

**RYAN WHITE CARE COUNCIL
RURAL ISSUES COMMITTEE
HIGHLANDS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT – SEBRING
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 23, 2006
12:00 P.M. – 2:00 P.M.**

MINUTES

- CALL TO ORDER** The meeting was called to order by Deborah Robinson, Chair, at 12:30 p.m.
- ATTENDANCE** Members Present: James Brandon, Ismael Colon, Brenda Davis, Linnwood Davis, John Halman, Donald Hinton, King James, Angela Kendall, Gail Prichard, Deborah Robinson, Linda Rogers
- Members Absent: Ovidiu Cotea, Ellen Gates, John Melartin, Jan Neeson, Deborah Reinhardt
- Guests Present: Jill Eades, Lois Hall, Susan Hall, David Housier, Ron J., Dave Konnerth, Sandy McKenzie, Maria Rivera, Donna Sabatino, Dennis Thieme, Lynne White
- Grantee Staff Present: Aubrey Arnold
- Health Councils Staff Present: Nicole Brown
- CHANGES OR ADDITIONS TO AGENDA** No changes were made to the agenda.
- ADOPTION OF MINUTES** The June minutes were adopted as written.
- CARE COUNCIL REPORT** There was no August Care Council meeting held. Aubrey Arnold gave a report on the last SIOC meeting and a brief overview of the Care Council. He also mentioned that the Care Council website is a great resource to find information.
- ISSUES OF LIVING IN A RURAL COMMUNITY** Deborah Robinson opened discussion about the issues of living in a rural community. The first issue discussed was transportation and Highlands County's lack of a bus system. It was mentioned that Transportation Disadvantaged is the only service available.
- Housing was also discussed as an issue. There is not only a lack of affordable housing but housing in general due to the rapid population increase in Highlands County. There is a small amount of HOPWA funding available to pay for utilities. Gail Prichard also mentioned that there is only one homeless

shelter which is privately run.

In addition Gail brought up the lack of specialty medical care available in Highland's County. This is not an issue that is specific to PLWH but the whole community. Residents have to travel to Polk or Hillsborough County to see specialists in many fields.

Linnwood Davis shared his issues with dental care and the lack of a dental hygienist in Lakeland. It was also mentioned that there is not an oral surgeon available to many clients unless they have transportation to travel to Hillsborough County.

A client also shared his positive experiences living in Sebring. He stated that people are nice to him and that he has a great support system in the community. Another client shared a different experience and how he felt a lack of a support system while living in a rural community. It was also noted that Highlands County does not currently have a support group for PLWH.

PLANNING AND EVALUATION UPDATE

Aubrey Arnold gave the Planning and Evaluation Committee update. He said that the Care Council runs on a three year planning cycle and that next year the Council will be doing a client survey for people who are in or out of care.

Donald Hinton questioned how to get input from people who are out of care. Aubrey said that it is difficult to find PLWH who are not in care but it is an important part of the planning process. In the past surveys have been distributed to non-HIV related facilities such as homeless shelters to reach this population.

The Planning and Evaluation Committee also identified subpopulations for focus groups in each county. Highlands County will be asked to hold a focus group for white females and Polk County will hold a focus group for black females.

The Planning and Evaluation Committee works very closely with RPARC and Dave Konnerth as the chair of RPARC gave a brief overview of their work including reallocations and service caps.

NEW BUSINESS

Deborah Robinson mentioned that elections for the Chair and Co-Chair of this committee will be held in September. She stated that the committee had grown over the last year and she encouraged everyone to think about the committee goals and nominations for leadership.

**COMMUNITY
CONCERNS AND
ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Deborah Robinson stated that you now have to prove that you are a US citizen for Medicaid. She passed out a reference sheet highlighting the acceptable documents to show citizenship.

Deborah also shared her idea of having a Red Ribbon Ball to celebrate World AIDS Day which is December 1st. She asked that anyone who is interested in helping let her know.

Aubrey Arnold gave an update on the CARE Act reauthorization. He said that it is still in discussion in Congress and that it may not be approved until sometime next year.

Brenda Davis announced that ABC's show Primetime airing on August 24th at 10:00 p.m. will focus on the disproportionate effect that AIDS is having on the Black community.

Brenda also announced that there will be a faith based conference for people of color with HIV. The conference is sponsored by the Mid Florida Center for Polk, Hardee and Highlands Counties and will be held on Saturday, August 26th at the New Jerusalem Church in Lakeland. It is free to attend.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no other business to come to the Committee, meeting was adjourned at 1:40 p.m.

11/7/2006