

Attachment B

Community Planning Development Retreat Final Report



Coloradans Working Together: Preventing HIV/AIDS

Community Planning Development Retreat Final Report

Thursday, October 4, 2007

WHO ATTENDED DAY ONE?

Ross Barnhart, Craig Chapin, Storm Foster, Michael Hurdle, Carol Lease, Reynaldo Mireles Jr., Roseann Prieto, Arthur Powers, Christopher Smith, Angela Garcia, Susan Luerssen, George Ware, Richard Weinert

Attendance summary:

Overall there were 9 participants (not including Coloradans Working Together (CWT) staff) in attendance on day one of the 2007 CWT retreat. Of which: the majority were from the Denver metro area. Rural representation included members from Ft. Collins and Pueblo.

Welcome to the 2007 CWT Retreat

Retreat, Refresh, Renew

Introductions and Icebreaker/Introduction Exercise

Objective/Outcomes: Introduction and team building exercise that introduced members to each other, and provided an opportunity for participants learn more about each other.

In-Depth, men who have sex with men (MSM) Needs Assessment Discussion

Richard introduced Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) Research and Evaluation Unit staff, George Ware and Susan Luerssen. George and Susan were asked to attend and present at the 2007 retreat by CWT Steering Committee, who felt that it would be beneficial to hear more about the outcomes of the 2006 MSM Needs Assessment. Susan and George were gracious enough to accept the invitation and conducted a thorough presentation on a number of pertinent issues related to MSM in Colorado.

Susan began with a slide presentation and discussion on the context of behavior, focusing on influences such as the overall sociocultural and structural environment, the immediate social and structural environment, and the individual level. Overall sociocultural and structural environmental variables may include, but are not limited to, factors such as the political environment and policy, classism, racism, sexism, homophobia, the economy, the availability of resources, religious ideals and beliefs, cultural processes and the physical environment. Immediate sociocultural and structural environmental variables may include factors such as main sex partner(s), teachers, mentors, peers, casual sex partners, service providers, cultural processes, family, friends, faith community, and the character of settings where behaviors often occur. The individual level encompasses factors such as, age, gender, race/ethnicity, social class, socioeconomic status/circumstances, personality, personal history, substance use, physical status, mental status and spirituality. The purpose of the presentation on the context of behavior was to show that risk behavior does not occur in isolation, but rather is the culmination of a number of intersecting and interrelated factors. George followed with an exercise and discussion focusing on MSM in various situations, and the factors influencing their risk behavior. This

activity was useful in providing a context in which to begin conceptualizing a new method for understanding, working with, and approaching strategies for MSM HIV prevention.

After the context of behavior presentation, a summary of the major outcomes of the needs assessment was given. Through the needs assessment, a number of major issues affecting gay/bisexual men were discussed. Community members who participated in the MSM needs assessment mentioned the following as major issues: discrimination against gay/bisexual men, mental health issues, the prevalence of substance use and abuse (particularly methamphetamine use), problems with access to health insurance and health care, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), problems with meeting basic needs, problems within the gay community, and issues such as relationships, HIV status disclosure, and people living with HIV (PLWH) exposing others to the virus. Recommendations that were voiced by needs assessment participants included shifting norms around the availability and use of drugs and alcohol in the MSM community, especially methamphetamine use since it is strongly associated with unprotected sex and multiple partners. Participants felt that there needed to be more of a focus on the reasons why gay/bisexual men use drugs and alcohol and more treatment options for MSM who abuse drugs and/or alcohol. Many respondents felt that issues related to mental health such as low self-esteem, loneliness and depression were common among gay/bisexual men, and were a reason that sex is used to avoid emotional pain, and to deal with loneliness and self-esteem issues. More affordable and accessible mental health services such as individual therapy and support groups were desired by the men who participated in the needs assessment. Issues regarding barriers to healthy MSM relationships were noted, such as a lack of societal support, laws against gay marriage/civil unions, a lack of support for monogamous relationships in the gay community, the prestige of having multiple partners, a perceived invisibility of healthy gay relationships, a dearth of suitable venues to meet partners (other than bars), substance abuse and emotional instability.

A brief explanation of Syndemics came next as a method of conceptualizing health problems. The definition offered at the retreat came from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and was presented as follows:

“‘Syndemic’ is a term invented to describe a set of linked health problems. A syndemic is two or more afflictions, interacting synergistically, contributing to excess burden of disease in a population.”

The discussion on syndemics focused on the interrelated epidemics of trauma history (especially childhood sexual abuse), depression, substance abuse, partner violence and HIV as one example.

After lunch, retreat participants prioritized the factors most commonly affecting risk behaviors. Ranking highest were: emotional well-being/mental health; substance use and abuse; community character, culture and norms; serostatus disclosure issues; socioeconomic circumstances/ability to meet basic needs; and seeing HIV as manageable and “not so serious”. The rest of day one was spent in small and large discussions about how these influencing factors can be addressed as part of HIV prevention.

Closing statements, questions, and evaluation

WHO ATTENDED DAY TWO?

