

State of Connecticut ***Commission on Health Equity***

Meeting Summary, November 20, 2008

Commission Attendees: Nancy Berger (Department of Public Health), Bruce Carlson for Cato Laurencin (Dean, UConn School of Medicine), Paul Cleary (Dean, Yale School of Public Health), Jeannette DeJesus (Hispanic Health Council), Kelson Ettienne-Modeste (Hartford Public Schools), Ann Ferris (UConn Center for Public Health and Health Policy), Paul Flinter (Department of Education), Cheryl Harris Forbes (African-American Affairs Commission), Kevin Lembo (Office of the Healthcare Advocate), Jose Ortiz (Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services), Stephanie Paulmeno (public member--Greenwich Department of Health), Natasha Pierre (Permanent Commission on the Status of Women), Jim Rawlings (Connecticut NAACP), William Rivera for Janet Williams (Medical Director, Department of Children and Families), Marie Spivey (public member—Capitol Workforce Partners), Gregory Stanton (public member--Lawrence & Memorial Hospital)

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, draft meeting summary from 10/30/08, draft by-laws and conflicts resolution statement. All members and other attendees were asked to sign-in to confirm attendance.

After introductions, the first item for discussion was approval of the draft meeting summary from the inaugural meeting of the Commission on Health Equity on October 30, 2008. Nancy Berger and Natasha Pierre noted that their names were omitted from the list of members in attendance. The meeting summary with the addition of the names of these members was approved without objection.

Greg Stanton reported on the work of the by-laws work group in drafting the by-laws and a conflicts resolution statement. After Greg's summary, there was a significant amount of discussion on the draft. The following suggestions were made and adopted by the commission as revisions to the draft by-laws:

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- Members should be able to participate in commission meetings in-person, telephonically or by other means such as videoconference, and therefore be counted as “present”.
- A quorum at meetings is defined as the presence of more than one-half of appointed or designated members.
- Motions are passed by a simple majority of those present at a meeting. Voting must be made at the meetings. Votes will not be held open.
- Draft meeting summaries should be distributed within three weeks of a CHE meeting to allow members to review the draft in time for the next meeting.
- A nomination committee should be elected by the CHE in order to nominate candidates for offices to be filled in January 2009.
- Nominations from the floor should be accepted in both December and January.
- Officers should serve a one-year term. (There was some discussion about whether the officers’ terms should be longer than one-year, but there was consensus among the commission that the one-year term is appropriate given that the by-laws allow a member to serve three consecutive one-year terms if continuity is an issue.)
- If the Executive Committee acts in a special meeting on an issue of fundamental importance to the commission, the vote should be ratified at the next CHE meeting.
- A finance committee should be established, the duties of which would be defined at the next CHE meeting.
- The legislative committee should have the responsibility of reviewing current legislation and making recommendations to the full commission for an action thereon.

Vick Veltri agreed to modify the by-laws in accordance with the commission’s comments and discussion with Greg Stanton and re-circulate a final by-laws document to the full CHE membership.

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Discussion of the conflicts resolution statement was deferred until the December 2008 meeting.

There was a brief discussion about the potential new members of the CHE, including Elizabeth Krause and one or two other people for whom staff of the Office of the Healthcare Advocate contacted appointing officials. Kelson Ettienne-Modeste was introduced as a new member, appointed by Speaker James Amann.

Jim Rawlings gave a report of the Finance Work Group. There was discussion about the phases of funding (planning, operational, etc.) that may be necessary. Strategic planning and start-up funding may be available from the local health and community foundations. On-going/operational funding will more likely be tied to Commission activity and research. Jeannette DeJesus suggested the Commission consider creating an endowment and beginning to fund the endowment through a solicitation of Commission members and their agencies/organizations. Finally, there was a discussion about identifying special revenue streams (fines, etc.) that may be directed/redirected to CHE. A discussion with the Attorney General's Office was suggested.

Jeannette DeJesus gave a brief overview of the issue concerning the Governor's decision to cut funding for Medicaid interpreter services. She will provide the CHE with a copy of the letter that a coalition of advocacy groups wrote to the Governor requesting reinstatement of the funding and action to obtain and initiate interpretation services. The group will consider writing its own letter to the Governor at the next CHE meeting, after Jeannette DeJesus' detailed presentation on this issue.

The CHE elected Cheryl Harris Forbes, Jose Ortiz and Kevin Lembo as members of the nominating committee for the CHE. Kevin Lembo agreed to contact the members of the committee to solicit nominations.

Jim Rawlings provided some background about the efforts to enact Public Act 08-171 in order to address the issues outlined in several reports about the disparities in healthcare access and outcomes faced by racial, ethnic and linguistic minorities. He expressed the need for a broad and diverse group to work together toward the goal of eliminating these disparities. He outlined the CT NAACP's work on this issue and the work of others including the Connecticut Health Foundation in collecting data that will help the commission start its work.

Because of the difficulty in finding an ongoing date and time for CHE meetings, Kevin Lembo agreed to circulate a calendar to all members in order to find out the best meeting time for December. The members agreed that it would be best for the CHE to come up

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with a regular day of the month (e.g., third Thursday of the month) and time for CHE meetings.

The meeting was adjourned.

Next Meeting: tbd

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