Health Care Reform Activities and Needs Survey
of Local Health Agencies
April 18, 2013

Across our state some local health agencies have established robust programs to implement and inform their communities about health care reform while others are just beginning to participate in local initiatives to understand health care reform and how they can help their communities.

The Department of Health, in consultation with the Public Health Improvement Partnership (PHIP) and the Washington State Association of Local Public Health Officials (WSALPHO), is interested in knowing where each jurisdiction is on this continuum; what the needs are, what assistance the Department of Health can provide, and how we can better work together on health care reform issues.

In March 2013, a short survey was administered to all 35 local health agencies in Washington State to inform future Department of Health and Partnership activities around implementation of the Affordable Care Act.

Completed surveys were received from 24 of the 35 local health agencies. Below is a summary of the responses.

1. Would you like more information about health care reform, such as what this means for your community and ways to help educate your community?

Twenty seven local health agencies would like more information about health care reform, such as what this means for my community and ways to help educate the community. Ways to inform included:

- Seminars/training sessions – for example are you interested in learning more about community health system reform models happening in other communities and states (17)
- Opportunities to share and exchange, for example forming a ‘learning community’ or some type of group to talk about what is going on and learn from others (11)
- Written materials/toolkits (16)
- List serve on health care reform issues/announcements, etc. (14)
- Other (webinars, training on how to help people sign up for Medicaid and use the exchange)

2. Are you currently communicating (or plan to) with your communities on health care reform?

Twenty one local health agencies are currently communicating (or plan to) with their communities on the topic of health care reform. They are:

- Hosting open forums (5)
- Sending out newsletters, etc. (2)
- Providing information during client contacts (9)
Presenting to their local boards of health, regional health authorities, health care partners (hospitals and doctors), local health care access, community organizations, health care reform planning teams

- Participating in access to health care groups; and creating websites on health care reform and its impacts on their counties

3. Under the Affordable Care Act nonprofit hospitals are required to complete a Community Health Needs Assessment and Community Benefits Plan. Are you involved with this work?

Twenty two local health agencies report that they are working with their local hospitals to accomplish requirement under the Affordable Care Act and Washington law for nonprofit hospitals to complete a Community Health Needs Assessment and Community Benefit Plan.

- The role of a local health agency would be to:
  - Convene
  - Lead
  - Conduct assessment
  - Provide data
  - Analyze and educate
  - Partner with the health care system in the area to provide community health needs assessment

- The local health agencies report that with these partnerships they hope to:
  - Enhance common health improvement plans, especially to address chronic disease impacts on the community, county wide needs assessment
  - Plan better and increase community participation to address community health priorities
  - Secure support for public health funding, especially assessment and community level interventions to improve access and quality at reduced costs
  - Develop a well-organized referral system for people with limited insurance so everyone who is eligible is covered and get volunteer providers to work in clinics that serve undocumented people
  - Gain common understanding and identify opportunities for partnerships and collaborations
  - Forge long standing relationship with multiple community organizations to identify, prioritize and improve the health needs of the community
  - Build relationships
  - Influence local community health improvement plans
  - Influence community benefit dollar allocations
  - Work with businesses to make sure, where appropriate, people who have no access to insurance are served
  - Work together with local community health improvement groups to define public health’s role within the health care reform
  - Explore the option of conducting a collaborative community health needs assessment which will serve as the basis for future collective action
4. Is there a Regional Health Alliances/Regional Health Improvement Collaborative\(^1\) underway in your jurisdiction?

**Thirteen** of the responding local health agencies report that there is a Regional Health Alliance/Regional Health Improvement Collaborative underway in their jurisdiction. Respondents reported wide variation in involvement with emphasis on prevention, information sharing, and future policy directions for the system.

- Local health agency involvement includes:
  - Sending staff to participate in collaboratives
  - Planning meetings
  - Planning assessments

- Local health agencies hope to achieve:
  - Develop and perform community health needs assessments
  - Develop community health improvement plans

5. Does your local health agency have dedicated staff or teams assigned to specifically work on health care reform?

**Five** local health agencies report having dedicated staff or a work team assigned to specifically address issues on health care reform.

