

Power of We Consortium **Meeting Minutes - October 21, 2011**

Present: Bill Nelton, Lia Spaniolo, Maureen Hirten, Graham Pierce, Lynne Martinez, Lisa Chambers, Eric Schertzing, Randy Bell, Ken Sperber, John Roy Castillo, John Melcher, Tiffeny Jimenez, Jacqueline Kelly, Meredith Johnson, Serg Ruiz, Olga Hernandez-Patino, Katie Ellero, Terry Link, Joan Nelson, Alex Bryan, Steve Findley, Jannelle Jagmin, Neal Valley, John Bolan, Jared Talaga, Heather Rae McAlvey, Paul Miller, Janine Sinno, Jessica Yorke, Colleen Synk, Ron Eggleston, Monica Jahner, Lori Eva, Laura Sager, Justing Sheehan, Eklavya Prasaj, Vincent Delgado, Angela Waters Ausin, Eldon Liggon, Debbie Edokpolo, Renee Canady, Matt Wojack, Peggy Roberts.

Welcome, introduction, announcements: Angela Austin opened the meeting:

- Serg Ruiz, VISTA member to the Power of We Consortium, was honored with a certificate of achievement and thanked for his contributions to increasing the technical capacity of the Consortium and organizations across Ingham County.
- Paul Miller, Michigan Disability Rights Coalition, announced the Including our Neighbors (ION) grant opportunities and provided information about him being available to speak to individual organizations.

Action Items

A. Ad Hoc Committee on *Power of We Consortium* financial campaign

In the fall of 2010, the Power of We Consortium membership discussed our changing financial environment and the need to consider a more sustainable plan to support the infrastructure of the Consortium. At its October, 2010 meeting, Consortium members voted to initiate a voluntary member-supported financial contribution campaign. Brad Patterson will lead a conversation regarding the outcome of that campaign. Member volunteers possessing some experience with campaigns will be asked to serve on an ad hoc committee to explore a format for, and provide leadership to, the 2011 campaign.

Brad Patterson opened the conversation of a 2012 financial campaign by referring to the “collective impact” the Consortium can make in this community by utilizing its 5 community practices to define and sustain a campaign. The Consortium shares data, uses continuous communication, and creates an environment of trust – all of which requires a dedicated staff. As a subcommittee of the Consortium, the Investors Steering Committee took on the task of sustaining the campaign last year and was able to broaden the base of donors beyond its founding members. Brad pointed out that the Consortium needs to sustain its current activities, not go backwards, even as staff has decreased to one person. Brad asked for persons to consider serving on an Ad Hoc Committee, along with a few members of the Investors Steering Committee to create and implement a new campaign. It was suggested that a total of 6 hours was an estimated time commitment. A sign-up sheet was then passed around for members to sign up.

B. Ad Hoc Nominations Committee/Appointment and Charge

The Consortium traditionally appoints an ad hoc committee to nominate community representatives, community partners, and a new co-chair for the upcoming year.

Consortium members will be invited to serve on the 2012 Ad Hoc Nominating Committee and will receive their charge. [See Attachment A](#)

Angela provided an overview of the nominations process and requested volunteers to serve on the ad hoc committee. Joan Nelson and Terry Link volunteered. This committee will meet in November/December and report its recommendations in January, 2012.

Dialogue for Collective Impact:

Resilient Communities

A resilient community is defined as “one that anticipates problems, opportunities, and potentials for surprises; reduces vulnerabilities related to development paths, socioeconomic conditions, and sensitivities to possible threats; responds effectively, fairly, and legitimately in the event of an emergency; and recovers readily better, safer, and fairer” (Wilbanks, Thomas J. 2008. Enhancing the Resilience of Communities to Natural and Other Hazards: What We Know and What We Can Do. Natural Hazards Observer. May 2008)

What are the critical roles and assets of the vulnerable persons that reside in our community?

What are the financial and human costs for ignoring or under-serving these persons?

How can we collaborate as a community to be more resilient?

What can we, and should we, be doing?

What policies should be addressed to assure we become a more resilient community?

Three panelists will address these questions by sharing their knowledge and expertise serving physically, emotionally, and mentally challenged persons, and formerly incarcerated persons in our community:

- 1) **Greta Wu**, Senior VP of Human Services for Peckham, Inc.
- 2) **Matt Wojack**, System of Care Project Director, CEI Community Mental Health
- 3) **Renee Canady**, Deputy Health Officer, Ingham County Health Department

Following panel presentations, PWC participants will be invited to engage in facilitated dialogue.

Angela began with an explanation of “resilient communities”, drawn from work being done in the field of disaster response. The concepts and knowledge generated from this work has found relevance in understanding how communities need to prepare to respond to man-made economic and social disasters and challenges.

