Maryland Health Disparities Collaborative

Awareness Workgroup

Recommendations on outreach to community-based organizations.
Background: Senate Bill 234, the Maryland Health Improvement and Disparities Reduction Act of 2012 seeks to reduce health disparities among Maryland’s racial and ethnic groups and geographic areas, improve health care access and health outcomes in underserved communities, and reduce health care costs by establishing a Health Enterprise Zones (HEZs) pilot program.

For an HEZ to be designated by the Secretary, a non-profit community-based organization (CBO) or local health department must apply to the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and Community Health Resources Commission with a comprehensive plan to address disparities in a defined geographic area. The application must illustrate an effective and sustainable plan to reduce health disparities, produce savings to the health care system, and improve health outcomes.

While not limited to this resource tool alone, the Awareness Workgroup urges using the recommendations and lessons presented in the Office of Minority Health within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2000 report Strategies for Effective Health Outreach to African American Communities. Within the document are lessons learned to assist program planners to implement ideas for future health outreach initiatives directed at not only African American communities, but all communities. Outlined therein, the outreach methods, tools and lessons learned, outlined therein, are applicable and beneficial to the promotion of HEZ’s across all Community Based Organizations.

The following lessons, adapted from the report, can be used as a framework for formulating outreach recommendations.

- Know your target audience
- Assemble a skilled professional team
- Collaborate with respected institutions
- Work with existing networks
- Stimulate discussion among the target community
- Create a clear mission focused on achievement, inclusion and meaningful involvement of target audience
- Use evaluation data during the planning process
- Understand and adjust for the digital divide
- Use technology to broaden the message
- Strive for bold goals and ensure expanded partnerships
Recommendations

**Recommendation 1:** Identify current lists of Community Based Organizations and existing networks with community based outreach.

- Virtual Network of leaders in health equity (deliverable of the Leadership and Capacity Building Workgroup)
- Maryland Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities community contact database
- Maple List Serve (Maryland AIDS Prevention List Serve)
- Ryan White List Serve
- Jurisdictional planning organizations (LHIC, MOTA, etc)
- Health benefit exchange and its work with the Navigator Program
- Health care reform coalitions
  - Maryland Women’s Coalition and MCHI
- Non-health organizations (i.e. NAACP, major community development agencies, chambers of commerce, small business organizations, economic and business development entities, community improvement, civic, and fraternal organizations)
- Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Community colleges, state colleges and universities
  - Academic based health committees
- Maryland Association for Nonprofits
- Racial, Ethnic focus and local community press/media
  - Local radio-PSA, community information shows
- Churches and other religious and faith-based/focused organizations

**Recommendation 2:** Create a standard outreach message template and toolkit of resources on the HEZ initiative to be posted on Websites and disseminated. Look to other successful outreach models previously used.

- Simple fact sheet
- Key definitions
- One-page FAQ’s
- Talking points
**Recommendation 3:** Use multi-channel marketing strategies.

- E-mail blasts
- Text messages
- Websites
- Webcasting/videoconferencing
- Teleconferencing
- Facebook/twitter/bloggign
- Direct mail post cards or letters
- Newsletter inserts
- In person meetings
  - Town Hall Meetings
  - Roundtable Discussions
- Press Releases and Media Advisories
  - Work with the DHMH Public Relations Department and Local Health Departments to disseminate.
- Radio stations

**Recommendation 4:** Provide Hospitals, larger institutions, and Local Health Departments information (fact sheets, guidelines) on how to be an effective partner.

**Recommendation 5:** Identify and send a personal letter to legislators and local elected officials in potential HEZ areas and provide information on how they can assist and work with CBO’s.

**Recommendation 6:** Identify effective initiatives or programs currently being implemented in high health need areas and collaborate for the purpose of spreading information to the community.
References


Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, *Maryland State Health Improvement Process (SHIP)*  [http://dhmh.maryland.gov/ship/SitePages/Home.aspx](http://dhmh.maryland.gov/ship/SitePages/Home.aspx)


*Maryland Health Improvement and Disparities Reduction Act of 2012* (Senate Bill 234)  [http://mlis.state.md.us/2012rs/billfile/sb0234.htm](http://mlis.state.md.us/2012rs/billfile/sb0234.htm)