

Partners for a Prosperous Athens
Physical and Mental Health Subcommittee
March 27, 2006

The Physical and Mental Health Committee convened with around 75 participants in the Media Center of Cedar Shoals High School. The group discussed the initial scope of work as determined by the steering committee and potential benchmarks for determining success. One major issue that the group discussed is the need to compile a listing of the various providers and services currently in Athens for the uninsured and the under-insured (i.e. what clinics are available, services offered, location, etc.). A second need is to determine the availability of wellness programs already in existence in industries and businesses in the Athens community. The group expressed a strong interest in seeking models of successful health care programs for the poor, uninsured, and under-insured that currently exist in other communities and examples of wellness programs in other communities. Providing this information to the committee during the next meeting will be important for maintaining momentum.

Another interesting discussion surrounded the Inner-Faith Hospitality Network that exists in the community and the role that it could play in providing basic health care services to the poor of Athens. Through this, and through local churches, medical mission trips to foreign countries are organized and executed. The committee suggested that, while these trips abroad provide a great service to other countries, the need to provide this in our own backyard should also be a priority. Working with these groups to organize a local health fair should be a priority.

Finally, the group had numerous suggestions on other items to be included in the scope of work and that should be looked at as benchmarks for success. Those items follow.

I. What is missing from the initial Scope of this work? /What else should be addressed?

- Physical rehab (PT, OT, etc.)
- Disability care
- Life skills: education, employment, finance...
- Independent living skills
- Teen Pregnancy/Sex ed
- Substance Abuse
- Nutrition
- Prenatal care
- Domestic Violence
- Family and Relationship Skills
- Insurance
- Access/Transportation to health providers
- Parks/Recreation (the need for healthy and safe places to play)
- Health Screenings
- Understanding Organizations' Policies and Procedures
- Vision/Eye Sight
- Dental
- Community Outreach
- Prescription Meds
- Prejudices/Racism/Cultural Differences in Athens: Literacy (can they understand?)
- Specialty Care Access
- Suicide prevention
- Changes to the Insurance System needed
- Mental Health Stigma; mentally ill do not know they need help
- Illegal immigrants= fear to seek services
- Language services
- Preventative/immunization
- Use the media to organize access
- Non-governmental programs
- Obesity
- Access to healthy food (affordable)
- Mental Health Services to illegal immigrants/ Prescription assistance
- TB component
- Non-English speakers understanding the system (many from socialist background)
- Spiritual health
- Coordination of care for those with chronic diseases
- Community health assessment

- Prevent HC providers from reporting illegal immigrants
- Free clinic providers so immigrants do not have to fear being reported
- More organized coalition of specialists that serve underinsured children
- Medical missions in Athens
- Pro-bono work of Doctors
- Inner-faith hospitality network – could develop Inner Faith Health Network
- Go to the people to do health screenings instead of expecting them to come (preventative approach)
- Well-care programs
- 60% of Health Care issues are preventable by Life courses (ex: good nutrition prevents obesity)
- Education in Elementary Schools on Nutrition/Wellness. School cafeterias promoting healthy eating
- Smoking programs based on realities: why do people start smoking?
- Stress management
- Legal advocacy
- Corporate interests (ex: coke products in schools)
- Community design/ Safe mobility
- Get into the neighborhoods and learn what they think the issues are – ask what their health concerns are
- Build network of providers who will donate services (include UGA students and Athens Tech)
- Find out what services Athens Tech students are required to offer while in training (teeth cleanings,...)
- Litigation/Patients Bill of Rights. Malpractice issues with donated care
- Talk to Homeless about their needs
- What is the community already doing?
- Health institutions collaborate instead of compete (ex: St. Mary's and Athens Regional)
- Child Abuse/Neglect
- Emergency Preparedness
- Preventative care in the workplace
- Vision for improvements
- Grant writers

II. Benchmarks

- Where are we now?
- Decrease ER visits for primary care
- Reduce kids missing school because of sickness
- Increase graduation and lower High-school pregnancy rates
- Childhood/adulthood obesity levels need to come down!
- Volunteer and financial support for Free health clinics
- Decrease infant mortality rates
- Trust funds
- Getting around Fed regulations to better take care of our community
- Better coordination of current resources
- Building community awareness (of needs, and also of services already available but not well known)
- Mobilize Faith Based
- Liability coverage for pro-bonos