Panelist Greta Wu represents persons with disabilities in her work at Peckham, Inc. While the roles and assets of disabled persons are not all that different from non-disabled persons, there is greater challenge in assessing opportunities. Disabled persons have a higher than average problem with:

- Credit ratings being affected when unable to pay health care costs
- Inability to access mental health care when they are “not sick enough” for public mental health criteria. Waiting until they have truly fallen apart affects employment.
- Education requirements often being very rigid which leaves disabled required credentials for certain jobs.
- Cross county transportation services often lacking, leaving disabled struggling to get to medical, employment, etc.
- Availability of affordable, accessible housing

- Lack of financial literacy being a barrier to asset building
- Challenges of technology

Greta talked about the way to building resiliency is to cultivate each person's strengths and find ways to support areas of need. Interagency collaboration helps to reduce duplication of services and stretch resources. Collaboration across organizations helps to invest in future generations of disabled persons, and their children, and it makes work more fun for all. Organizational persons who can offer to "job shadow" for people with disabilities and their children can be a tremendous help. Also, just listening profoundly to persons with disabilities can help to truly understand what helps them, what energizes them, what sustains them, and what do they actually need.

If Greta were "queen for a day" and had the ability to affect policy, she would require that all buildings adopt "universal design" principles – for new buildings, public and private housing, etc. – that would take into account all the things that make disabled person feel welcome and access what they need.

Panelist Matt Wojack began by speaking of his 6 years with the Impact system of care for children with severe emotional disturbance, and the challenge to change the community's culture from a public institution-driven culture to a family driven, youth-guided culture. Traditionally, CMH, DHS, the courts, etc all operated independently, causing the youth and families huge challenges in trying to respond to the expectations and demands of each. Under Impact, these entities work together in a wraparound approach to meet the total needs of the family. One primary goal of Impact is to reduce residential placement of youth and to keep youth with their families in the community.

Matt discussed how mental health issues are actually the norm in families, and that the affected people know what they need. Families dealing with mental health issues are very resilient when they are provided the supports and resources they need. The cost of doing nothing to assist these families is decreased education attainment, low/under employment, increased substance abuse, and increased incarcerations. Collaboration among traditionally non-collaborative institutional partners was essential for the success of Impact. Community Mental Health, the Court, Department of Human Services, and other community partners needed to work cooperatively to invest in families with emotionally disturbed children to prevent removals and placements in residential settings.

If Matt were "king for a day" he would, of course, want to reverse the downward trend of funding for mental health as has been the trend over the past 11 years in Michigan. He understands that people must be severely impacted before they are eligible to receive services from CMH. Matt would also seek to remedy the uneven, antiquated funding systems that allows poorer counties to be underfunded compared to more wealthy counties. Matt further stated that promoting a data-informed outcome system would reduce decisions being made on emotion. He would also advance a community based care system.

Renee Canady from the Ingham County Health Department was the last panelist to speak. She talked about being with persons formerly incarcerated and how some feel

negative toward the label “ex-offender”. Moving beyond the labeling of these persons, and on to the recognition stage, is of primary importance. 11.5 million persons cycle in/out of prison each year. Most persons of color love and/or know a formerly incarcerated person, all of whom struggle with issues of education, employment, and health.

Formerly incarcerated persons are consistently re-exposed to vulnerabilities. 21% of them are seriously mentally ill, such that prevention and treatment for mental illness would greatly reduce incarcerations. Organizational collaboration is necessary to end the invisibility of this population, and to provide supports for substance abuse treatment and mental health services. Collaboration needs to occur to end the isolation for formerly incarcerated persons to allow them to raise the profile and raise the debate. Renee quoted Dr. Henri Treadwell as saying “Punishment is creeping into public funding.”

Were she “queen for a day”, Renee would “ban the box” – remove the question that shows up on most employment applications that asks: “Have you ever been convicted of a felony?” The preferred system would allow that question to be posed only at the interview process, thereby giving formerly incarcerated persons the opportunity to meet with employers prior to snap decisions being made.

Angela opened the discussion to the audience. Monica Jahner, ARRO program of NorthWest Initiative, passed out flyers in support of the Ban the Box initiative regarding a January 17, 2012, 5:30 event with Dr. Michelle Alexander, author of The New Jim Crow. Dr. Alexander will speak on how barriers to employment for formerly incarcerated persons hurts families and communities. Organizations were asked to sign up by Dec 1st as a sponsor of this event.

Other comments included the fact that 80% of youth in the juvenile justice system have experienced some trauma, while just 15-18% of the total youth population have experienced trauma. Children of formerly incarcerated persons and the disabled are directly impacted by struggles of their parents.

Refugees often have a variety of disabilities, which are often hidden due to language and cultural differences. Many of these disabilities are unearthed during vocational training. Peckham is serving over 2500 persons at any given time.

The question was asked as to how often the “affected person” is involved in the solution being posed? Matt indicated that involving the youth and families in system of care is foundational, and transformational.

Angela asked the questions: How do we collaborate and not compete? How do we increase resilience for these populations? Answers include: we cannot discriminate; we must also work intentionally against discrimination; we must create safe places for people to self-identify their disabilities and special status.

One person commented that the community is a big puzzle, and each person is a piece. Sometimes we need to move a piece around to find a better fit.