



MAINE CENTER for Public Health

Annual Report 2004



ANNUAL REPORT 2004

Mission: The Maine Center for Public Health will enhance the health of Maine citizens through an organized program of research, education and training, technical assistance, and policy analysis.

2004 Goals and Highlights of Accomplishments

Goal 1. The Maine Center for Public Health will play an increasingly important role in public policy development in Maine to advance public health goals, in partnership with its advocacy partner, the Maine Public Health Association, as well as other organizations.

Dirigo Health Reform

- The Maine Health Access Foundation (MeHAF) provided funds enabling a joint Maine Center for Public Health/Maine Public Health Association (MCPH/MPHA) Task Force to continue public health input to the Dirigo reform process, this time with a focus on the state health plan. Task force recommendations relating to Dirigo health insurance product have been adopted by the Dirigo Board of Directors. Stakeholders have continued to share information and a community partners group developed independently. Public health stakeholders participate in a number of health reform committees. Health reform activities were slow to start due to the greater emphasis placed upon health insurance. At this point, our assistance will focus on analytic recommendations to the group, an annual meeting forum in 2005, and tracking the implementation of the plan.

State Government Reorganization

- The MCPH/MPHA Public Health Task Force has been tracking the reorganization of state government as well. The MCPH endorsed the proposal to form a Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention. There was extensive input by MPHA and MCPH Board members for the concept of a Maine CDC. The MCPH and MPHA also advocated for a direct report of the state health officer to the commissioner.

Obesity Prevention Policy

- The Maine Center for Public Health staff and Board members participated on the Commission to Study Public Health that was charged with identifying the causes of obesity and developing recommendations to the state legislature. After numerous meetings and a public hearing, approximately 28 recommendations were developed. The recommendations include (not a complete list):
 - Requiring chain restaurants to put calories on menus and menu boards
 - Allocating one percent of transportation funds to shared use paths
 - Numerous changes in schools including improving the health of the foods sold in schools, increasing physical activity time, requiring body mass index measurements to be taken and reported to parents and to the state, removing advertising of foods that are unhealthy, among other items
 - Improving the health insurance benefits related to obesity for state workers and MaineCare recipients and improving health promotion and state cafeterias and other food venues to include healthier options

These recommendations were presented to the legislature in four bills that will be taken up in the 2005 legislative session.

Integrated Primary Care and Mental Health Planning

- Leadership from the MCPH and the Department of Behavioral and Developmental Services (now the Department of Health and Human Services) completed a year-long planning process funded by the Maine Health Access Foundation (MeHAF). Current Maine experiments with integration of physical and behavioral health were highlighted at a statewide conference. Preliminary discussions were held with MeHAF regarding a RWJ Local Initiatives proposal; these did not proceed further because of the 20 plus local projects which have independently emerged around the state. MCPH, DHHS, MeHAF and the Governor's Office of Health Planning and Finance leaders have since met to discuss the possibility of further work in this area, but the potential for statewide consistent progress remains unclear. MCPH has provided background information to DHHS for a January 2005 background report on the issue, including further surveys of mental health providers and an inventory of projects around the state. DHHS has stated that it intends to explore reimbursement issues and other barriers, but the form its plans will take is unclear.

Goal 2. The Maine Center for Public Health will enhance educational training opportunities in Maine for the public health workforce.

Area Health Education Center

- The University of New England has been funded by the federal government to expand its Area Health Education Center program to include a new public health-oriented center managed by the MCPH. Although the budget was cut significantly as a result of

decisions at the federal level, the annual grant to the Center will support innovative public health training and education initiatives for clinical practitioners in Maine.

Maine – Harvard Prevention Research Center Workshop

- The fourth annual M-HPRC obesity workshop was held on Wednesday, December 1st entitled “What Marketers Are Feeding Our Kids! Confronting the link between food advertising & youth obesity.” Included in the day’s agenda were nationally recognized speakers on the topic of marketing to children as well as some fun and entertaining presentations. Margo Wootan, from the Center for Science in the Public Interest, and Susan Linn, from the Media Center of the Judge Baker Children’s Center in Boston, both shared extensive information on the effects of media and consequences of the commercial exploitation of children. Workshop participants also watched a live theater performance from Food Play “This is Your Life” addressing nutrition, fitness and youth obesity. Despite adverse weather conditions over 200 individuals representing a variety of Maine organizations attended.

Public Health Emergency Preparedness Training

- The Center is continuing its work the Maine Bureau of Health’s Office of Public Health Emergency Preparedness to provide training to the public health and health care work force in collaboration with the Harvard Center for Public Health Preparedness.
- Approximately 25 trainers went through a two day train-the-trainer course. The Harvard Center for Public Health Preparedness has developed and delivered nine training courses that the trainers can adapt for a variety of audiences. Initial evaluation of the courses taught by trainers was very positive.
- On December 7, 2004 a statewide conference called “It Could Happen Here: Lessons Learned from the SARS Experience” was held at the Augusta Civic Center and attended by approximately 150 people. The session featured four speakers from Toronto discussing their incredible experience with the SARS epidemic.

