

# SustiNet Health Partnership

## Health Disparities & Equity Advisory Committee

**Co-Chairs**  
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### Health Disparities and Equity Committee Legislative Office Building – Room 1B – Hartford, Connecticut July 9, 2010 at 1:00 p.m. Regular Meeting Minutes

**Committee Attendees:** Marie Spivey; Co-chair; Yolanda Caldera-Durant; Bonita Grubbs; Estela Lopez; Sharon Mierzwa; J. Nwando Olayiwola (via phone); and Brad Plebani

**Office of the Healthcare Advocate:** Africka S. Hinds-Ayala

**Absent:** Rafael Perez-Escamilla Co-chair; Leo Canty; Grace Damio; Elizabeth Krause; Katherine London; Yvette Martas; and; Stephanie Paulmeno; and Arvind Shaw

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Marie Spivey opened the meeting by welcoming committee members, OHA staff, and the public.

Marie requested that all present in person and via phone introduce themselves.

The June 7, 2010 meeting minutes were approved by all present, without any correction and/or changes.

Marie stated she spoke with Co-Chair Rafael Perez-Escamilla with regard to the Health Disparities and Equity Committee final report, as well as the other committee and task forces final reports. She said the discussion was to identify further issues that may need to be addressed by the Board of Directors at the regularly scheduled meeting. Marie said that they also discussed what they thought would be useful to Health Disparities and Equity Committee members, thus pulling excerpts from each report that spoke specifically to the needs of the HDEC. Marie encouraged everyone to take the opportunity to read the reports and appreciate the work that was placed into each one.

Marie provided the committee members with a three-page synopsis: **“Excerpts from SustiNet Task Forces and Committees”**, in which specific statements were extracted from each report that addressed/mentioned elimination of health disparities, health inequities, cultural competency, education, training, etc. Marie thought this would be helpful because it gives committee members an idea of what was mentioned in each report.

Sharon Mierzwa thanked Marie for providing the synopsis of the final reports because it allows the group to focus and review what is most pertinent. Sharon went on to commend the Health Information Technology Committee for citing that SustiNet should support a public service campaign describing how race and ethnicity data could be used to improve healthcare quality. Sharon appreciates that the HIT Committee placed this in the fore front because it will enhance the work of the HDEC.

Brad Plebani said that he spoke with a co-chair of the Healthcare Quality and Provider Advisory Committee (HQPAC) and said that their final report showed changes with regard to health disparities and equity; he volunteered to add specific HQPAC information that addresses disparities/equity concerns to the synopsis.

Brad said there were language changes within the final report. Marie agreed with and thanked Brad for reaching out to get the information needed. Marie clarified that the section under the HQPAC was left blank because she did not have the time to place an excerpt within the synopsis.

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#### Members

Yolanda Caldera-Durant • Leo Canty • Grace Damio • Elizabeth Krause • Yvette Martas  
Sharon Mierzwa • J. Nwando Olayiwola • Stephanie Paulmeno • Brad Plebani • Arvind Shaw

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Marie said the reports had some similarities and there are cross-cutting concerns from amongst the group; Marie wants to see more focus on ensuring that healthcare providers reflect the communities they serve and needs to be brought out very clearly. Bonita Grubbs wanted to see how the reports can be moved into how to implement the recommendations made, which will be the ultimate responsibility of the Board.

Marie said that the Tobacco and Smoking Cessation Taskforce report was very thorough; she would have liked to have this question answered/area addressed: the percentage of youth (ages 10 to 18) who are smokers with their respective ethnicity and socioeconomic status.

Marie spoke with regard to the Childhood and Adult Obesity Task Force Final Report stating that there are similar themes within this report: low-income, people of color, and education. There is so much that needs to go into understanding nutrition, food preparation, and environmental factors. Bonita said the task force reports go directly to the CT General Assembly.

There was no commentary about the Health Information Technology Committee Final report.

Marie commented on the Patient-Centered Medical Home Advisory Committee Final Report stating that it is an interesting report especially with the efforts of Money-Follows-the-Person because it implies that home-bound individual becomes the employer and that the caretaker will need special skills to fulfill the needs of their employer. This will allow for cultural competency to be taken into consideration. Estela Lopez expressed concern that Fairfield County has the highest uninsured population; Yolanda Caldera-Durant explained that that this is true because Bridgeport, Norwalk, Stamford, and Danbury are cities with high populations and are all within Fairfield County that has issues with the cost-of-living and cost of housing. Yolanda said that AmeriCares free clinic has statistical information that she is willing to share with the group. Estela said that the Board meeting will have presentations and not focus on the reports. Bonita said that the Board will be looking at the model of SustiNet; she asked OHA Staff Member, Africka Hinds-Ayala, who is to be covered under the SustiNet Health Plan. Africka responded that yes the upcoming Board of Directors meeting will address the populations to be served under SustiNet, to include but not limited to state-employees / retirees, Medicaid, SAGA (Medicaid Low-Income Adults), etc.; there is a Workplan that is on the SustiNet website that addresses the who, what, where, when, and why.

Marie said the Preventive Healthcare Committee report did a very good job addressing healthcare disparities and cultural competency within the design of SustiNet for the patient and provider.

Marie concluded by stating that everything discussed over the past several months will be in the forefront of the conversation at the Board of directors meeting. Marie wants to make sure the HDEC makes an impression/impact within the SustiNet Healthcare Plan that is culturally competent for everyone in the state. The HDCE, as well as the other committees/taskforces, made excellent recommendations that will help and enhance SustiNet going forward.

Marie expressed sincere thanks to everyone present and not-present; there were great strides to make and the group had a good focus on addressing realistic concerns and cross-cutting with the other committees. The services of the HDEC will be needed as SustiNet moves forward. Bonita questioned if this committee could stay together and continue on in an advisory capacity. Although some committees / taskforces have disbanded, it is still necessary for the HDEC to remain intact. Yolanda questioned what resources (administrative, financial, consulting, etc.) are available to the HDEC if the decision is to remain a full and functioning committee; also, what media campaign is needed to get the message out about SustiNet: defining, structuring, and implementing. Estela graciously thanked each person for their support and allowing the liaisons to be such an integral part of the process, while making the work seem easy.

Marie said it is important to communicate the need to reduce healthcare disparities/increase. Brad encouraged each committee member to attend the SustiNet Board of Directors meeting to provide support for Estela and Bonita, as well as to witness firsthand the work being done. Bonita offered to help organize a celebration of the work done and will provide information at a later date.

There was no unfinished business to be addressed by the committee.

Meeting was adjourned.