

HEALTH LEADERSHIP NETWORK
HEALTH POLICY CABINET MEETING
APRIL 2, 2010

In attendance: Karen Tait, County Health Officer; Debra Sommerfield, Lake County Administration; Carol Huchingson, Lake County Department of Social Services; Nice Alterman, Facilitator; Susan Jen and Jackie Armstrong, Health Leadership Network.

COUNTY HEALTH RANKINGS: Mobilizing Action Toward Community Health.

Dr. Tait shared copies of a report prepared by the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute that ranks California counties according to community health data. Using available data, the rankings are based on Health Outcomes (mortality and morbidity) and Health Factors (health behaviors, clinical care, social and economic, and physical environment). Karen also distributed copies of the Metrics that details the kinds of data and sources used to measure each factor. More information about the nationwide study and supporting data can be found online at www.countyhealthrankings.org.

A review of Lake County's Snapshot produced the following observations:

- The fact that Lake County's Low Birth Weight ranking is ahead of the state average may be an indication of good access to prenatal care for the County's traditionally high number of pregnant teens.
- The County's Teen Birth Rate, 5 points above the state average, ties to local unemployment and children living in poverty.
- The County's Motor Vehicle Crash Death Rate is more than double the state's value and three times the Target Value (top 10%). Susan wondered if an examination of victim demographics would tie that data to the County's higher number of people with disabilities and seniors.
- The Metrics handout explains that the County's favorable ranking for Access to Healthy Foods simply reflects that most of the population has access to grocery stores.

In closing, Karen said that the intent of the report is to generate discussion about community health factors and that it represents a good, although not perfect, tool for identifying areas for improvement. She added that it will be interesting to see how the County Rankings compare with the County Health Profiles are to be released by the state on Monday.

In response to Susan's question about how Health Services might use the Rankings to identify public priorities, Karen said she suspected the more important issues to look at would be transportation safety, obesity, smoking and economic factors. Susan noted the difficulty in identifying the impact of specific programs and policies. Debra said that it might also be helpful to look at the places where the county is losing ground and figure out why. Karen added that the county's high employment rate impacts health behaviors because idle people are inclined to drink and smoke more than people who are busy and productive, plus productive activity improves self esteem.

In response to Susan's question about how County Administration might use the Rankings to direct its efforts, Debra said that unemployment rates and limited opportunities to pursue higher education would be the issues most appropriately addressed by the county's administrative office.

Regarding climbing unemployment statistics, Carol explained that public assistance programs are not experiencing similar increases, though it's possible that people on unemployment are waiting for their benefits to expire before applying for other kinds of assistance. She reported that while the number of CalWorks applicants has increased, the number of CalWorks cases has remained at approximately 1,100 because many of the applicants have resources, including unemployment, that exceed program qualification criteria. There is, she continued, a growing caseload of the working poor evidenced by an increase in the number of food stamp and CMSP applicants. DSS also has federal fund subsidies designed to prevent layoffs with an employer match in the form of supervision.

UNDER-UTILIZATION OF FOOD STAMPS.

Susan explained that the subject of food stamps as a way to increase local food purchasing had come up at a number of meetings over the last month and asked Carol to provide some information about the program. Carol said that food stamps are currently provided automatically to CalWorks clients as well as to other qualified "Non-Assistance" clients. The Department, she continued, just completed a conversion to the C4 automated system which includes an online application process. Face-to-face interviews are no longer required, she explained. Qualified applicants will receive an EBT (Electronic Benefits Transaction) card by mail. The new program is called SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program).

One of the problems related to underutilization, Carol said, is the "welfare" stigma attached to food stamps so news about SNAP may be more effective coming from sources other than DSS. Susan said HLN could promote it through its networks, and Nice thought the SNAP acronym was perfect for ease-of-use promotions such as "It's a SNAP!" Discussion about developing a series of tip sheets to be put in grocery bags and/or inserted in the Shopper, included the following suggested topics:

- SNAP information, website, computer access points
- A menu of local resources (clinics, employment training, child care, etc)
- Information about nutrition (price of food per nutrition benefits),
- Recipes
- Farmers' Markets schedule

Regarding public education projects, Karen reported that Health Services was in the process of setting up video equipment that would assist the department in developing materials to provide public health information to hard-to-reach populations.

ENACT UPDATE

Susan explained that the Environmental Nutrition and Activity Community Tool (ENACT) is an assessment tool developed by The Prevention Institute to track changes across multiple organizations.

Some of the significant changes within Lake County organizations since ENACT was first completed in 2008 were reviewed, including increases in Tribal Health's preschool physical activity curriculum, development of an employee wellness program at Clearlake Family Health Center, and Kelseyville Unified School District's Farm-to-School program.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.