

Office of Minority Health Diversity Task Force - Meeting Minutes

The DTF Meeting was hosted by NH Hospital in Conference Room C on Wednesday September 30, 2009.

Attendees: There were 41 attendees. Partners attending included local, city, faith-based, & community organizations, government, citizen consumers and private business.

Special thanks to: Sherry L. Gould, Director of Social Services Wijokadoak, Inc., and Mike Racette from OMH for assisting with meeting notes.

Marianne Rechy from the Office of Minority Health opened the meeting underscoring the importance of partner input with respect to the future direction and activities of the DTF. The basic questions focused on how the DTF can be improved as a task force and restructured into a viable, relevant and effective meeting for the shared vision of its' membership. Marianne will take on the role of point person and subcommittee liaison for the DTF for the next programming year.

A copy of the survey results that were sent out to the members to elicit responses and feedback about the DTF activities was circulated. Marianne Rechy indicated that the top five requested activity topic areas based on the responses were as follows (in rank order).

1. Race Ethnicity and Language Health Disparity Data Collection
2. Connecting DHHS Resources with Community Groups
3. Health Awareness/Wellness Prevention Resources
4. Cultural Competency and Health
5. Language Access Initiatives

Mary Ann Cooney DHHS, Deputy Commissioner and Interim Director of the Office of Minority Health lead the group in brainstorm activities. One defining theme that was evident from the survey and from member feedback was that the meaning and direction of the DTF has become lost since the DTF was first formed; some issues needed to be acknowledged in order to improve the task force. Mary Ann Cooney indicated that while the survey was not scientific, it provided a good indicator of people's experiences, feelings and ideas about the DTF and was a very good starting point for the dialogue on a new direction.

Mary Ann then facilitated brainstorming that was captured and condensed in a bulleted format on several flip charts.

Flip Chart One – A basic assessment - the theme was: “What do we like about the DTF”

- An opportunity to be in a room with like-minded people with a chance to interact
- A commonality/ not alone/a shared struggle
- Longevity and commitment around the room
- The ability/unique opportunity for interaction for both DHHS with external partners and community members with DHHS
- Subcommittees to address issues
- Regional vision
- State Plan

Flip Chart Two – the theme was: “What would we like to see from the DTF”

- Time & energy to be used well
- It’s a “**Task Force**” having a clear purpose/point to do something
- A clear purpose/point with mutual DTF agreement
- Necessary meetings/understanding/actionable items – to create change
- Partnerships
- Transparency about collaboration/feedback/leadership
- Leverage resources & information
- Communicate issues on disparities, address needs
- One place for information & resources
- ID Risk factors (for vulnerable diverse populations)
- Voice for all the underserved
- Conversation about racism and discrimination
- Education/forums for understanding politics & impact on services
- Increase institutional support, i.e. funding for populations we serve
- Integrate support via institutions

Flip Chart Three – (relative to chart two) The theme: “What do we need”

- Right people at the table
- Structure & schedule
- Well facilitated/direction
- Subcommittees or groups to work on task for accountability
- Outcomes
- Timelines
- Website or place to put information in one area; communication tool/shared place
- Some time for instructional sessions in the meeting
- Commitment from people/members’ goals recap
- Action plan/products
- To know who is part of the group
- A point person
- Continuous member feedback

Mary Ann Cooney identified areas that were reasonable and feasible based on the brainstorming. She pointed out that although OMH has no budget available to do all the things we would like, the DTF could set the directions that the State of NH/DHHS could utilize with respect to minority health services and health equity access for diverse populations. Also, that the DTF could set the direction for grants accessed and applied for based on shared knowledge, issues and partnerships. Marianne Rechy emphasized the need for diverse stakeholders at the table when leveraging resources for federal funding.

In Mary Ann Cooney’s facilitation she described how we need to continue to look at the true nature of health equity and disparities for all vulnerable populations in NH. She indicated that she would like to see DTF as an advisory committee to DHHS in areas of diversity, access and equity.

Mary Ann acknowledged that DHHS/OMH has not always done the best job at providing feedback and structure to the DFT and in the support of the subcommittees. She particularly referenced the work of the DTF subcommittee on language access. This subcommittee focused on improving communication access of DHHS services for everyone. The NH DHHS

Communication Access Plan (CAP) policy document & training was created in large part due to the work of this subcommittee.

Feedback from the members present that had been part of the Mental Health Subcommittee also echoed the need for better structure, leadership and feedback mechanisms for any future subcommittee planning.

Mary Ann Cooney posed the rhetorical question to all members present:

“So what are we going to do about it?” The answer: “Let’s keep moving forward.”

The room then divided into six small groups to come up with three ideas as to what the Task Force next steps should be considering what we have discussed in this meeting.

Final Flip Chart Four – The theme: “What does this Task Force Need to Know (to move forward)?”

- Goals - define populations we are working with
- Objectives of the task force/group goals
- Assessing environment
- Accountability and feedback to know the value of what we are doing
- Clear & strong leadership for the task force
- Goals & objectives of the subcommittees/logic model
- Look at strategies for sustainability/ leveraging with partners
- Mission/Goals: how it relates to OMH overall work
- Stronger Committee Structure
- Better Communication/Point Person
- Agree on shared vision/right people at the table
- Strategic Plan for NH
 1. Goals (need to limit individual wants and focus on overall needs)
 2. Action steps (need to be defined)
- Web or other communication source to access DTF info- feedback loop
- Structure for meetings and feedback
- Education on issues, initiatives and partners around the table
- DTF as a champion for health access and equity for all
- Need to know the strengths and resources of the DTF membership and how we can use each other in partnership to further our individual and collective work

Mary Ann Cooney thanked the Task Force membership for coming to this meeting and hoped to continue her involvement at DTF and looked forward to receiving ongoing feedback and input from members.

Marianne Rechy handed out the Meeting Structure Changes and Tweaks (attached)

And a document titled: New Hampshire OMH Diversity Task Force: Engaging Partners – Improving Outcomes (attached) **She encouraged members to pass along this information to anyone who would like to join DTF.**

ACTION ITEMS:

Mary Ann Cooney solicited volunteers from the DTF to be part of the

Diversity Task Force (DTF) Programming & Structure Development Team.

Members of this team will work with Marianne Rechy in looking at the results from this

brainstorming meeting and the feedback survey. This team will work on the development of programming and structure based on information gathered, and will report out at the larger DTF at the November meeting. Members wishing to join this team please contact Marianne Rechy at 271-4320 or at Marianne.Rechy@dhhs.state.nh.us.

DTF Subcommittees

A list of subcommittee groups will be forwarded to the DTF membership after the Regional OMH conference in RI and once the Diversity Task Force (DTF) Programming & Structure Development Team has had an opportunity to meet. Topics for subcommittees will be based on information gathered from membership and at the regional conference in October. Members with any questions or input in the meantime, please contact Marianne Rechy at 271-4320 or at Marianne.Rechy@dhhs.state.nh.us.

Connecting Communities Newsletter

Mike Racette presented information about OMH “Connecting Communities” newsletter. He handed out some guidelines for people to submit articles for publication of the quarterly OMH Newsletter “Connecting Communities”. (See attached guidelines) Any submission or questions should be addressed to Mike Racette at the NH Office of Minority Health at 271-5991 or mracette@dhhs.state.nh.us.

End Notes