Ross Barnhart, Craig Chapin, Storm Foster, Michael Hurdle, Carol Lease, Reynaldo Mireles Jr., Roseann Prieto, Arthur Powers, Christopher Smith, Angela Garcia, Susan Luerssen, George Ware, Richard Weinert

Welcome to Day Two of the 2007 CWT Retreat Photo Feelings Activity

2001-2007 CWT Membership Demographics presentation

Richard provided the group with a graphical representation of the CWT membership demographics for the past six years. Since 2001, CWT membership has remained consistent in a number of areas, such as regional representation, gender, and HIV status. From 2001 through 2007, CWT regional representation has remained fairly consistent with the majority of 2007 members being from urban areas (80% urban vs. 20% rural). The genders of CWT members for 2007 is approximately 55% Male, and 45% Female, which is almost identical to the numbers from 2006. The last time a self-reported transgendered individual was a member of CWT was in 2005. In terms of HIV status, there was a marked decrease from 2006 in HIV negative individuals, and a corresponding increase for HIV positive individuals. Two CWT members self-report "status unknown" as their HIV status in 2007, which is a decrease of 50% from 2006.

Areas where there were differences in 2007 from 2006 consist of age, ethnicity, HIV risk factors, and sexual orientation. In 2007, the majority of CWT members were between the ages of 40-49, which represents a shift from the average ages of members in 2006, which was 50+. Members reporting their ethnicity as white increased 10% from 2006 figures, members reporting their ethnicity as Latino decreased 15% from 2006, and members reporting their ethnicity as African American increased by 8%. There were increases from 2006 to 2007 in members reporting their risk as being attributed to being a MSM and a high-risk heterosexual (high-risk heterosexual is defined as having an HIV+ partner(s), a bisexual partner(s) or multiple partners). There was an increase of 8% in self-reported Gay/Lesbian members over the figures for 2006, and a decrease of 9% in self-reported heterosexual members.

Please see the demographics attachments for more in depth information on CWT membership.

2008 CWT Committee discussion

Richard asked the members how they felt about restructuring the way CWT committees are currently in place. At this time, there are nine CWT committees; Steering, Urban Planning, Rural Planning, Plan and Application Comparison Committee, Cultural Competence, Definitions and Standards, Public Policy, Membership/Orientation, and Needs Assessment/Prioritization. The CWT steering committee voted to suspend all but the Steering committee meetings for the third and fourth quarters of 2007 noting that low turnout and involvement were contributing reasons. It has also been mentioned that the large number of committees may be a reason for lessened involvement in CWT.

Richard suggested that for 2008, there could be three permanent committees: Steering, Urban and Rural planning committees, and fluid ad hoc committees to be convened as necessary. This way there will be the major urban and rural planning committees to direct regional HIV planning tasks, and the steering committee to oversee and provide direction. The ad hoc committees can be convened as

needed to address issues that may arise during the year (e.g., Letter of Concurrence), or to work on specific projects related to CWT (the Gap Analysis, Needs Assessments, planning body collaboration, etc.). The CWT members present at the retreat felt that this was a good way to restructure the CWT committees.

2008 CPG Meeting times and location

After discussing physical location and accessibility with the members present at the retreat, it was decided that the Blair-Caldwell library is an extremely accessible location to hold Community Planning Group (CPG) meetings and therefore will continue to be the location for hosting 2008 CPG meetings. One member brought up the topic of having CPG meetings available to members by conference call. There are pros and cons on each side of the debate on having CPG meetings available by conference call. On the pros side, increased accessibility would provide those who live outside the Denver metro area the opportunity to participate without having to spend time outside the office. Another pro would be that meetings may be more accessible to those with disabilities, or who are unable to make it to the meetings in person. On the cons side, there are fears about decreased participation due to members feeling as though they do not need to be present at the meetings, abuses of the conference call availability by those feeling they can call in if they don't feel like attending in person, and the realities of asking people to participate on a 4 hour conference call and the difficulties associated with that such as maintaining attention span, people completing other tasks when they should be following the meeting, and the difficulty of having peer-to-peer conversations and community building through an impersonal method such as conference calling. CDPHE has purchased a new Polycom and cellular phone to provide access to meetings as needed. In conclusion, as stated above, we will continue to use the Blair-Caldwell Library for CPG meetings, and conference call capabilities are in place to be used as needed.

The first CPG meeting of the year will be accessible by conference call in order to gauge how well the system works. After the first meeting, a survey will be sent to CPG members asking for their input on how well the Polycom worked. The outcome of that survey will determine whether this will be used in future meetings.

Elect Sergeant-at-Arms, Urban Co-Chair Elect, Rural Co-Chair Elect for 2008

Elections for the Urban Co-Chair Elect and Rural Co-Chair Elect were held. There were two nominations for each open position. Congratulations to the new 2008 Co-Chair Elects, Christopher Smith (Urban Co-Chair Elect) and Ross Barnhart (Rural Co-Chair Elect). The CWT Coordinator will act as Sergeant-at-Arms for 2008.

Closing statements, questions, and evaluation

A summary of the evaluations will be submitted to the CWT Steering Committee at the November meeting, as well as an attachment at the end of this report.

Submitted by:

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We thank all those who participated in the 2007 CWT Retreat.
The time and effort you gave was greatly appreciated.

Attachment A:
Membership Demographics

CWT Member Demographics, 2001-2007







