

HEALTHCARE ROUNDTABLE CLEARFIELD COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN SEPTEMBER 21, 2005

ATTENDEES

Jodi Brennan, Director of Clearfield County Planning Office
Meredith Krejny, Planning Specialist of Clearfield County Planning Office
Mike Loomis, Philipsburg Area Hospital
Dr. Karen Willenbring, Susquehanna Rural Free Clinic
Gary Peters, DuBois Nursing Home
Cathy Gillespie, Ridgeview Elder Rehabilitation Center
Nancy Mencer, Houtzdale Home Health
Barb Peters, Mountain Laurel Nursing & Rehabilitation Center
Robert Murray, Clearfield Area Hospital
Raymond Graeca, DuBois Regional Medical Center

INTRODUCTIONS

After introducing one another, the question was asked, “who’s missing from this roundtable that should be contacted?” Participants indicated that the following should be contacted: Area Agency on Aging, emergency medical services, Office of Aging and Board of Assistance.

PURPOSE

County Planning Director Jodi Brennan explained that the input collected at today’s roundtable would be used for the purpose of updating the county’s comprehensive plan. She then briefly explained what a comprehensive plan was and the purpose it serves. She also stressed that they would accept input after the meeting as well and asked for participants to share any data sources or reports that would be useful in the development of this plan. The roundtable participants will be sent the final draft of this comprehensive plan section for final review and comment.

PROCESS

The Director also explained the process in which today’s meeting would be run to obtain this input. The SWOT analysis, a commonly used planning process, would be utilized which simply stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats. These items would then be used to develop a list of goals.

After lengthy discussion, participants developed a list of the following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats and goals. Participants were then given five stickers, which they used to vote for the top five goals they felt were the most important. Participants were allowed to use more than one sticker per goal if they so desired. These “votes” were then used to prioritize the goals.

STRENGTHS:

- Several hospitals in county, adequate number of beds
- Adequate nursing facilities
- Susquehanna Rural Free Clinic & free clinic in DuBois
- Lot of people need jobs (health field pays well, good benefits, growth industry)
- Highly competent medical staff in area
- Health education programs in County (LHUP-Clearfield RN Association program, PSU-DuBois RN to BSN program, CCCTC- nurses aid & LPN programs)

WEAKNESSES:

- Transportation poor (out of county agencies providing service but no in-county providers) especially low income/ uninsured clients
- Inadequate funding for training programs
- Shortage of skilled workers
- Shortage of therapists (physical, occupational, etc.)
- Lack of one-on-one volunteer corps.
- Communication (all levels)
- High low income population, uninsured (lots of folks needing medical assistance) often in 45-64 age cohort, too much income to qualify for medical assistance but not enough to pay for care
- Over-obligated resources (especially disaster response), insufficient coordination (lots of individual plans but no overseer)
- Not well prepared for disaster (e.g. lots of facilities in close proximity)
- Rural location contributes to problems, inefficiencies, high costs
- Difficult to attract physicians to area- shortage of primary care providers
- Reimbursements inadequate to cover full costs of care
- Low education levels in county (don't understand insurance regulations/ benefits, not aware of preventative care, ways to stay healthy, etc.)
- Lack of affordable adequate housing for elderly
- Lots of people don't access healthcare until it's too late
- Insurance medical assistance systems confusing, too complicated for lots of people

OPPORTUNITIES:

- Encourage legislators to adopt tort reform
- Patient assistance programs (help them fill out forms, make informed decisions, etc.) not a lot of people aware of them
- Become a model for good emergency management
- Capitalize on training, Medicare
- Health care a growth industry- jobs
- Better understand hospital situations and better coordinate services (networking)
- Collaboration at all levels
- Work together to improve patient outcomes
- Streamline programs/ agencies to eliminate redundancy

- County's State Dept. of Health could serve as coordinator for health disaster response. (e.g. last year's flu vaccine shortage)
- Improve transportation for rural areas
- Availability of experts (county more fortunate than other rural areas)
- Attract & retain higher caliber of workforce
- Increase training opportunities

THREATS:

- Public officials unaware how large a role healthcare plays in economic development
- Lack of plans for natural/man-made disasters
- Changes to Medicare & Medicaid
- Increasing costs, especially energy leads to isolation
- Increasing elderly population
- Lack of physicians accepting medical assistance
- Not enough people going into & staying in the healthcare field (lack of stability- who will replace the retirees?)
- Litigation- increasing costs drives some physicians out

GOALS (in order of priority as voted on by roundtable participants)

1. Better coordination of all healthcare providers (7 votes)
2. Empower county to coordinate EMS, hospitals, and other agencies for emergency response (6 votes)
3. Develop alternative programs, pilot / demonstration projects etc.- like adult day care- need to take some risks and think outside the box (5 votes)
4. Develop better transportation for clients in need of it (4 votes)
4. Provide assistance to access healthcare (transportation, assistance filling out medical forms, provide education etc.) (4 votes)
4. Increase pool of skilled health care workers (4 votes)
5. Increase political capital of healthcare industry (3 votes)
6. Develop booklet regarding information on healthcare resources (1 vote)
7. Educate and inform legislators about healthcare issues (0 votes)
8. Provided healthcare education especially those isolated individuals (0 votes)
9. Think globally (don't be constrained by county boundaries) (0 votes)

Two participants had to leave before the session was over and the remaining participants requested that those who left be given the opportunity to vote as well. The Director indicated that she would send them a copy of the goals drafted today and ask for their votes.

Participants were informed that they would receive minutes from this roundtable with the results of the prioritization of goals in the near future. An invitation will follow for a second follow up meeting to develop a plan of action to implement the top 5 goals established at today's roundtable. Participants were encouraged to provide additional goals.