

Healthy Communities Task Force Meeting

Wednesday, February 11, 2015

Welcome, Patty Elkis

Patty Elkis is the Director of DVRPC's Planning Division. Patty welcomed all attendees to the Healthy Communities Task Force meeting. She remarked that the first Healthy Communities meeting revealed that public health and planning professionals wanted the opportunity to build the relationships necessary to better integrate public health and planning. DVRPC decided to convene the Healthy Communities Task Force to provide a space for these two communities to come together and learn from each other. In recognition of DVRPC's 50-year anniversary, Patty also briefly reviewed the DVRPC's history, noting how the organization's work has evolved to integrate transportation with land use, the environment, the economy, and public health.

Introduction, Justin Dula

Justin Dula is the County and Regional Planning Manager for the Delaware County Planning Department and serves as one of the co-chairs of DVRPC's Healthy Communities Task Force. Justin introduced the topic of the meeting – examples of health and planning working together – and stressed the importance of continuing communication between the public health and planning fields. Justin highlighted other upcoming meetings, namely DVRPC's "Future Forces" Focus Group, "Fit City," and the ongoing work with Sea Green on health and air quality.

Panel Discussion

Planning and Health Partnerships for a Healthier Chester County, Ashley Orr and Randy Waltermeyer

Ashley Orr is a Systems Analyst with the Chester County Health Department. In this role, she coordinated county-wide RoadMAPP to Health, Chester County's Health Improvement Plan, and led the department's Public Health Accreditation process. Ashley reviewed the process that the county undertook to develop RoadMAPP to Health, noting the incredible amount of community and stakeholder involvement that went into the plan. In conjunction with public input, the partners came up with five priority areas for improvement: cultural competence and health disparities, behavioral and physical health coordination, awareness of community resources, and individual health management and disease prevention, and safe and healthy environments. To achieve many of the objectives outlined in RoadMAPP, especially those under the Safe and Healthy Environments priority area, the Chester County Health Department partnered with a number of non-traditional groups including the Department of Parks, the Department of Community Development, the Planning Commission, and the Water Resources Authority, to leverage the work of other government agencies and ultimately have a greater impact. Ashley said that RoadMAPP aims to make being healthy the easiest choice for Chester County residents.

Randy Waltermeyer is Chester County Planning Commission's Transportation Services Director. During his presentation, Randy focused on the integration of public health and planning initiatives in Chester County, building on the strengths of the community's multi-use trails, classic town layout, and strong

public transportation system, all of which can be used to promote walkability. Randy highlighted Chester County's successes, specifically its amendments to the county's sidewalk ordinances to increase the availability of sidewalks in new development, the continued extensions of the regional bike trail network, and the walking school bus that the public health department piloted with a local elementary school. Randy also noted the County's bike and pedestrian improvement plan, which makes a number of recommendations for improving the bikeability and walkability of the county, such as locations for signed bike routes, sidewalks, sharrows, restricted and multi-use trails, and intersection upgrades. In order to successfully promote walking and biking, Randy stressed the importance of education, enforcement, encouragement, and evaluation.

Jefferson's Community Health Needs Assessment, Dr. Rickie Brawer

Dr. Rickie Brawer serves as the Associate Director of the Center for Urban Health at Jefferson University. Dr. Brawer was responsible for developing Jefferson's first Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) and subsequent Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act mandated that nonprofit hospitals conduct and publish a CHNA and a CHIP every three years. To develop Jefferson's first CHNA, Dr. Brawer and her team used both primary and secondary data, conducting over 65 interviews and 4 focus groups, to better understand the health factors and underlying social conditions that affect the overall health of the people in Jefferson's broader community. They studied community demographics, mortality and morbidity rates, health behaviors, healthcare access issues like insurance and transportation, social determinants of health like education and income, and special populations like immigrants and refugees. As a result of the findings, the Jefferson CHNA team developed a number of recommendations to address issues such as access to care, chronic disease management, productive land use, and prevention. Many of these recommendations focused on built environment factors like access to parks, healthy food, active transportation, and safe neighborhoods.

From her experience, Dr. Brawer had many recommendations for those looking to implement more comprehensive CHNAs, including understanding the cultures you're working with, building transportation amenities like benches at bus stops to improve the ease of getting to healthcare facilities, focusing on chronic disease prevention rather than management, and improving overall community safety through substance abuse and violence prevention programs. By focusing on a community based approach to healthcare, Dr. Brawer emphasized the opportunity for Jefferson to reach beyond themselves to have a more impactful and long-lasting effect on community health.