

Meeting Summary for Women & Children's Health Committee

Zoom Meeting

Jun 10, 2024 09:24 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada) ID: 910 5915 5099

Quick recap

The team from Partners and Social Research discussed a community-based project in New Britain aimed at increasing access to reproductive health education, with a focus on promoting high-quality, evidence-based programs for young people and their families. The team agreed to continue communication and feedback throughout their project, with the next meeting scheduled for July 8th.

Next steps

Eva, Donna, and Jennifer to find out what navigators or processes exist in New Britain for enrolling youth in Medicaid and other entitlement programs, and report back to the committee.

Eva, Donna, and Jennifer to explore opportunities for collaboration with Katie and Kai from Illinois Contraceptive Access Now (ICAN) on provider training and patient education regarding the Medicaid family planning program in Connecticut.

Eva, Donna, and Jennifer to consider advocating for legislation that allows minors to self-attest for Medicaid family planning coverage in Connecticut.

Eva, Donna, and Jennifer to investigate the extent to which interpersonal violence and consent laws are covered in the evidence-based curricula being implemented in New Britain.

Eva, Donna, and Jennifer to provide an update on the progress of the Yes project in New Britain at a future Medicaid Council meeting.

The Medicaid Council to explore best practices for incorporating reproductive health education into annual visits and routine healthcare screenings.

The Medicaid Council to consider ways to promote awareness and access to reproductive health services, including STI testing and family planning services, among youth in Connecticut.

The Medicaid Council to advocate for aligning Connecticut's health education standards with the National Sex Education Standards and addressing gaps in legislation related to comprehensive reproductive health education.

Summary

Introducing Community-Based Reproductive Health Project

Rep. Jenn Leeper, Amy Gagliardi and Iva Kosutic, and their colleagues from Partners and Social Research introduced themselves and their roles to the MAPOC Subcommittee on Women and Children. They discussed a community-based project in New Britain that Iva's team has been working on with funding from the Federal government. The goal of the project is to increase access to reproductive health education. The team also highlighted the partnership with Clint Family Services and acknowledged Doug Milano and Liz Boilard's contributions to the project.

Reproductive Health Education in Connecticut

Iva and Donna Maselli discussed the importance of reproductive health education in Connecticut, focusing on the decline in teen birth rates and persistent disparities among different ethnic groups.

Reproductive Health Education and Equity Importance

Iva emphasized the importance of providing high-quality, evidence-based reproductive health education to young people to promote their health and wellbeing and prevent unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections. Jennifer then discussed the Office of Population Affairs Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program (OPA and TPP), which aims to advance equity in adolescent health by supporting the replication of medically accurate, age-appropriate, and evidence-based reproductive health programs and services in communities with the greatest need. She explained the concept of equity, emphasizing the importance of designing programs that address the unique needs and circumstances of different populations. Jennifer also highlighted the importance of medical accuracy, age-appropriateness, and evidence-based programs in their approach.

OPA Grant for New Britain Adolescent Health

Jennifer discussed the OPA grant for New Britain, which aims to advance equity in adolescent health by providing evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention programs and services. Partners and Social Research, along with several community organizations, was awarded a \$3.6 million grant to implement this project over five years. The focus is on providing high-quality curricula and access to adolescent-friendly services, with a community-driven approach that empowers youth and their families. Donna reported that the New Britain Board of Education approved the use of an evidence-based program for middle and high schools, which will be implemented in September. Monika raised concerns about potential pushback from parents and board members, but Donna clarified that the delay in implementation allowed for review and embedding of the program into the curriculum.

Evidence-Based Programs for Young People

Iva outlined the project's goal to provide free evidence-based programs for young people and their families, focusing on four settings: schools, community organizations, after-school programs, and clinics. The project intends to implement four different evidence-based curricula, each with a unique focus, but all emphasizing the importance of abstinence and providing practical information on staying safe. The curricula also encourage young people to consider the long-term consequences of their actions and feature interactive activities to promote discussions and critical thinking.

Anonymous Questions System and Program Feedback

Iva discussed the implementation of an anonymous questions system in their program to stimulate conversation and address topics of interest to their community. They also mentioned the provision of education for parents, caregivers, and teens, with a focus on sexuality and other taboo topics. Iva further highlighted the importance of continuous quality improvement through structured observations, best practice sharing, and the use of participant feedback. Jennifer then presented preliminary feedback from the first six months of the program, indicating high satisfaction rates among participants. A question was raised by Donna regarding the national sexuality education standards, to which she responded by highlighting the involvement of their own Dr. Bonnie Edmundson in their development.

Curriculum Frameworks and Reproductive Health Education

Freeman Burr also emphasized the role of curriculum frameworks in establishing learning outcomes and the importance of local curriculum design. Jennifer shared insights from discussions with New Britain youth, revealing their dissatisfaction with the current state of reproductive health education. Donna proposed the expansion of health education to include planned parenthood as health experts in Connecticut.

Improving Connecticut's Reproductive Health Legislation and Education

Rep. Leeper highlighted the challenges faced in passing such legislation, while Amy expressed her commitment to improving Connecticut's low rating in this area. Shelly introduced a partnership with Planned Parenthood to provide reproductive health education, which was supported by Pam and Katie, who suggested strengthening Connecticut's Medicaid program for family planning. Kai stressed the importance of connecting young people to safe and confidential care, and Donna shared her experience working with community health centers. The team also discussed the need to investigate the presence of Medicaid enrollment navigators in the New Britain school district.

Medicaid Family Planning Program Enrollment

Katie, Donna, Iva, and Amy focused on the enrollment of young people into Medicaid family planning programs, highlighting the lack of awareness among both youth and providers. The team also emphasized the role of healthcare providers in routine screening for STIs and birth control, and the potential long-term reproductive health impacts if left untreated. The team agreed to continue communication and feedback throughout their community project, with the next meeting scheduled for July 8th.