Notes

Community Health Worker Educational Program Meeting

April 22, 2014

Attendees: Dr. Danny Avula (Richmond City Health District), Christina Benton (VDH), ), Stephanie Bernier (RCHD), Kayla Craddock (VDH), Dr. Alan Dow (VCU), Sheryl Garland (VCU Health System), Dr. Susan Hunter (J.Sargeant Reynolds Community College), Amy Popovich (RCHD), Dr. Mike Royster (IPHI), Denise Wise (RCHD)

1. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss opportunities for the agencies represented to collectively explore an educational validation process (ie, credentialing or certification) for Community Health Workers (CHWs) who work or volunteer in Virginia. This would be beneficial to support several initiatives including the Community Health Worker Task Force that is led by the Virginia Department of Health (VDH), and the application for a State Innovation Model (SIM) grant that will be submitted by the Virginia Center for Healthcare Innovation. VCU is preparing the section of the grant that is focused on the development of educational programs for case managers, care coordinators, community health educators and community health workers. The group that has been assembled for this meeting is being asked to assist with the development of the educational component for the latter group.
2. Christina Benton updated the group on the activities of the VDH Task Force that is looking at the broad competencies of community health workers across the State. Once the core competencies are agreed upon, the goal is to have individual organizations add on specific skills and educational requirements that community health workers may need to support populations served. VDH would like to establish a broad curriculum that can be used across the Commonwealth.
3. Dr. Mike Royster shared that the Institute for Public Health Innovation (IPHI) has developed a curriculum for the CHW programs it supports in Maryland, Northern Virginia, and DC. It includes a combination of 80 hours of training and didactic education. The curriculum also has a continuing education component. IPHI is currently working with George Washington University to develop a program focused on a heart failure readmission reduction initiative. The training is classroom based, but interactive and usually occurs over a series of Friday afternoon sessions.
4. Dr. Susan Hunter shared that J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College has a division that focuses on the development of Occupational programs. They could format a class that assists in developing a career track if the group is interested in going that route. There is an interest in helping to create a certificate or a credentialing process for the CHWs. One issue that was discussed was the need to identify faculty for such a program. The program could potentially be disseminated through the commonwealth via the community college system.
5. The group discussed the idea of having IPHI staff qualified by J. Sargeant Reynolds to teach the course. It was also suggested that we think about making the program available to all community colleges so that the educational opportunity was available to CHWs across the State. In addition, there was a discussion about developing an online course.
6. One question of importance to the group is financial sustainability for introducing CHWs into health care delivery models. A question was raised regarding VCHI’s interest in engaging payers through the SIM proposal to look at reimbursement options for the CHWs. The group agreed that looking at the ROI as a part of the grant would be an excellent idea.
7. Next Steps:
   1. The group agreed to meet again to map out a plan for pursuing an educational standard; it was suggested that we embrace a credentialing instead of a certification process. Danny Avula will coordinate the follow-up meeting.
   2. We need to investigate whether there are others in the State who may be pursuing a similar goal. Information was shared regarding a HRSA grant that had been received in the Halifax region to establish a rural health network for a higher education center.

It was suggested that Carl Rush who is the with the Project on CHW Policy & Practice Institute for Health Policy UT-Houston School of Public Health be invited to participate in the follow-up meeting. He is an expert in the development of educational curriculum for CHWs. Sheryl Garland will extend the invitation.

* 1. Update the Community Health Worker Training Program model to incorporate ideas discussed and review with the group at the next meeting. Dr. Alan Dow will update the model.