



LHIC Family Health & Resiliency Work Group
January 12, 2021
Virtual Meeting
8:30-10:00AM

Welcome & Community Announcements

Shelby Graves welcomed the group and led introductions. There were several new members in attendance. Shelby also led the community announcements section of the meeting. Please see the community announcements shared below.

Community Announcements:

- Healthy Harford is working on food access for county residents and has a COVID resource landing page on their website. Their website also features a matrix for COVID testing, information on food distribution, links to prevent homelessness, utility assistance, and other updates. Bari mentioned that churches tend to distribute nonperishables and coordinate with Community Action Agency to get this to members. All resources can be found at HealthyHarford.Org.
- Stephanie reported that the EPICENTER hosts a food giveaway in Aberdeen monthly with Maryland Food Bank. They also host food giveaways in Edgewood as well. The dates of food distribution can be found on their website at EpiCenter.Org. They also have an Internet cafe where families can check out a laptop, use the Internet, and use their space to work free of charge. They have a job readiness coach onsite, allow any printing, faxing, or scanning, and can assist with applications. These services are typically open from 10:00-2:00, check the site calendar for updates to the schedule, as they may change in February.
- The question was asked "Do any of the food banks have diaper access?" Bari said Healthy Harford can look into this. Stephanie said Alpha's Glory in Aberdeen and Birthright distribute diapers. The EPICENTER has a limited supply of size small diapers leftover from the drive this summer. Breathe 379 sometimes has diapers available as well. Usually, clients and providers can call ahead to check on availability.
- Silvana shared that the Success Project is offering the Strengthening Families Program virtually. Families with youth 6-11 years of age can sign up.

March & November Assessments

The FHR work group completed a brainstorming session during the January 2020 meeting. They created and released two separate assessments of the status of FHR in Harford County. These were completed in March and November of 2020. Shelby presented highlighted results from

the Harford County Family Health and Resiliency Assessment, conducted in spring 2020. Each member of the group was emailed a copy of the highlighted results report. The assessment was completed by approximately 25 service providers in Harford County, Maryland. She also shared the November follow-up assessment results, which included considerations for COVID-19 operations.

Community level and systemic level barriers to family health and resilience in Harford County were consistently identified in all brainstorming activities and assessments. The majority of the group (82%) was on board for creating a temporary work plan and priority list for the duration of COVID-19. This would likely be a smart move for the group, as many of our families' needs have shifted or intensified due to COVID. Please see the attached presentation and March Assessment for additional details on the specific breakdown of results.

FHR Standing

Shelby provided the group an overview of the history of the group for the new members. She also shared that the prior priority groups included Transportation, Communications, and Family Planning. Each group fulfilled their work plan benchmarks.

FHR Timeline:

- The FHR group was established and developed a work plan in 2018.
- The group implemented its work plan from 2018-2020.
- The group has completed its two-year work plan and also completed an assessment, as of June 2020.

Opportunities

Shelby shared three upcoming opportunities to consider during the brainstorming and priority setting process for the FHR work group.

- The health department plans to develop the 1 N. Main Family Health Center to serve as a hub for wraparound and evidence-based services
- The health department and U MUCH are currently completing the 2021 Community Health Needs Assessment. The focus groups and community survey will provide context for future FHR work group planning.
- Springboard Community Services is developing an ACEs steering committee to address mental health, trauma, and ACEs in Harford County. This topic was rated a particularly high priority by group members.

Priority Setting & Brainstorming

Shelby led the group in brainstorming for a temporary work plan to implement throughout COVID-19. The group decided to wait to create a 1-2 year work plan until this temporary work plan was well in place. Please see the questions and discussion comments below.

- **What services are currently being offered to families?**
 - HCHD offers virtual group sessions for family health services, health education, and parenting support. These groups are available to all enrollees of MEGAN's Place and Healthy Families.

