

**Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council (CECLC) Meeting Minutes
December 20, 2013 from 11:30 until 3:30, Wilder Foundation**

Members Present: *Mitchell Davis, Jr., Kamaludin Hassan, Pahoua Yang, Sarita Ennis, Kamala Puram, Dave Haley, *Paula Haywood, Pa H. Lor, Saciido Shaie, Pamela Cosby, *Sia Her, *Hector Garcia, *Muriel Gubasta, *Vayong Moua (by phone) [*left before adjournment]

DHS Staff Present: Antonia Wilcoxon, Mee Cheng, Rosalie Vollmar

Guests: Rep. Rena Moran, Dr. Richard Oni

Members Absent: Jose Gonzalez, Samanthar Hassan, Titilayo Bediako, LaJuana Whitmore, Edward McDonald, Rev. Janet Johnson, Rep. Tom Huntley, Rep. Jim Abeler, Rep. Tina Liebling, Rep. Tara Mack, Sen. Tony Lourey, Sen. Julie Rosen, Sen. Kathy Sheran, Sen. Michelle Benson

1. Welcome, Introductions, Opening

Wilcoxon called the meeting to order at 11:35. Because there is not a permanent chairperson yet, Wilcoxon asked for a volunteer to chair today's meeting. Pamela Cosby agreed to be the chair for today's meeting.

Wilcoxon asked that everybody go around the room and introduce themselves. In order to get to know each other a little better, people were to tell the group the first music album you ever bought and a little bit about that.

2. Review Minutes – November meeting

There is not a quorum today so there will be no voting. Therefore there is no official approval of the minutes for November's meeting. However today's meeting will be used to discuss agenda items until the next meeting where we have a quorum.

3. Review Proposed Agenda, Approval

There were no additions to the agenda.

4. Working Lunch

Lunch was provided by Kowalski's.

5. History of Disparities Reduction Advisory Committee (DRAC)

Wilcoxon reviewed the handout titled "Disparities Reduction Advisory Committee (DRAC) November 15, 2013". Some of the individuals in the room were former members of DRAC: Muriel Gubasta, Hector Garcia, Saciido Shaie, and Rep. Rena Moran, who was attending in Rep. Liebling's stead. The handout is a small summary to help understand why the Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council exists today. Wilcoxon reviewed the information in the handout.

Page 2: What is the Disparities Priority? During their 2007 summer strategic planning process, the senior management team (SMT) identified certain areas in the agency in which they saw as not supporting achievement of the agency's mission. Disparities was identified as one such area. SMT members developed a list of measures to guide the agency in achieving its vision of "reducing disparities in service access and outcomes for racial and ethnic populations."

Comment:

Page 3: Why is it a Priority? Minnesota has traditionally been a leader among states in human services, ranking high overall in a number of measures. However, racial and ethnic populations have not experienced equitable outcomes or access to services in the state.

Page 4: Wilcoxon reviewed the picture of the DRAC group from an April meeting, pointing out some of the members in the picture. The group met for 4 years and the communities had a lot to say about what they wanted DHS to know/consider/change.

Page 5: Disparities Reduction Strategy includes the vision, mission, guidelines, priorities and strategies. Message back to DHS was if you are thinking about a policy – keep these things in mind.

Page 6 – Includes goals of the National Partnership to End Disparities which DRAC agreed with.

Comments:

- What is the outcome of this report – did anything change?
 - One thing that was done is that this group was established through Statute
- To what extent are findings like this bought into by the leadership – The leadership structure lacks people of color. What is the buy in? – If the buy in isn't there then why are we all here?
- Wilcoxon- This Council was established by Statute at the request of DRAC members so this council would have a more formal role with the agency. Legislators added the community-generated language into the statute regarding what they wanted the agency to commit to. There have been some things that DHS has implemented:
 - Affirmative action goals have been increased - if managers interview members of cultural populations and do not hire them – they need to submit a justification as to why there was a missed opportunity, the commissioner and deputy commissioner approve the missed opportunity hires..
 - Constance Tuck, formerly the Office of Equal Opportunity director, is the Chief Equity Officer for the agency, reporting to the commissioner and a member of the senior management team.
- Paula Haywood, commenting on her being a county employee: even though she is not in a high level position at the county – she does have a voice and brings them to the table. We are all in a position to influence decisions.
- Sia Her: We can influence decisions but we need to look at the depth and breadth of that influence. Creating one office (community relations) with one person is almost patronizing. Capacity and meaningful investment in our communities are the critical pieces to keep hammering at.
- Kamala Puram: Asian community is often seen as the “model minority” and so the whole population is ignored. But there are issues- we don't want them to be ignored.
- Asians often apologize for their opinion or for speaking up.
- How do we overcome this challenge?
- All doesn't mean the same
- Equity is not the same as equality

At today's meeting it seems like the group is not made up with an equal representation of community members. Make sure there are as many of or more community people at the table than government employees.

- What happens when we involve our communities – we are talking about recognizing that all of us are human beings.

Page 8 – Lessons Learned: comments listed– Wilcoxon explained that these are the comments from DHS employees who had not before had the experience of community engagement. These were collected over the 4 years of meeting.

