

Maine Asthma Council
April 1, 2009
Medical Care Development

Members Present: Renee Page, Nancy Dube, Desi-Rae Severson, Peter Doran, Veronica Carrier-Boucher, Ed Miller, John Chandler, Lee Gilman, Chris Paulu, Martha Webster, Stephen Meister, Jessica Langella, Annabelle Suarez, Linda Huff, Ruth Lawson-Stopps, Dwight Littlefield, Eric Frohmberg, RuthAnne Spence, Marvin Cling, Amy Olfene, Lisa Burgess Hodgkins, Krystyn Tonnessen, Elaine Beaulieu, Rhonda Vosmus, Sue Kelly, Sara McConnell

Via Phone: Linda Coleman, Donna Levi, Tracey Wall, Rachel Charette, Madeline Martin, Sue Bouchard, Christy Crocker, Leslie Walleigh

Introductions

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

Partnership Evaluation

RuthAnne Spence gave a poster presentation of some of the highlights from the survey monkey partnership satisfaction/involvement survey. She indicated that in the fall she will conduct a more in-depth follow up survey including some key informant interviews. Some of the highlights were a 74% response rate, which is excellent. Overall 91.3% of those who took the survey thought the council was relevant and 97.2% said it was a good use of their time. RuthAnne commended the group on their level of participation in the survey by saying the results she got were great for a group of this size. She stated the comments she received were all suggestions to make the council function better and those suggestions should be heeded. Her full report is attached to the minutes.

AHRQ Innovations Exchange

Donna Levi was pleased to announce that the Innovations Exchange found the MaineHealth AH! Program online and wanted to add the AH! Program to their online resources. A website has been designed which captures the problem of asthma and focuses on self-management and patient education. The AH! Program was selected because of their multi pronged approach to asthma education and their consistent use of well trained Asthma Educators. There were some questions raised about the sustainability of this resource. Donna felt the program could be sustained by keeping it fresh on people's plate. The MaineHealth Learning Collaboratives is the method they will use to keep this project on the front burners. More information about the content of the Innovations Exchange can be found at their website

<http://www.innovations.ahrq.gov/>

Asthma Advocacy and Legislative Issues

Ed Miller updated the group on the FDA bill currently being debated. At the federal level health reform is going to happen sooner than later. The tobacco settlement debate continues, and so far there are no cuts to the fund for Healthy Maine. There are a number of second hand smoke moving through the legislature one of which is to ban smoking on all public beaches in the state. There are also others which are intended to close loop holes in the current smoking bans one of which is to ban smoking in all outdoor eating establishments. Ed noted that it is a little surprising that this bill is going through unchallenged, he said in the past bills like this have been challenged by business owners. There is movement to improve data collection that enables more race and ethnicity information to be captured. Right now it is difficult to identify disparate populations in the state, therefore making it harder to focus health interventions on those specific populations of need. The Advisory Council on the Development of the State Health Plan is working on cost containment components. A part of that is the tax on roll your own tobacco. It continues to be cheaper to roll your own cigarettes than to purchase packs. Ed Miller made it clear that roll your own cigarettes and loose tobacco are on the radar.

Homes Workgroup

Eric Frohberg gave a brief update on the work the Home group is undertaking. Part of that is identifying short and long-term activities. Some of which are designed to be implemented before the August 31 funding cycle ends and some to continue into the next funding cycle. Among those activities are creating a web-based resource on the council website in the Homes section. Creating a safe home score card or using an existing score card (if there is one that fits the needs) and developing a training program for employees who regularly enter patients home as part of their work, Rhonda Vosmus suggested using the MaineHealth website which already has many tools that may suite the needs of the homes group.

Asthma Educators Institute Scholarship

Lee Gilman was pleased to announce that a revised curriculum has been developed this year in collaboration with Rhonda Vosmus and will be piloted at the upcoming training. There has been 1 applicant for the Aroostook and Washington County scholarships and several inquiries from school nurses looking to attend. Issues around reimbursing for Asthma Education also came up, this continues to be a confusing process that not many people are clear on. Mainecare will reimburse for asthma education in certain settings, but there are still big barriers to address before this process will be beneficial to patients.

Alert Document

Ed Miller updated the group on the process of the alert document. A document intended to “shock” the reader by stating that asthma is a preventable cost (which goes back to cost-containment) and it gives the reader general information on asthma as well as a check sheet. The check sheet is intended to be sure people are taking necessary steps to help reduce the rate of asthma in the state. Currently the document is in draft form but will be completed and final in the near future.

Air Quality Presentations

Martha Webster and John Chandler each did separate presentations on outdoor air. Martha focused on the enviroflash resource and how she generates the information that is then emailed to people who have signed up. Martha showed seasonal data on air quality throughout the year. She noted that ozone spiked in April and then the summer months and ozone decreased in the winter months. She indicated there was a 6 weeks window in the fall when air quality was fairly safe. It was noted that those safe air days conflict with asthma rates as those tend to spike in early fall. It was speculated that children going back to school caused the spike in asthma ER visits. Martha also sought feedback from the group on ways to disseminate this tool and expand it’s reach so more people will be aware of this resource and utilize it to reduce their exposure to unsafe ozone days. Martha urged anyone with ideas to contact her. She can be reached via email at Martha.e.webster@maine.gov.

John Chandler gave a presentation on how he monitors ozone levels in the state. He showed areas of the state where he tracked certain particulates in the air. He presented data on the various regions in the state and the air currents that carry particulate to the state from places like the mid-west, and New York City and Washington DC.

State Plan

Ruth Lawson-Stopps gave an update on the status of the Statewide Asthma Plan. This plan is directly linked with the upcoming Grant application to the federal CDC. The plan is to be a partnership document that focuses on surveillance, partnerships and interventions. Ruth noted that the plan is intended to be a grass-roots document specific to the work we are doing in Maine. The areas to be addressed in the plan are Homes, Workplaces, Outdoor Air, Schools and Public Policy. Goals and objectives will be drafted based on the work that is being done by the councils corresponding workgroup.

Schools Workgroup

Nancy Dube gave an update of the work being conducted by the schools group. The main goal of the schools group is to be sure that kids with asthma are going to

school, and asthma should never be the reason kids miss school. A survey was just sent out with the help of Sue Kelly to each school in the state seeking information on the number of students with asthma, the number who have a plan, as well as various other information regarding medications and indoor air quality. The survey is to be completed by April 3rd. The results will be examined and will help guide the work of the group.

Workplaces Workgroup

Linda Huff gave an update of the work being conducted by the schools group. Similarly to the Homes group the workplaces group has developed some short term and long term activities. Some of those are identifying the most common workplace triggers, high risk occupations, where are those high risk occupations geographically in the state. As well as more long term activities such as finding the self employed (the Mom and Pop businesses). Creating a web-bases resources center that will be housed on the Councils website in the Workplaces section, and in line with the self-management components of the statewide asthma plan, they will develop mechanisms to educate employees and employers about asthma.