Public Health Internship Opportunities

- MCPH met with representatives of Maine and Boston graduate public health educators, provided background materials for job fairs and, following a survey inquiry, recruited for 14 internship positions through MCPH Board members. Unfortunately, although preliminary discussions took place, no students chose internship positions. Discussions with educators indicated that barriers include: lack of demand for summer internships unless they lead to a fulltime job; status as fulltime employees; distance; unfamiliarity with Maine; lack of payment. Efforts to secure successful placements will be part of the AHEC process. When more students are placed, an evaluation will be undertaken. To date, one internship placement has been made for Summer 2005 and it is expected that the newly-formed AHEC Committee will provide further input into this process.

Goal 3. The Maine Center for Public Health will contribute to available knowledge about public health practice in Maine through applied research and dissemination.

Maine – Harvard Prevention Research Center

- A primary focus of the M-HPRC is dissemination of research that occurs through workshops (described above) as well as through the electronic “Info Monthly.” Every month two research articles with abstracts, as well as other practical information and links designed to serve statewide and local prevention efforts, are distributed via an electronic list that has increased by almost 10% in the last year to over 280 individuals.
- The Maine – Harvard Prevention Research Center secured funding from the Maine Health Access Foundation for a collaborative project focused on childhood obesity called the Maine Youth Overweight Collaborative. This project, which will be done in collaboration with the Maine American Academy of Pediatrics, will enhance the effectiveness of clinical providers as they seek to address the current epidemic of overweight and obesity. Twelve primary care and pediatric practice teams have been recruited to participate. The first of three Learning Sessions was held with 60 participants on November 4th and 5th and was extremely well received. In addition to the development of various materials for clinical decision support, a Keep ME Healthy toolkit was designed around research-based preventative health messages, called 5-2-1-0:

- 5—Eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables on most days
- 2—Reduce screen time to 2 hours or less every day
- 1—Participate in at least 1 hour or more of physical activity every day
- 0—Limit soda and sugar sweetened drinks.

All of these materials can be viewed by visiting the MCPH website. An extensive evaluation process for the collaborative has been developed and is currently being implemented. The project will run through April 2006.

- As a result of the December 2003 M-HPRC obesity workshop, MCPH partnered with the Muskie School Physical Activity and Nutrition Program staff to apply the research learned in the conference by developing and pilot testing a project called Take Time! Physical Activity in Schools Initiative. Approximately 14 schools in Maine are participating by having all students engage in at least ten minutes of physical activity every day. An evaluation of the project will be completed by the end of the year.

Goal 4. The Maine Center for Public Health will contribute to the enhancement of public health *evaluation* in Maine.

Public Health Evaluation

- MCPH staff developed an annual evaluation report for Maine’s Comprehensive Cancer Control Program which was presented in October, 2004. This report and the accompanying evaluation plan have received considerable attention and the documents currently serve as a model for other states seeking to evaluate their efforts. As a result,

Maine is now perceived as a national leader in Comprehensive Cancer Control evaluation.

- MCPH signed a contract with the Bureau of Health for approximately \$20,000 per year, for up to four years, to evaluate a social marketing campaign for colorectal cancer. The work began in the fall of 2004.
- MCPH staff has been working with the BOH to strengthen planning and evaluation efforts through a contract titled *Evaluation Capacity-Building*. This contract involves several state programs within the Department of Community Health and the Department of Family Health. The activities include:
 - Provide Technical Assistance
 - Work with Program Managers to develop logic models
 - Create templates for tracking activities
 - Assist with or write the evaluation section of federal grants
 - Develop interview guides and conduct interviews
 - Staff/Facilitate Evaluation Workgroup
 - Hold quarterly meetings
 - Secure funding for an annual evaluation workshop
- MCPH staff has been working with the Environmental Public Health Unit at the Bureau of Health on a federally funded grant focused on environmental public health tracking. Our efforts focus on providing evaluation expertise to the program and related pilot projects.

Community Coalition Evaluation

- MCPH was awarded a two-year grant by the Bingham Program which includes approximately \$15,000 per year to support evaluation of community-based programs, many of which are also funded by Bingham. The grant, and work, began in July, 2004.

Evaluating Public Health Systems

- MCPH worked with the Maine Bureau of Health to conduct a systems-based assessment for diabetes based on national public health performance standards. The results of the assessment were presented in March, 2004 and the findings were used to help develop strategic direction for diabetes efforts throughout the state.

Goal 5. The Maine Center for Public Health will strengthen its financial position in pursuit of *fiscal sustainability*.

Sustainability Plan

- The MCPH obtained a two-year grant from the Betterment Foundation to support the development and implementation of a long term plan. A Board/Staff Sustainability Task Force has been meeting since last May with a consultant and has prepared recommendations for discussion and possible adoption at the November 16 Board meeting.

Fund Raising

- The Finance Committee has met its goal of raising at least \$50,000 during the current calendar/fiscal year, the result of successful foundation solicitations, Board member contributions and several “friend-raising” receptions. Last year all Board members made financial contributions and that remains the goal this year as well. The Bingham Program has also provided annual challenge grants of \$10,000 each year for a three-year period.

Staff Transitions in 2004

- *Joan Orr* was hired in May of 2004 to lead the Maine Youth Overweight Collaborative. Joan comes with extensive community health experience working with the Healthy Community Coalition of Franklin County for a number of years.
- *Paul Campbell* has left the Maine Center for Public Health as the President for the first five years of the Center’s existence. In those five years the Center went from a 2.6 FTE office to approximately 8 staff and a budget near \$1 million. Paul will be greatly missed by all.



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