



King County

Board of Health

Staff Report

Agenda item No: 15
Briefing No: 09-B24

Date: September 17, 2009
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SUBJECT

A FINAL BRIEFING on the Board of Health health reform project

SUMMARY

The Board's six-month, health reform project involved four activities: Community outreach, advocacy with state and federal lawmakers, application of the Board's health reform principles to a Department program, and collaboration with other health departments. The project is now complete as per the work plan the Board adopted in Resolution #09-04.

All four areas involved the work of Board members, Council staff, and the Seattle-King County Public Health Department. Some of the highlights of the project included meetings with federal and state lawmakers, a Board of Health press conference that brought together six counties representing over sixty percent of state population, and the launching of a King County health reform webpage.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Community Outreach

There have been numerous presentations to community organizations and publication of articles regarding the Board's work on health care reform. One of the most important community events was a Board of Health press conference hosted by King County Council member and Board chair, Julia Patterson, and co-sponsored by the Boards of Health from Clark, Kitsap, Pierce, Snohomish, and Thurston Counties. For excerpts of the conference, please visit: www.youtube.com/watch?v=FgWZsNOS0pE. A full list of project presentations and articles can be found in the attachments.

Advocacy

Board and Department staff met with Representatives Inslee, McDermott, and Reichert, and with Mark Iozzi, Senator Cantwell's health legislative aide. Board of Health members also met with state senators Keiser and Pflug, and state representatives Cody and Pedersen.

In these meetings, Board members and staff emphasized the importance of incorporating the Board's six health reform principles into federal and state legislation; the need for significant support of public health as part of an effective reform effort; and the hope of being of assistance in ensuring passage of reform this year.

Application of the Principles

The Board's principles were applied to the King County Maternal and Child Behavioral Health Pilot. The program serves to improve the health and well-being of low-income mothers and children through the identification and treatment of depression in pregnant women, mothers, and their young children. Its design and implementation incorporates many of the Board's six health reform principles. This structure has allowed it to rapidly develop an impressive track record of identifying and improving the health of thousands of King County residents. To read the full report, visit: <http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/BOH/HealthReformProject>.

Collaboration

The efforts to engage other counties were very successful. Representatives of Snohomish County attended meetings with Representative Inslee and Reichert and Senator Cantwell's aide, Mark Iozzi; and Kitsap County representatives also attended the meeting with Mr. Iozzi.

Elected officials from Clark, Kitsap, Pierce, Snohomish, and Thurston Counties participated in the Board's press conference (the participants were board of health members except for the Clark County participant who represented the Clark County Board of Health chair).

All county representatives signed a letter to members of our federal delegation asking that the principles be incorporated into federal health reform, that reform move forward this year, and that reform include public health funding.

The relationship forged with members of the respective public health departments and the boards of health raised the profile of King County's health advocacy and hopefully will lead to further collective efforts.

Recommendations

The Board has made significant accomplishments through its health reform project over a relatively short period of time. Although the project is complete, the need for comprehensive, accessible, high-quality health care and a strong public health infrastructure remains. Board members should therefore consider continuing to engage in the following activities:

Advocacy

Federal

- Monitor the status of health reform legislation through the Herndon Alliance (newsletter@herndonalliance.org) or the Universal Health Care Action Network (www.uhcan.org)
- Communicate and/or visit Congressional members and emphasize the importance of passing health reform *this year* that:
 - incorporates the Board's six health reform principles
 - includes significant and sustainable public health funding (e.g., the Prevention and Public Health Investment Fund in current Senate bill)

State

- Communicate and/or visit state lawmakers during the 2010 legislative session to support state health reform that:
 - incorporates the Board's principles (e.g., Senator Karen Keiser's Washington Health Partnership plan)
 - supports sustainable funding for public health programs and infrastructure

The impact of these advocacy efforts will be increased if they include the participation of the five counties that participated in the project activities.

Community Communications

Continued efforts to reach out to constituents through newsletters, local articles, and presentations are important. As appropriate, Board members should discuss health reform and the importance of public health when communicating to the general public. The Board's health reform website contains a significant amount of information that can inform these communications.

Most important, the Board should continue to emphasize the importance of its overarching goals as articulated in the Public Health Operational Master Plan – the support of reform that leads to healthier individuals and thriving communities.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Health Care Reform Project Calendar

Attachment B: Photocopy of project website