

Maine Asthma Council
February 11, 2009
BLS Commerce Center
Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Desi-Rae Severson, Donna Levi, Amy Wagner, Paula Gilbert, Lee Scott, Ruth Lawson-Stopps, Dwight Littlefield, Ed Miller, Peter Doran, Amy Olfene, Renee Page, Veronica Currier-Boucher, Marvin Cling, John Chandler, Helen Roy, Leslie Manning, Nancy Dube

Guests: Rhonda Vosmus, Patty Hamilton, Elaine Beaulieu, Bonnie Irwin

Via phone: Christy Crocker, Rhona Julien, Jessica Loney, Elaine Heilrich-Rosenberg, Linda Coleman, Ruth Anne Spence, Annabelle Suarez

Introductions

Ruth Lawson-Stopps welcomed everyone to the meeting. Introductions were made around the room with everyone briefly explaining how their work connects with asthma.

Lung Association Update

Ed Miller discussed the ramifications of the money stripped from the Government Stimulus Package, and the effect on chronic disease. He expressed his concern that the money in the Fund for Healthy Maine could be used to fill the State budget gap, which would ruin the public health infrastructure in the state and that money would be lost for good. The Lung Association supports an increase in the cigarette tax to help fund healthcare costs. The Lung Association is also addressing environmental air quality and working to make policy changes that would consider outdoor wood smoke a nuisance.

Report for Policy Makers, Business and Community Leaders

Ruth Lawson-Stopps is in the process of creating a report that is to be disseminated to leaders, legislators and other various policy makers explaining the burden of asthma and the urgency to address asthma and lung health issues in Maine. The information for this report will be gleaned from the already existing "*The Burden of Asthma in Maine : 2008*" which was compiled by the asthma program's epidemiology department from the University of Southern Maine. Ruth is looking for volunteers/writers to lead this project.

Role of Asthma Educators (AE)

Rhonda Vosmus, an asthma educator from MaineHealth, gave a presentation on the roles and responsibilities of asthma educators. The primary goal of an AE is to educate staff, patients, and families about asthma management, treatment and guidelines, and to provide asthma self-management to patients. Each year the Lung Association conducts a two-day training for those interested in sitting for the national exam to becoming certified asthma educators. This years training will be held at Southern Maine Community College. The Lung Association and the Maine Asthma Program are teaming up to provide scholarships to interested attendees who live and work in Aroostook and Washington counties, areas of the state with the highest burden of asthma. Scholarships could potentially cover travel costs, meals, lodging, and other miscellaneous expenses. The number of applicants will determine scholarship amounts.

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Washington County Initiative

Ruth has been meeting with Elody Libby and Carol Lewis from Washington County to explore the possibility of collaboration to address indoor air quality issues and smoke-free housing. It is hoped that if this initiative works well it could be modeled in other areas. Leslie Manning indicated that the Bureau of Labor Standards (BLS) is also working with that area of the state regarding workplace safety and health. Leslie explained that there is an active and receptive safety and health group who are anxious in working with BLS. This could be a place to potentially pilot some interventions.

Website and List serve

Desi-Rae Severson sought clarification of what the council needed and expected from a list serve. It was determined that this should not be a public list serve and should be used to convey asthma information, news of upcoming events, news of funding opportunities and other information deemed acceptable. The list serve will not be used for things like advertising and job openings. The list serve questions and comments will be archived for future reference.

May 15th Asthma Event

The asthma program is pulling together a day-long event that will be held at Maple Hill Farms in Hallowell. The purpose of this event was discussed and there was agreement that this should be slated as an annual event.

Asthma Program Evaluation Update

Ruth Anne Spence, the asthma program evaluator, called in a brief update from Atlanta where she was attending a conference. She has plans to conduct a survey of council participants (for evaluation purposes) to assess if the revived council is meeting their needs. And also to determine what council members expect and do not expect from the group. She alerted council participant to be expecting this survey monkey in the near future.

Asthma and Pregnancy Brochure

Ruth Lawson-Stopps presented a brochure created by the Asthma program in accordance with NAEPP guidelines regarding pregnant women with asthma. This brochure is to be used by Mainecare to target their specific population in accordance with the Division of Family Health's Maternal and Child Health block grant. The brochure is intended to reach pregnant women between the ages of 15-44 who enroll in Mainecare with an indication that they have asthma and are pregnant. There was much debate over the brochure and the contents specifically the use of the word "death." MaineHealth offered to forward pregnancy information to the Asthma program with the hopes that before the brochure went to second printing the wording and information could be altered.

Workgroups Report

Homes: Ruth Lawson-Stopps gave updates of the "Homes" group. Currently the homes group has selected 4 areas of focus. 1) to develop an on-line reference library 2) develop a web-based score card to help homeowners determine what household triggers they are exposed to 3) develop a training program for local health officers, public health

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nurses, code enforcement officers and any others who may have to come in contact with clients housing. 4) Work with Washington County and Pleasant Point housing authority to help identify individuals with asthma and assist in eliminating triggers. The Homes group is also working towards a more complete “Healthy Homes” environment that not only includes asthma but also lead, radon and mold.

Workplaces: Peter Doran gave an update on the “Workplaces” group. He indicated that they are working on a WRA fact sheet. One area of focus is to make the business owners and employers aware of the costs associated when an employee has asthma. Not only medical costs, but time and productivity costs as well. The Bureau of Labor Standards will do a cross reference study to find the number of employees within certain high-risk industries in the state. The workplace group is also working on an online resource center where people looking for occupational asthma sources could find information.

Schools: Ruth Lawson-Stopps gave an update on the “Schools” group.

Next Meeting

Wednesday April 1, 2009