- Their primary functions include:
  - Bringing information from the rural health clinics to the local boards of health
  - Prepare for implementation of the Affordable Care Act in the community
  - Track federal, state and local policies
  - Identify impacts and opportunities for the county
  - Educate community organizations on changes
  - Convene community planning groups

- Most local health agencies are willing to share what they have learned, including materials (19)

- About half are willing to share job descriptions of staff they hired for health care reform activities (13)

- About half are willing to share charters and work plans of newly created health care reform workgroups (12)

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\(^1\) Regional Health Alliances/Regional Health Improvement Collaborative is a neutral, trusted entity comprised of a community's health care stakeholders that can address issues such as health care access, cost and quality through planning, facilitation, coordination, and other activities.
6. Is your local health agency currently engaged in health care access issues in your jurisdiction?

**Eighteen** of the local health agencies are currently engaged in health care access issues in their jurisdictions.

- **Thirteen** of those are planning to help with possible Medicaid expansion and rollout of the **Health Benefits Exchange**
- Local health agencies expressed interest in a range of activities:
  - Early planning
  - Navigator role in a partnership with a regional agency
  - Launching a campaign to enroll newly eligible county residents
  - One agency is considering responding to the RFP from the exchange

7. Are you working on capacity issues such as inventorying primary care providers; partnering around recruitment, etc.?

- **Five** local health agencies are working on capacity issues such as:
  - Inventorying primary care providers
  - Partnering around recruitment, etc.
- The local health agencies report they hope to achieve the following for the community:
  - Work with providers to update database
  - Meet regularly with providers of vaccines for children and communicable disease services as well as with the oral health coalition
  - Develop a conference – What’s new in Medicine
  - Stay aware of capacity issues across all health care professions and discuss with state and legislative representatives whenever possible
  - Develop a reasonably priced system to get people the healthcare they deserve done in conjunction with hospitals and reviewed by community partners through local health care access alliances
  - Develop a system to monitor and assess capacity throughout the county and are currently identifying indicators to monitor capacity and inform community

8. Are you involved in initiatives related to health information such as Electronic Medical Records (EMR) and/or local/regional Health Information Exchanges?

**Thirteen** local health agencies are involved in initiatives related to health information such as Electronic Medical Records and/or local/regional Health Information Exchanges. Their involvement spans the continuum from considering purchasing of EMR to having an integrated EMR linked to the hospital.
9. Are you engaged in any service delivery reforms — health homes; primary care referral networks, or other?

Eight local health agencies are engaged in service delivery reforms. The types of reforms include:

- Working on access to care for children with special health care needs and expansion of mental health services
- Working on health home models, through their regional health authorities, or community health improvement plan
- Evaluating the counties’ participation in the state’s Health Home model in response to local legislation and developing a plan for accountable and integrated system of health, human services, and community based prevention and wellness
- Working with regional health alliance work group
- Increase and improve health literacy

10. Are you engaged in discussions in any payment reforms such as Medicare accountable care organizations; preventive care services via commercial/private payers, others?

Two local health agencies report participating in health care payment reforms such as:

- Medicare accountable care organizations
- Global budgeting
- Commercial payer ‘Total Cost of Care’ initiatives
- Community accountable care organization formation in conjunction with local health care access alliance
- Others

11. What should the role of the Department of Health be?

The following were suggested:

- Share information/data, best practices, and resources
- Share information on who is doing what on health reform in Washington – the implementation and how we can/should be involved
- Be a liaison between the local health agencies and the Department of Social and Health Services and Health Care Authority
- Be a point of contact
- Provide leadership on how to do EMR, or how to contract with insurance, etc.
- Provide information on how to create alliances
- Provide opportunity for conversation and discussions
- Add clarity and vision of the public health’s role in all of the changes, and how health care reform can/may/should change local public health practice
- Keep us on track for what we need to be aware of
- Provide information about crossover between public health and the Affordable Care Act
• Be at the leadership table with other state agencies planning and implementing health care reform
• Communicate with local health agencies about reform updates and changes
• Lead a group on how health care reform can/may/should change local public health practice

12. What jurisdiction do you represent and are you interested in participating in a workgroup on health care reform?

The following 24 local health agencies completed the survey and 14 responders (names in orange) are interested in participating in a workgroup on health care reform. They responders represent large and small, east and west jurisdictions.

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If you are interested in participating in a health care reform workgroup or need more information on the results of this survey, please contact jane.lee@doh.wa.gov

We welcome your additional feedback and participation in these efforts!