Page 9 – Next Steps – Suggestions from community members

- Bullet 1 - sounds like there is something wrong with the community not with the system - the language seems backwards. We don't need to be fixed.
- DHS – doing it for us – act like they are doing us a favor in their services. We are looking for quality of services not quantity of services.
- Seems like the system perspective is: If we are providing something that is beneficial - they know how to get to us.
- Many in our most vulnerable - Bullet 3 – Marketing DHS – Meaningful level of education - Better way to frame it – is to go back to American history 101 – government for the people - there would be no DHS or government without the people
- Wilcoxon's clarification: – DHS staff did not write this – This was community input - We heard over and over that DHS is sitting on a lot of information that would be useful to community members. So marketing refers to that. DHS should be getting out there letting people know what is available to community who can use the public services and resources.
- The DRAC group had a lot of discussion on this and it was hard to arrive at just bullet points – there was so much more to it
- Bullet 5 – what did that mean?
 - Wilcoxon: the comments were around eligibility criteria – need to be at a certain poverty levels
- Not trying to criticize the work of the previous committee – I am trying to see where this group fits in
- I was a member of DRAC. The bullet points don't give the full picture. Many of your comments were also raised at the meetings we had.
- The 4 years work is why we are all here today – we can build on their work – DHS only provides services to those in poverty - DHS has a lot of money – big budget – how is that money being spent?

6. Governance Language Review (Bylaws)

Wilcoxon requested of the chair that the group review the language, but the group will not be able to vote. The bylaws were reviewed paragraph by paragraph.

Part 1 -Section B

- Add “advancing health equity and” prior to reducing disparities that affect racial and ethnic groups.

Section C

- Add “advancing health equity” prior to regarding racial and ethnic disparities reduction.

- 2nd #1 – delete “relevant” and add “the House of Representatives and Senate committees with jurisdiction over Human Services;”

Comment: This Council is an opportunity to educate DHS and the legislators to help them serve us better. This is important work. What we learn here we need to take back to our communities and get further input.

Section D

- #1 Add at the end “and advance and promote health equity”
- #4 after disparities add “and health equity needs”

Section F

- #3 - Quorum issue – what is the correct number?

Discussion on Quorum:

- We don't want this quorum thing to get in the way of what we need to get done. Should we add something regarding expectations of attendance?
- Can we vote by email to prevent the quorum issue from being a problem? That may make it too easy for people to not attend/participate in person
- We need more than 50% of the community members for a quorum
- The legislators' attendance may be minimal – do we want to exclude the legislators from the number to establish quorum
- We accepted the position knowing the responsibility – It's not fair for those who are here all the time
- Can we keep track of those who are regularly missing?
- There is 36 total members – Quorum would be 19 as it is now
- Propose excluding non-community members (8 legislators+ 2 county employees) to bring membership number to 26 and then quorum would be 14
- Under that change would everybody still be considered a voting member?
- This led to much discussion about who should be a voting member and who should not.
- Propose rewrite of #3 - A quorum is established when a majority (50%) of the voting members are present with voting members defined as...
- Because there is not a quorum no decision or vote could be made today.

Comments:

- Because there are many in our community who don't understand the terminology or how the system works – a suggestion was made to hold a workshop/ training on it. Maybe a training needs to take place in the communities about how this all works.
- The meeting day and time may be part of the problem. Might need to have a shorter meeting and Fridays are hard for representatives to make it on Fridays.
 - Wilcoxon – Please give comments about whether this time/day does not work. Because of the quick deadline for the report the meetings were scheduled for longer timeframe now but intend to shorten them later. Expectation is that council members learn here and then go back out to their communities to disseminate the information.
- We are not here to talk the same language – we are here to learn – our job is to make the document easier for everybody not just for us. Let's just use simple words that everybody can understand.

Part 2 – Section G

- # 5 – missing 3 consecutive meetings
 - People leaving early are just like not being there.
 - For those who stay the whole time, it's kind of a slap in the face when people get up and leave early.
 - Wilcoxon: A quorum needs to exist throughout the meeting. Council needs to address attendance issues.
 - There were over 60 applications for membership.
 - If you aren't going to be able to attend – there were many others interested.
 - There should be an exception for the legislators to not be included in the 3 consecutive meetings criteria

- #1 - Commissioner shall appoint a chair
 - Commissioner asked for the council to recommend a chair but it is her role to appoint the chair and It should not be a state employee
 - Some people have been asked if they were interested, as requested by the commissioner

7. Next Steps

- Several council members recommended that Cosby be appointed by the commissioner as the Chair - Cosby stated that she would be willing to do this. Wilcoxon will meet about this with the Commissioner.

- Make sure people sign up for subcommittees. We will be scheduling a meeting.

- Haven't yet talked about our principles and values and how we behave as a council as a whole.

- Wilcoxon requested that members send her feedback and input on food served.

- We would like to patronize small businesses owned by cultural communities.

8. Public comment

- Dr. Richard Oni, a psychologist working with West Africans and many other immigrants, and refugee groups: He commented on his concern about the composition of the MNSure board. Issue of involvement of minorities: lack of request of services doesn't mean services aren't needed – people don't always know what to ask for.
- Continue to be vocal – let your voice be heard. Common issues come up in other boards he is on.

9. **Adjournment.** Meeting was adjourned at 3:25pm.