- HCHD Behavioral Health offers virtual services for mental health, SUD, and youth and adolescent mental health.
- WIC is still accepting services throughout COVID and offering phone and video appointments, as well as virtual breastfeeding appointments.
- The EPICENTER's activities are still ongoing, some virtual and some in-person (see website and social media pages). They still offer childcare in Edgewood Monday-Friday. They will begin offering childcare in Aberdeen at the end of January. They also offer AA meetings, food giveaways, and the Internet cafe.
- The Judy Center Harford Square is open to partnerships and collaboration. They currently offer virtual home visits and case management. Bonnie shared that they currently use the SMORE newsletter to keep families up-to-date on activities and offerings within the county. This newsletter allows Bonnie to place everyone's flyers, activities, and information in one place.
- The Department of Human Services continues to offer most/all services. Some of these services have been moved to virtual offering. They still offer their program for in-home services for families. They also offer virtual parenting services.
- The HCHD Dental Clinic is still open. Dental health bags are distributed by Bonnie at the Judy Center to members of the community. They have also distributed these dental bags to Halls Crossroads.
- **What resources and services are missing?**
 - There are currently a lot of childcare gaps because of COVID. Many group members echoed this. The group asked if anyone currently offers drop-in childcare? No one was certain.
 - Parents cannot bring children into appointments at this time due to COVID (parents are unable to bring guests and may miss appointments due to a lack of childcare - or may even have to reschedule appointments for other children).
 - Councilman Wagner asked "What is there for mental health and depression, disconnection, and being cooped up at home? For both parents and for children/adolescents?". He commented that the outlet for children to attend extra-curricular activities has been suspended as well. Many parents and community members report that their youth are "stir crazy" and parents have concerns for their children's mental health. This also applies to senior populations, as the rec centers have been close as well.
 - Patty shared that some schools are allowing virtual clubs to continue.
 - Shelby shared that HFA and MEGAN's Place offer virtual "drop-in and play" activities for children 0-5.
 - Transportation has become even more of an issue during COVID.
- **What challenges have our families reported in accessing services at this time?**
 - WIC has had a really hard time getting through to a live person when calling other community programs. Staff themselves have had this issue, as well as clients. They report that it feels like a phone chain that results in just leaving a message and waiting for a call back. This is also not easy to navigate for ESL clients.
 - Clients report additional transportation issues. They are afraid to use public transportation. Transportation options are even more limited. Some programs are unable to offer transportation assistance at this time.

- Translation services on video and for calls has been problematic for clinical services and home visiting services.
- Telehealth access has been a challenge for some populations, due to connectivity issues and access to smartphones and smart devices.
 - A lack of technology and knowledge of use of technology for (e.g. zoom meeting, downloading apps) for parents and other caregivers has been an issue. It was recommended that agencies offer some kind of walkthroughs for these services.
 - Technology required to search for jobs is a challenge as well.
 - Printing is a solvable issue, via the EPICENTER and United Way. United Way also offers tablets to families.
- **What challenges are your agencies experiencing in serving families at this time?**
 - Virtual Challenges:
 - Some agencies reported having limited options for virtual offerings (e.g. platform limitations for themselves or access for clients).
 - The Judy Center reported that their workshops and activities have to be virtual, which has caused family engagement to be low.
 - HCHD Family Health programs are also seeing lower engagement. Family retention has also been a challenge. Many families feel disconnected or do not have the technology needed to participate regularly.
 - Referral/Partnership Challenges:
 - WIC has experienced challenges in referring clients to other agencies. They reported feeling that they no longer have confidence in providing a phone number or phone referral. This is creating more leg work for staff. They have focused more on creating a warm hand-off and having confidence in the referral process. This could be improved.
 - Staff/Volunteer Challenges:
 - Due to COVID, many agencies report having limited staff, high staff burnout, and staff divided to other duties.
 - There is a lack of volunteers who want to be onsite to help. All programs at the EPICENTER are volunteer-based. Volunteers want to volunteer from home, which limits ability to provide in-person services. This causes a split of time for full time staff.
 - Other Challenges:
 - Healthy Harford commented that they are only dealing with organizations, not the community, when planning food distribution. They feel they have limited access to families at this time. No longer having direct contact with families is very limiting in the planning and implementation of these programs.
 - Councilman Wagner asked “Would one assume that the majority of people picking up food are aware of all the resources available? Do the majority know where to go? Are/ can resources be handed out at the same time?” Bari responded that there are a lot of different food banks and they all hand out different information. It is not one consolidated piece of information being given out at all locations. The information is changing quickly. Because having it in print form is limiting, they rely on directing people to specific websites - it is the best we can do right now.

