

Roundtable Discussion with Local Health Directors

February 6, 2014

Background: Connecticut is one of eight states selected to participate in the Aspen Institute's Excellence in State Public Health Law (ESPHL) program, a one year program designed to help states examine how law and policy can advance their state's health priorities. Aspen's program provides education and other resources that will enable policymakers and agencies to more effectively address public health issues and become leaders in creating healthier states. The program strengthens public health law collaborations among state officials and state-level policy-makers, and will increase these leaders' effectiveness on public health issues in their respective states, including working across party lines and government agencies and branches.

Representation from Connecticut comes from the Department of Public Health (DPH), the Office of Policy and Management, Connecticut General Assembly staff, as well as State Senator Terry Gerratana and State Representative Prasad Srinivasan. The goal of this program is to include legislators, municipal leaders and others in discussion about public health, describe the current public health system, and create a demand for efficient and effective public health services across the state.

The ESPHL program affords Connecticut an opportunity to: highlight public health capabilities, challenges and successes; educate legislators, municipal leaders and the public about foundational public health capabilities; and create a demand for efficient and effective public health services across the state.

For this facilitated discussion, the objectives are to:

1. encourage discussion about a vision for a fully functioning public health system;
2. discuss ways in which to garner support for that vision;
3. explore the ways in which legislators, municipal leaders and the public can become champions of and support a core set of public health services (examples perhaps?); and
4. learn from national experts what other states currently have in place to ensure provision of efficient and effective public health services statewide.

Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Update on the Aspen project
3. Plan for February 7th informational forum:
 - a. Agenda
 - b. Two-pager
4. Discussion (see objectives, above)



LEAD PUBLIC HEALTH

An Informational Forum

Pursuing Excellence in Public Health

From smoke free public places to immunization clinics; from clean drinking water to “Click it or Ticket” reminders on the highway, public health is everywhere – protecting Connecticut’s health by safeguarding the places where we live, learn, work, and play. Public health professionals monitor the health of all populations, investigate diseases, and work to eliminate disparities through federal, state and local public health systems and programs.

What does Connecticut’s public health system look like? What are public health services? Does every community provide the core public health services and protection that all Connecticut residents should expect and deserve? How can Connecticut public health and municipal leaders effectively use resources to assure the conditions in which all people can be healthy? These are key questions that Connecticut set out to explore through its participation in the Aspen Institute’s Excellence in State Public Health Law (ESPHL) program.

Connecticut’s Local Public Health System

Of Connecticut’s 74 local health departments/districts (LHDs) that exist to serve all of the state’s residents, 24 are part-time and 50 are full-time. According to a recent survey by the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) the number of public health and preventive services offered by LHDs varies widely across Connecticut, from fewer than twenty to more than fifty. The structure, governance, resources and function of LHDs in Connecticut are inconsistent and do not equitably serve all residents. LHDs vary widely in terms of human and fiscal resources and revenues. The flu season of 2012-13 and severe weather events (e.g., storms Irene, Alfred, Sandy and Charlotte) brought into focus the disparity of services available to Connecticut residents across the state.

Aspen Institute’s Excellence in State Public Health Law (ESPHL) program

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Connecticut’s team includes staff from the Department of Public Health (DPH), the Office of Policy and Management, Connecticut General Assembly staff, as well as State Senator Terry Gerratana and State Representative Prasad Srinivasan.

Thank you for joining us today. Your participation in this process is critical as Connecticut envisions a stronger public health system that equitably serves all residents.