

we PLAN

FOR ACTION

An Opportunity to Improve your Community

**Cook County
Department of Public Health
Cook County Bureau of Health Services**



Todd H. Stroger
President
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Vision Statement

The public health system will ensure the conditions people need collectively to be healthy in communities of suburban Cook County. To succeed in this task people and organizations that make up the public health system will work and plan together.

WEPLAN KICKOFF A SUCCESS

WePLAN For Action Kickoff draws 85

More than 85 leaders from throughout suburban Cook County attended meetings on November 28th and 29th in Westchester and South Holland facilitated by the Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH). Meeting participants represented a cross section of suburban Cook County disciplines, including, health, social service, municipal, community, education and faith communities. CCDPH Director Stephen A. Martin, Jr., PhD, thanked people for attending and emphasized the importance of partnerships.

“We know we cannot do this alone. These are complex problems, so your



participation is very important to improving the health of the public,” he said. The purpose of the meetings was to create viable partnerships to address three health issues that are problematic in suburban Cook County. The priorities include increasing access to primary

care, preventing youth violence, and preventing chronic illness with a special focus on diabetes. The priorities were developed after extensive review with community partners, and were documented in a health department report called WePLAN.

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WHAT HEALTH PRIORITIES WERE IDENTIFIED IN WEPLAN?

- Deaths from homicides and firearms are twice as high in suburban Cook County as the national goals of Healthy People 2010.
- In 2005, almost twice as many adults (12.7%) age 45-64 were told that they have diabetes than in 2000 (6.6%).

- In 2005 almost twice as many adults (14.6%) were uninsured as in 2000 (8.7%). Poor families (income \$15,000-\$30,000) were impacted the most.

Given the threats to health that are illustrated by the facts above, three priorities were identified: First, to reduce the

personal, family and community burden of violence by increasing prevention activities for youth and families. Second, to reduce the disease and economic burden of diabetes by preventing and reducing obesity. Third, to improve access to primary care for residents by reducing barriers to care.

The WePlan for Action welcomes and needs participation from all suburban Cook County residents. Only a diverse group of people working together can create the kinds of solutions needed to tackle the issues.

“It is clear that no single organization has the depth of resources needed to improve community health to an optimal level. Ultimately, this is an opportunity for all of us to contribute to a goal that is achievable through collective action and a shared vision. Together we have the wisdom, expertise, knowledge, and commitment to make change.”

Pictured: (L to R)

Melody Geraci, Linda Rae Murray and Adam Alonso

Far right picture (L to R)

Apostle Carl White, Pat Welch and Kenneth Williams

KICKOFF A SUCCESS

cont'd from front

After presentations by health department staff about the WePLAN planning process and findings (available at www.cookcountypublichealth.org) three panelists at each meeting described challenges of their particular health program or activity. The panelists and meeting participants described the need to work together to overcome cuts in health care services, reduction of community prevention pro-

grams, and the existence of health inequalities.

Before the meetings concluded, attendees were urged to join the WePLAN for Action Steering Committee. The Steering Committee will plan, coordinate, and carry out actions to increase access to primary care, reduce youth violence, and prevent chronic illness, especially diabetes. The first Steering Committee meetings will be held January 22nd, February 21st and March 19th and will focus on the priority health issues.

One thing you should know:

Health is more than health care.

Doctors treat us when we're ill, but what makes us healthy or sick in the first place? Research shows that social conditions – the jobs we do, the money we're paid, the schools we attend, the neighborhoods we live in – are as important to our health as our genes, our behaviors and even our medical care.

—California Newsreel
www.unnaturalcauses.org

PANELISTS SPEAK ON CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES

Six panelists described their work in specific health programs they carry out. **Melody Geraci**, of the Chicagoland Bicycle Federation, said that by connecting with WePLAN partners, Safe Routes To School can better succeed in empowering kids to learn healthy and non-polluting ways to travel. **Linda Rae Murray, MD, MPH**, said that primary care is more than getting on an exam table in a doctor's office. “It includes a good diet, a clean water supply, dental care, and treatment of substance

abuse. Good housing and public transportation, income, and safe neighborhoods for exercise, are social determinants of health,” she said. **Adam Alonso**, Director of Corazon Community Services is excited “about the impact and change we are seeing with youth” in the work of the Cicero Youth Task Force. “I am humbled by the cooperation of the community,” he said. Panelists who attended the November 29th meeting in South Holland were passionate about their work around better community health. **Apostle Carl White**, of Victory Christian Assembly and the Southland Ministerial Health Network said “it gives me a sense of accomplishment to help people live healthy lives.” He emphasized the need for parents to get more involved

in their children's lives as a way to prevent youth violence. **Pat Welch**, former principal at Hillcrest High School described success in working with community partners and educators to improve students' diet. “We need to work together for the



future of our society, through our youth,” she added. **Kenneth Williams**, of Aunt Martha's Healthcare Network, said, “So many people are unaware of the resources that are available.” He enjoys informing people “who are in the greatest need of healthcare services.”

