Rhode Island
Commission for Health Advocacy and Equity
“Making strides to address health equity and the elimination of health disparities in Rhode Island”

Commission for Health Advocacy and Equity
Wednesday, July 18, 2018
2:00 PM to 4:00 PM
Rhode Island Department of Health, DOC, Lower Level
3 Capitol Hill Providence RI 02908

CHAE members attending: Andrea Goldstein (Brown University), Daniella Palermo (Brown University), Lori Benkhart (RI Department of Attorney General), Larry Warner (RI Foundation), Raymond Neirinckx (Office of Community Development), Taino Palermo (Roger Williams University), Vanessa Volts (Sojourner House).

RIDOH staff and guests: Deborah Garneau (RIDOH), Mia Patriarca (RIDOH), Chris Rancour Bruzzi (Gov. Commission on Disabilities), Beanish Kamen (RIDOH), Christina Garcia (City of Providence), Sarah Lawrence (Community Health Worker Association of Rhode Island), Niel Hytinen (RIDOH), Waverly Findlay (RIDOH)

Call to Order: Taino J Palermo, Ed., Roger Williams University, CHAE Chair

Review of May 16th, 2018 Meeting Minutes:
Meeting minutes were reviewed and will be voted upon at the October meeting.

Chair updates: Membership Recruitment:
- There are currently 6 open seats
- Four applicants are seeking to serve on the Commission
- CHAE is seeking at least 1 additional candidate
- The Commission is currently looking to increase representation for the following areas: environmental justice and workforce development

Please send suggestions for potential Commission members to Mia Patriarca or Carmen Boucher. An expression of interest form can be given to applicants. All Commission members have received this form by email.

Legislative Update, Neil Hytinen, Legislative Liaison:
The 2018 legislative session is over. Governor Raimondo did not veto anything on the list provided. (See attached list provided to attendees).
- Minimum wage bills never moved out of committee. However, other surrounding states passed similar legislation.
- For example, Massachusetts is going to implement $15/hour incrementally by 2022. Meanwhile, Rhode Island is only at $10.10, which will become $10.50 by July 1st, 2019.
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Discussion:
- Commission discussed working on legislation that is not necessarily deemed “health-related”.
- Where and how can we have a discussion around “Kristen’s Law” as it relates to health equity?
- Although the Commission has not taken a stance on Kristen’s Law, we can still write op-eds, debate, write letters support take a position on this law in the future.
- Governor Raimondo’s Overdose Prevention and Intervention Task Force-- we need to consider how opioid policies can affect marginalized communities.

Feel free to contact Neil for any additional questions relating to policy and legislation.

Community Health Workers Discussion
- Question: How can we promote community health workers as healthcare professionals?
- Disrespect and discrimination come with a lack of respect for the role.
- RIDOH is currently working with the Rhode Island Community Health Workers Association on certificates. There are around 220 certified CHW’s in RI currently.
- Does requiring a certificate to be a community health worker create more barriers? CHWs are the link to low income communities.
- A portfolio of lived experiences is being used in RI, rather than an exam that’s used in neighboring states.
- Training Process: 12 modules, 9 domains, 72 hours minimum. Fieldwork also required. Outside trainings can be used towards certification.
- Twenty hours for recertification every 2 years
- More specializations are being added (ex. asthma, legal advice, etc.) only cardiovascular and diabetes specializations currently available.
- No formal process for specialization. Do we want formal or less formal trainings?
- Training is available through Providence College, Roger Williams University, Dorcas international.
- A certifying body is being used rather than going directly through the state, as it’s faster and easier.
- Goal: having insurance reimburse Community Health Workers
- We need to prove the value of Community Health Workers to insurers and employers
- Getting hung up on quantitative evidence rather than anecdotal evidence of CHW benefits.
- Who do we need to talk with to make the case that this should be a reimbursed role?
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- No standard rate for CHW’s, generally around $18-20/hour.
- Planning to get the Community Health Workers Association in front of the Commission in the future for further discussion.
- This meeting can serve as a potential launching pad for them to engage in their own advocacy work.
- The Commission can introduce legislation around CHW issues. We would need a legislative sponsor to introduce legislation.

Policy Update, Taino Palermo
- Minimum wage bills are tabled, but this will remain a standing agenda item
- How do we take a position on the citizenship question in the US Census.
- The question was removed from the Rhode Island Census
- See “Public Health Awakens” email attached for further details

In general, the Commission is focusing on policy-making and is hoping to engage community groups.

In addition, if anyone here wants to step forward and organize a community meeting around the citizenship question, let Taino or Mia know.

Updates/Other, Taino Palermo
- Reminder: Health Equity Summit 2018, September 20th, RI Convention Center.
- Have someone from Department of Education come and speak to Commission at the next meeting? Vocational tracks, discipline procedure, graduation rates, etc.
- Possible resource: Aspen Institute
- Job qualities fellows program
- The Boston Federal Reserve, community development mission
- RI was 2nd state chosen to do Working Cities Challenge
- The Boston Federal Reserve can potentially help us by providing free research. This data would also be used to assess the community development and economic conditions of New England cities.
- Tai discusses how the Commission introduces and makes the community aware of policy, such as op-eds.
- Goal: have all existing/continuing commissioners and new appointees in place by the next meeting

Next meeting: September 26, 2018. Please note that this meeting will take place in the lower level DOC at RIDOH. This meeting will focus on strategic planning. [Note that this meeting will be rescheduled to October due to proximity with the Health Equity Summit.]
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Public Comments
None