

MEETING NOTES

Local Health Improvement Coalition TOBACCO WORKGROUP

Monday, July 16, 2012, 8:30 am

Historic Colored High School Building, 205 S. Hays Street, Bel Air, MD, 21014

Attendees:

- Vickie Bands, Chair (Upper Chesapeake Health System)
- Anne Cerruto (Harford County Office on Aging)
- Scott Gibson (Harford County, Office of Human Resources)
- Karen Goodison (Upper Chesapeake Health System)
- Mary Kate Herbig (Harford County Law Department)
- Susan Kelly (HCHD, Health Officer)
- Barry Klein (UCHS/HCHD, Grants Coordinator)
- Mark Lewis (Upper Chesapeake Health System)
- Karen McElwain (Upper Chesapeake Health System)
- Laura McIntosh (HCHD, Health Policy Analyst)
- Dr. Russell Moy, Deputy Health Officer (Harford County Health Department [HCHD])
- Linda Pegram (HCHD, Public Health Education)
- Dottie Ruff (HCHD, Public Health Education)
- Patrick Sypolt, Risk Manager (City of Havre de Grace)
- Bill Wiseman (HCHD, Public Health Education)

1. General Business:

- Ms. Bands initiated a discussion of tobacco-related issues and what needs to be done about them in Harford County, noting that tobacco use rates are higher than state averages while resources are shrinking.
- Mark Lewis, familiar with both Harford and Howard Counties, discussed similarities and differences between these two communities, such as less perceived public interest in health consequences of tobacco use and other poor health choices in Harford County.
- Scott Gibson suggested that tobacco problems in Harford County need to be more specifically defined before attempting solutions.
- MPOWER, a package of six evidence-based practices that work as identified by the World Health Organization and promoted by CDC that can help reduce tobacco use and tobacco-related illness and death was mentioned in a discussion of available resources, where the acronym stands for (1) Monitoring tobacco use and prevention policies; (2) Protecting people from tobacco smoke; (3) Offering help to quit tobacco use; (4) Warning about the dangers of tobacco; (5) Enforcing bans on tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship; and (5) Raising taxes on tobacco.
- Dr. Moy reiterated that while it might be public perception that tobacco use is decreasing, that is not the case in Harford County in light of shrinking resources. Group discussion reiterated that while other issues such as obesity seem to be gaining traction here, public awareness of the problems associated with tobacco use seems to be waning. The group supports measures intended to increase visibility and public awareness of the problem.
- Scott Gibson suggested the value of identifying the top 50 employers in Harford County and using tobacco-restrictive policies to curb tobacco use. The committee discussed the appropriateness of closing “gaps” regarding enforcement of smoking prohibitions in public areas and suggested the possibility of imposing civil fines for smoking on County properties.

- A discussion about media messaging followed. Mr. Sypolt suggested partnering with local, municipal Departments of Tourism to make use of their marketing expertise in developing and preparing media messages and provided a Havre de Grace contact. Likewise, a Harford County contact was identified. Another suggestion was to investigate the availability and use of graphics departments, such as exists at UCHS.
- There was group support for identifying ways to make better use of the CDC Tobacco awareness campaign ads featuring individuals suffering from the ravages of tobacco use.

2. Project Scope:

- To facilitate community change through the development of more restrictive County, municipal and workplace tobacco policies
- To raise awareness of tobacco issues as related to personal and community health status
- To "light a fire" and ignite interest among Harford County residents, who despite educational and income levels higher than most counties, have higher rates of adult and youth tobacco use.

3. Action Items:

- In consideration of the discussion points (above), members are charged with the task of identifying potential public and private/business organizations with whom partnerships can be forged and resources made available.
- Members were asked to consider ideas for potential inclusion in a public information and awareness campaign; a subcommittee will meet to initiate discussion in this regard.
- Names and contact information for other prospective invitees can be forwarded to Ms. Bands for follow-up.

4. Next Meeting:

- August 20, 2012, 8:30 – 10:00am, Havre de Grace Municipal Building, 711 Pennington Avenue, Havre de Grace

5. Adjournment

- 10:00am