- **What specific resources/skills can this group offer to Harford County families?**
 - Access to families, as well as access to other agencies and linkages to community resources.
 - The group can get the message out that OBs are still seeing women for prenatal care. We can stress the importance of prenatal care and well care visits. We can help to promote these services and connect families to them.
 - Bari mentioned that Jams Squad is still available for a free bike and free bike helmets are available via Healthy Harford.
 - Bonnie recommended the SMORE Newsletter system, as it is electronic and can be updated continually. You do have to pay for a membership for it. She is trying to use it so it is one place for parents to go to find what they need.
 - Mary Jo Beach recommended that all the members put out consistent messaging on our own websites. She suggested creating a campaign or key set of messages. The title would be the same for everyone for families to access resources on their pages, such as “I’m a Family and I need resources” or “Family Resources” or “My Family Needs” and we could have consistent resources and messaging on our sites. This would fall under the “collaboration and communication” category of strategies to address FHR issues.
 - Silvana shared that Community Services updated their Harford County Community Resource Guide. They have print and electronic copies available. The Office of Drug Policy Page and Harford Talks website have additional resources for families.
 - Kelley shared the following in the comment box: Two thoughts about pushing out information. 1) I work with a monthly food distribution at an elementary school in Baltimore County and they send out text messages and emails reminders about their upcoming food distribution. Could the schools do the same providing the link at Health Harford or reminders to food distributions in their schools' area. 2) Email or mail a nicely designed poster to healthcare providers and churches with the link to Healthy Harford or other key websites that provide links to resources. They can post on their doors and churches can provide the information on their website.
 - Bari shared two essential call-in resources - United Way 111 and 1-800-NEXT-STEP. The crisis line has licensed social workers available, not only mental health services, and can refer to community services. Agencies can reach out to the Crisis Center and be added to the referral list for those who call in.
 - Bari commented that organizations are very good at updating with their social media, rather than their websites. For example, the EpiCenter is great about this.
 - Patty shared that it would be an asset to have a good contact for families for answers with Food Stamps and Child Support. The health department receives a high volume of calls for SNAP and other food assistance programs.
 - Shelby commented that “It sounds like a lot of our ideas are partnerships, communication, and collaboration.”

- **In the lens of a temporary plan during COVID, what would be the most pertinent issue for this group to address?**
 - Judy commented that perhaps it would be helpful to let the community know “We are still here, you can still access services.” A lot of people think we are

closed and no longer working. Perhaps we could plan a “we are still here campaign.”

- Mary Jo Beach agreed with Judy. It would be great to make it seamless, let people know that we are still open, available for services, here for families, even if not physically - we are here.
- Many group members echoed ideas for awareness, increasing access to services, and assisting the families with the navigation of these services.
- Domestic violence (DV) has increased during COVID and perhaps additional messaging is in order.
 - Lindsey commented that they (WIC) are hearing less about DV right now, but does feel this is an issue. Women on the phone and video are home with their abusers. Finding a way to get that out there without the women having to reach out via the phone would be ideal.
 - This was echoed by those in home visiting programs.
 - Bari asked if someone could connect this group to SARC resources. Councilman Wagner and Debbie Button agreed.
- **What can this group adequately address during COVID-19?**
 - The group agreed that virtual meetings, communication campaigns, and connecting other agencies and families to resources is likely the best option for the group to work together throughout COVID.

Questions 8 and 9 from the presentation were not answered. The group will resume planning when they meet in March.

Comment Box Submissions:

- United way for free tablets, library system and EPICENTER for free printing.
- BGC is open Mon-Fri for after school programs 3-7 pm at select clubs. There is more information on their website.
- Sounds good Shelby. This was my first meeting and I very much enjoyed participating. Learned a lot about what is happening with Harford County families.
- Harford County Public Schools have staff that work on SNAP access through their nutrition department.
- For information on food access, child care scholarships, Covid information, utility assistance, etc. www.healthyharford.org
- Harford County WIC phone number is 410-939-6680
- Thanks Shelby for mentioning the ACEs meeting! It will be held at 2pm this Thursday (1/14)
- No Kid Hungry texting hotline: text the word FOOD to 877-877 to find free meals in their community.

Follow-Up Tasks:

- Shelby will send out the minutes, the assessment results, and this presentation to the group. She will also add new group members to the roster.
- Councilman Robert Wagner and Aid Debbie Button will reach out to a SARC representative to join the group’s next meeting.
- Members will send flyers and other resources to Shelby to distribute to the group.

- Shelby and Bonnie will meet to look at the SMORE newsletter and discuss other opportunities.

Attendance

SheTiel Coley-Winder	HCHD - MEGAN's Place
Shelby Graves	HCHD - HFA
Keri Bean	HCHD - HFA
Kristen Perry	HCHD - WIC
Lindsey Barclay	HCHD - WIC
Sara Moore	HCHD - Family Health
Patricia Peterson	HCHD - HFA
Christina Claypool	HCHD - Administration
Andrea Pappas	HCHD – Behavioral Health
Shawn Partain	HCHD- HFR
Judy Churn	HCHD - Family Health
Robert Wagner	Harford County Council
Debbie Button	Harford County Council/Government
Samantha Webb	EPICENTER
Stephanie Saunders	EPICENTER
Jill Latteri	DHS
Roblyn Aigner	Harford County Sheriff's Office
Bonnie Mitrega	The Judy Center
Jennifer Thomas	UMUCH
Bari Klein	Healthy Harford
Silvana Bowker	Harford County Government
Kelley Ray	Care First - Community Outreach