

Western Massachusetts

Health Access Network Notes



COMMUNITY PARTNERS, INC.

May 4, 2007

Jones Library – Amherst, MA

GUEST PRESENTER:

*Gwendolyn Rodriguez, Health Care For All,
on the Disparities Action Network*

The Disparities Action Network (DAN) is a group of advocates, researchers, providers and many others who are working to improve Massachusetts state policy on racial and ethnic health disparities. Based at Health Care for All, but working in broad coalition, the DAN developed omnibus disparities reduction legislation for the 2007-2008 session of the state legislature. The DAN used the collective knowledge of members, national and state disparities research, and the work of the Massachusetts Special Commission on Disparities to inform the legislation. This legislation seeks to establish a state office of equity to examine disparities issues on a state level. DAN is seeking support for the bill. The first hearing is May 16th. HCFA will offer transportation to the hearing.

- Click here for a [summary of the legislation](#)
- Click here for the [legislation fact sheet](#)
- Click here for HCFA's [Racial & Ethnic Health Disparities page](#)

Following the bill's filing, the DAN plans to continue its work with a greater community focus. Some of these issues have been identified:

- the lack of funding and training for interpreter services
- an examination of hospital's Community Benefits programs and how these programs can work to address disparities
- the need to develop a community of people addressing disparity issues; many people are working at a community level, but are unaware of others who are doing similar work

On May 23 at 6:30 pm in Springfield the DAN will host a meeting to begin addressing these and other issues. All are welcome to attend. For more information, contact Gwendolyn Rodriguez at 617-275-2892.

Questions & Answers

Q: Do any other states have an Office of Equity?

A: Colorado does, but it's still in its beginning stages so there hasn't been much feedback yet. Click here to [see their website](#).

Q: How are you approaching rural areas?

A: We would really like the input and voice of those people doing work in rural areas so we know how to approach it.

Other resources on Health Disparities:

[Weekly updates](#) from the Kaiser Family Foundation