



INSTITUTE FOR WISCONSIN'S HEALTH INC.

**Wisconsin Public Health Practice-Based Research Network
Kick-Off Meeting Notes
February 26, 2010**

Attending: Anne Barbarena, Terry Brandenburg, Linda Conlon, Eric Gass, Lieske Giese, Pat Guhleman, Shelley Hersil, Mary Jo Knobloch, Sue Kunferman, Muriel Nagle, Darren Rausch, Gretchen Sampson, Tom Schlenker, Julie Willems Van Dijk, Nancy Young, Susan Zahner.

Unable to attend: Dodge County and City of Oshkosh Health Department representatives

1. Terry Brandenburg, Health Officer of the West Allis Health Department and WPHPBRN Steering Committee Chair welcomed attendees.

2. Dr. Glen Mays, Program Director of the National PBRN Coordinating Center at the University of Arkansas provided an overview (see handout) of the national PBRN initiative and answered questions.

Q: Do you have suggestions on how to make PBRN activities relevant to local health department (LHD) leaders as they balance priorities? **A:** Link research with LHD evaluation and quality improvement needs, work and projects. Dr. Mays added that even though public health systems and services research (PHSSR) is the major focus of the national effort, we don't need to take intervention research off the table: we should think of public health research as a continuum.

Q: Is the national PH PBRN program encouraging PHSSR in training programs across the country? **A:** Yes. Working with Academy Health - developing series of webinars on methods in PHSSR. These will be available to PH PBRN networks free of charge. Offering early career pilot grant funding to encourage young researchers in PHSSR. Also trying to work through Association of Schools of Public Health to build better training programs.

Q: The 14 priorities on the national PHSSR agenda have been promoted. Should we tie our efforts to them?

A: There are likely to be additions as this field evolves. CDC will host another stakeholder meeting in September 2010 to revisit and re-prioritize the national agenda. PBRN national project will be part of that process. At this time, the national priorities should be used as a guide but we should not limit ourselves to those priorities.

3. Pat Guhleman, Interim Director of the Bureau of Health Information and Policy, Division of Public Health/WDHS and Dr. Susan Zahner, Associate Professor, UW-Madison School of Nursing provided an overview of the Wisconsin PHPBRN. See handout.

- Could the WPHPBRN fill some or part of the function of a "research council" identified in the draft state health plan? Room for exploration of this.

4. Mary Jo Knobloch, MPH, CPH, Project Manager reviewed literature in this area and the first year lessons learned from first year PBRN states. See handout.

- Two predominant themes – challenge of engaging researchers and challenge of readiness of LHDs to engage in research practice when they have higher priorities and few resources.

5. Susan Zahner provided a brief review of Public Health Systems and Services Research (see handout) and led a discussion. Group comments:

- Need to put data sources together so research questions can be answered.
- While identification of research priorities is important, we need to move beyond that.

- Wisconsin Public Health Quality Initiative (WIQI) includes LHD self-assessments by essential service and research domain has been consistently rated as in need of increased capacity. However, LHDs don't necessarily rate as priority to address. Even if LHDs have an interest, the resources (people, time and skills) to access evidence that exists is not available in most LHDs.
- Public Health Madison Dane County uses research to propel direction. They find that staff members have become more supportive of research as part of practice because they have had an opportunity to see how it impacts their practice.
- Can this PH PBRN replicate studies done in Madison/Milwaukee/other LHDs in other LHDs?
- Wood County HD is working with the Marshfield Clinic Research Foundation on developing a school immunization clinic study
- Should we ask, what research evidence do we currently have - what activities are going on now? Can we compile it and analyze how this fits into priorities?

6. Dr. Paul Smith, Director of the Wisconsin Research and Education Network (WREN) and Associate Professor, Department of Family Medicine, UW School of Medicine and Public Health presented an overview of WREN as example of a successful research network. See handout.

- Discussed importance of choosing a good, simple, appealing project early on that has value for local partners
- Resources to support WREN staff are written into bigger projects. WREN staff then assist with project implementation. Resources flow both ways.
- M Nagle provided an overview of ICTR-CAP. See handout.

7. T Brandenburg facilitated a discussion on network development starting with the charter:

The charter is a broad description of structure and function but will not include all activities/plans. It can be revisited annually and should be considered a work in progress at this time. Suggestions were made for changes/additions:

- Change Co PI as presently in document to Network Directors; describe PIs as those who would lead individual research projects.
- Change Managing Agency to Network Coordinator
- Add project selection decision making to VI
- Under V, separate duties of three parties
- "PH practitioners and academic partners will identify relevant questions and..."
- Page one last sentence of charter "...ACADEMIC and community partners."

Additional thoughts about how network could function:

- Partners can contribute provide data,
- Repository could be developed

8. Susan Zahner led a discussion about the pilot research project. See handout.

Project in proposal is topical outline as required for the application, but Dr. Zahner wants to work with a planning group to design project so that it can begin in Fall 2010. She is looking for volunteers from this group.

- E. Gass noted that funding is one of three policy issues that WPHA is taking on this year. Potential for overlap of data collection.
- J Willems Van Dijk – The Public Health Council is looking at priorities for concentration. Thematically this topic meshes with state health plan. NACCHO just did survey on impact of recession on services. May be potential for mining some of that data.
- S Kunferman asked if measures of performance are standardized. It could be useful to identify how studies have measured performance.

Potential research questions:

- How are decisions made in LHDs in times of economic cutback?
- Can an evidence-based decision making process be tested?

What does the end user need? If the most important end users for this pilot are the 12 participating LHDs, what questions would they like to see answered by this study? Some responses:

- Data that shows when money is taken away, health outcomes worsen
- A description of what changes occur in services and service levels over time when PH funding is reduced
- Potential for case studies on results of across-the-board cuts vs. cuts based on some sort of prioritization process

Potential hypotheses:

- Larger LHD budgets have increased more than small LHDs over the same time period
- Services that are not supported by categorical grant funding are the first to be cut when there is economic pressure
- Services that are not statutorily required are the first to be cut when there is economic pressure
- What happens to LHD budgets and services when they merge with human services?

9. Mary Jo Knobloch talked about project communications See handout.

Suggestions from group for consideration:

- Make maximum use of portal
- Use subject line of emails to bring attention to critical issues
- Explore ways in which we can promote the WPHPBRN – creation of mailing list?
- What are the research activities of the people around this table? Can WPHPBRN inventory by asking “what are you working on/or thinking about doing in the area of PHSSR?”
- Webinar to share research ideas and projects
- National Library of Medicine has PHSSR portal and University of KY has public health research center. Links to these could be placed on WPHPBRN web portal
- Consider WPHPBRN newsletter that could be shared more broadly.

10. Brief discussion about next steps:

- Revise charter based on today’s comments
- Form work group to conceptualize the pilot study
- Plan webinar
- Explore purpose, method, content, distribution and timetable for newsletter
- Plan for inventory of research activities of 12 LHD partners, current and projected