elimination of racial and ethnic disparities.

The meeting was adjourned.

**Next Meeting:** LOB Room 1B, 9:30 a.m.

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