



## **Commonwealth of Massachusetts Health Disparities Council**

**SENATOR  
SUSAN FARGO  
Co-Chair**

◆  
**State House  
Room 504  
(617) 722-1572**

**REPRESENTATIVE  
BYRON RUSHING  
Co-Chair**

◆  
**State House  
Room 121  
(617) 722-2006**

### **Disparities Council Agenda Meeting Minutes**

One Ashburton Place, 21<sup>st</sup> Floor, Rooms 2 and 3  
Monday September 14, 2011  
10:00AM - 12:00 PM

#### **1. Approval of Minutes**

Representative Rushing called for the approval of the minutes from the July 18, 2011 Health Disparities Council (HDC) meeting. No objection was voiced and the minutes were approved.

#### **2. Legislative Working Group Update:**

Chaired by HDC member Dr. Sara Orozco of the Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology, the HDC's Legislative Working Group (LWG) is charged with helping advance existing disparities-related legislation as well as tracking ongoing health care cost containment and payment reform efforts within the Legislature.

The LWG completed analysis of Governor Deval Patrick's filed health care payment reform bill, H. 1849 "An Act improving the quality of health care and controlling costs by reforming health systems and payments" and developed and brought forward to the full Council recommendations to help ensure that the issue of racial and ethnic health disparities be addressed in this filed legislation.

Dr. Sara Orozco presented these LWG recommendations in the form of 11 guiding principles and requested for the HDC to consider adopting and advocating for incorporation of these principles into H. 1849.

Georgia Simpson May from the Office of Health Equity at DPH emphasized that these principles should consistently incorporate language addressing race and ethnicity, as well as cultural and language competencies.

Dr. Alice Coombs of the Massachusetts Medical Society agreed and suggested that the principles should support and emphasize the need for workforce diversity in hospitals and medical schools.

Massachusetts Assistant Attorney General Lois Johnson asked for recommendations on how workforce diversity might be best incorporated within H. 1849. Ms. Johnson proposed that one method might be through including language as a subset of the quality benchmarks principle.

Roxanne Reddington-Wilde of Action for Boston Community Development suggested that the principles might be made stronger if the 11 were merged into only 5 guiding principles, arranged by topic areas.

Representative Rushing suggested that the reordering of the principles may serve as a means to enhance and strengthen their impact.

Additionally, Representative Rushing called for the Council's approval of the guiding principles with the understanding that the LWG will set up a process for the council to make retroactive revisions – to “in principle, approve the principles”.

No objection was voiced and the principles were approved with the addendum that Dr. Orozco and the LWG were to set up a process via a scheduled conference call to capture and receive further comments.

### **3. Interpreter Services Group Update**

Georgia Simpson May of the Office of Health Equity (DPH) informed the Council that the ISWG report and recommendations are out and possibly being reviewed by institutions at this time. She's received inquiry from a hospital about compliance with the recommendation for the use of certified medical interpreters. In addition, Ms. Simpson May is scheduled to present the report and recommendations at an upcoming meeting convened by the Forum On the Coordination of Interpreter Services (FOCIS) – a group representing at least 50 interpreter services departments in as many hospitals across MA.

Dr. Alice Coombs indicated that the MHA would also be interested in a presentation and asked that they be contacted.

#### **4. Discussion on the “National Stakeholder Strategy for Achieving Health Equity”**

Georgia Simpson May of the Office of Health Equity (DPH) presented on the Office of Minority Health’s (OMH) *National Stakeholder Strategy for Achieving Health Equity* (NSS). This OMH study provides a comprehensive roadmap for frontline workers and organizations to proactively and productively address and eliminate our nation’s health disparities.

The NSS sets out a strategy of change based on five defined key goals and 20 corresponding strategies that were developed through a grass roots development process. Each strategy provides a menu of objectives, measures, and potential data sources.

Ms. Simpson May highlighted how ongoing work in Massachusetts has been well aligned with NSS and allows for HDC to utilize these strategies as benchmarks and guiding tools in addressing our own Commonwealth-wide disparities.

Dennis Heaphy of the Disabilities Policy Consortium asked what role the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) had in development of the NSS.

Ms. Simpson-May explained that these strategies explicitly address all kinds of diversity, specifically expanding the definition of disengaged populations from previous disparity studies to include ethnic, cultural, linguistic, sexual orientation, gender, disabilities, etc.

Dr. Coombs reiterated the importance of workforce diversity to improve the quality and competency of an institution’s actions.

Ms. Simpson-May suggested that the NSS may serve as a roadmap for the HDC’s actions, as DPH already reports out to the Office of Minority Health regarding alignment with the NSS.

For the Council’s next meeting, Ms. Simpson May will create a one-pager to describe DPH activity that is alignment with the NSS.

## **5. Announcements**

Roxanne Reddington-Wilde requested that two microphones be made available for public participants at future Council meetings.

Additionally, Ms. Reddington-Wilde announced that a Securing the Safety Net seminar will be held at ABCD Central on Thursday, October 6 from 3:30-5:30. The seminar is titled, "Double Jeopardy: Health Disparities when Race and Disability Intersect."

Georgia Simpson-May announced that the Ounce of Prevention Conference will be held on October 4, 2011 at the Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel from 8:00 am - 4:00 pm.

## **6. Future Meetings**

The group ended the meeting and resolved to meet again on Wednesday, **November 9, 2011 from 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm** at One Ashburton Place, 21<sup>st</sup> Floor.

Dr. Orozco will contact council members regarding the process of revising the LWG's H.1849 recommendations.