

**OCL Health Disparities Study
Steering Committee Meeting
December 11, 2007
Meeting Minutes**

Present: Sandra Barrett, Betty DeFazio, Liz Crockett, Beth M., Martha Ryan, Peter Sarver, and Cynthia Stevenson.

The meeting began at 8:40 a.m., with a recap of the study by Sandra Barrett.

Today's meeting featured guest Timothy Bobo, *Executive Director of the Central New York Health Systems Agency*.

The Central New York Health Systems Agency (CNYHSA), which serves 11 counties in upstate New York, was started just over 30 years ago as part of a federal plan for community health planning, which, today, is conducted on a limited basis. CNYHSA now offers planning and consulting services for community health improvement and also addresses issues concerning access to affordable healthcare, information sharing, education and advocacy.

CNYHSA currently is engaged in two major activity tracks. The first is planning and development in the areas of primary care, mental health, public health, Medicaid managed care and rural health networks, for which they offer grant writing and needs assessments, among other services. The second primary activity involves HIV/AIDS programming for about 20 organizations in Central New York, such as the CNY HIV Care Network, HOWSA, which offers long-term rental assistance and providing technical assistance to minority-serving organizations that provided AIDS prevention and treatment services, AIDS Community Resources and the FACES program at the Southwest Community Center.

CNYHSA also acts as an advisory to the NYS Health Department by reviewing CON's (certificates of need) from local healthcare institutions being submitted for approval.

Tim discussed that CNYHSA is aware of and is assisting various organizations to address health disparities in our region. He discussed federal Health Shortage Area Designations, and the recruitment of medical professionals to those areas which have extremely low ratios of medical providers per numbers of residents within a specific area. The Syracuse Community Health Center's designation as such is expiring. We are not a designated area for mental health. Sandra Barrett asked Tim why dental care for those in need in our area is so challenging to obtain. He responded by pointing to the low Medicaid reimbursement rates, which were increased a few years ago, but which have had a marginal impact on the number of those on Medicaid receiving dental care. He also described this problem as one of an "inter-play" of many factors, among them cultural issues, insurance coverage and location of pediatric dentists.

Betty asked if CNYHSA reviews any projects that have been put in place to determine effectiveness and impact. According to Tim, the agency does not, and given their resources, it is not realistic at this point.

Tim concluded by saying that regarding the issue of health inequalities in our area, there is “no simple solution.”

The meeting concluded at 9:40 a.m.