

**Minutes**  
**Communities Connect Membership Meeting**  
**Thursday, April 9, 2009**  
**(rescheduled from Friday, April 10, 2009)**  
**3:30 pm – 4:30 pm**

Lisa Podell, King Co. Public Health Children's Health Initiative; Ralph DeCristoforo, Community-Minded Enterprises; Holly Greenwood, CHOICE Regional Health Network; Kristen West, CHOICE Regional Health Network; Kerri Lenderman, Whatcom Alliance for Healthcare Access; Sue Sharpe, Whatcom Alliance for Healthcare Access; Jackie Saul, Whatcom Alliance for Healthcare Access; Jesus Hernandez; Community Choice Healthcare Network

Guest: Dennis Martin, Healthcare Authority

## ***Meeting Objectives***

- Update on Community Collaborative Grant re-authorization
- Speak with Dennis Martin from HCA
- Update on other legislative issues

## ***Minutes***

<b><i>Topic</i></b>
<b>Introductions and Agenda Review</b>
<b>SB 5360 Update</b> The bill was heard last week in Ways and Means and then exec'ed out on Saturday, where it was unanimously approved and sent to Rules Committee. Jesus has spoken to Representatives Armstrong and Driscoll (also a CC member), who have learned from members of the Rules Committee that the bill will be sent to the floor for a full vote next week. After being approved in the House the bill will go back to the Senate for approval of the amendments made in the House. The session is expected to end on time April 29.  There was some question as to if the amended language in the bill is the same as what was recommended by the King Co. Children's Health Initiative. Holly believes that it is and will verify this.
<b>Senate and House Budgets</b> The biggest issue stemming from the budget proposals is possible changes to Basic Health, changes that could potentially result in 40,000 people being disenrolled from Basic Health. The House version of the budget contains some funding for children's Medicaid outreach; this is not included in the Senate budget. Both the House and Senate budgets include funding for GAU, a program that had been completely cut from the Governor's budget. Public Health services, family planning and immunization services will all take a huge hit in both the House and Senate budgets. Children's Medical eligibility will remain at 300% of the Federal Poverty Level.  Kerri has learned of several groups, including the State Hospital Association, the State Nursing Association, and SCIU, who are aligning themselves around developing a referendum for increasing the state sales tax to earmark money for state health programs, including Basic Health. They have been running television ads to gain public support for this tax sales tax increase referendum.  Ralph is aware of another movement seeking to discontinue providing Basic Health to undocumented residents. He recently saw a local talk show featuring Senator Schoesler speaking on this subject. Jackie noted that she heard a clip aired on NPR this morning featuring Representative Doug Ericksen from Whatcom County advocating for a voucher system for purchasing private insurance coverage for those disenrolled from Basic Health.

### **Dennis Martin, HCA**

Dennis was asked to join the call today to update and inform members of what they can do to help preserve funding for Basic Health. Dennis noted that HCA has been working for some time to reduce the budget of Basic Health. He believes there will be at least a 42% cut to funding and it may be worse. He also noted that there may be a certain level of cuts after which it is no longer feasible to continue Basic Health, although the exact minimum number of participants needed to maintain the program is unknown. In other words, there is a possibility that cuts may be severe enough that continuation of the program becomes unlikely. Dennis stated that HCA is attempting to maximize enrollment by making changes to coverage (i.e.: increasing co-pays, premiums and other out-of-pocket expenses) rather than cutting slots. HCA does not equate a 42% reduction in budget as a 42% reduction in enrollment. HCA is also working to determine if certain populations could be deemed no longer eligible for Basic Health if budget reduction is not met by attrition or changes to coverage, such as eliminating eligibility for those with Medicaid or other coverage. Dennis stated that if HCA is going to be required to make substantial cuts, they will work with stakeholders to determine the most equitable way to do this (such as disenrolling those with additional coverage or disenrolling based on income level). If attrition remains constant, HCA may not be required to disenroll anyone; however, attrition has decreased significantly since December 2008. Dennis indicated there may also be legal challenges stemming from cutting or not enrolling individuals from certain populations. Another possibility is mandating wellness activities for those certain chronic conditions that require wellness checks. Currently, 15,000 people are in managed enrollment, and Dennis is not sure when they will stop taking applications.

Dennis noted that Communities Connect members can contact their legislators to advocate for Basic Health, but at this time there is no specific information to comment on, other than proposed cuts to funding. Dennis will report back to Holly when there is more information to share; she will then send out calls to action as needed. Kristen shared her regrets that this is happening after all the progress HCA has made.

### **Other Issues**

- Executive Committee Retreat: The Executive Committee will be meeting in Seattle on April 21 for a half-day retreat. The primary objective of the retreat is to do some long-term planning and develop a plan for sustainability. Any outcomes from this will be brought back to the membership.
- Patient Empowerment Training: The Patient Empowerment training mentioned at prior meetings will most likely take place in the fall as the trainer is on maternity leave.
- Membership Update/Dues: All but five members have renewed their membership. Jackie and Executive Committee members will be following up with those who have not yet renewed.
- Medicaid Advisory Board: Doug Bart with CHOICE has identified a possible consumer to serve on the Medicaid Advisory Board although he has expressed a few concerns which Kerri Lenderman and Wendy Carr, a WAHA employee who serves on the board, are working to address.

### **Review of Next Steps:**

- **Next Legislative update call: Friday, April 17**
- **Next Membership Meeting: May 8, 2009**