

Rochester Area Task Force on AIDS, Inc.

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PILLS MEETING

October 14, 2005

MINUTES

Members Present: Jeffrey Bookhart, Jessica Akpan, Rita Eggert, Mary Angerame, Cherri Hawkins, Trilby DeJung, Lynn Varricchio

Opening: Jeff opened the meeting and had members introduce themselves for the new members. Mary then moved approval of the minutes of the September meeting with an amendment that it was Trilby, not Mary, who had agreed to arrange a meeting with Congressman Kuhl. The motion was seconded and the minutes were approved. The agenda was approved with one addition: to discuss the time of the meeting.

Meeting time: Because the current meeting time was not working well for members, there was agreement to meet on the 3rd Monday of the month at 9:00 AM.

Update on Meeting with Senator Robach: Lynn reported that she met with Senator Robach on October 3rd to discuss the Assembly Bill that we hoped to get approved in the Senate. The Senator agreed to contact the prison health committee to see if they could get it passed in its current form or with amendments, and then meet with members of the Prison Health Coalition from around the state in Albany. His objective would be to find a way to get a bill that both houses could approve. Lynn is to call in two weeks to follow up.

There was discussion about who from Rochester should be part of the Albany visit and the following were suggested: Jeff, Cherri, Dr. Khani, Mary, and Craig Johnson perhaps from the jail.

Medicare Part D Update:

On October 6th Trilby, NYAC, and GMHC staffers did a training for approximately 30 people from AIDS agencies in this region. Trilby is willing to make presentations in other parts of the region.

Ryan White Reauthorization/Congressional Visit:

A meeting has been set up to meet with Patty Larkin, Louise Slaughter's staff person on health policy. The meeting will be devoted to helping the Congresswoman's staff understand what is at stake for NYS services for people living with HIV/AIDS if the Administration Principles are followed, and providing her with alternative criteria from the RATFA policy paper to consider legislation that is proposed.

There is currently a proposal from Coburn to increase ADAP funding by moving capital funds from CDC, slated for a reflection garden at CDC. Another congressman has proposed taking money from the Medicare Part D fund for drug providers.

Trilby recommended and the committee agreed that we should ask for a delay in ending Medicaid payments for the dually eligible. This is a group that could lose coverage for their medications if things do not go as planned.

If people with chronic illnesses stop taking their meds as a result of the donut hole, they could end up in hospital emergency departments or admitted to hospitals.

Mayoral Forum:

The mayoral candidates answers are due on the 21st and will be published in a special edition of the RATFA Bulletin.

The Center for Disability Rights is having a forum. It is suggested that anyone attending make implementing the recommendations of the RARE Report a priority.

Medicaid Matters:

Trilby will be presenting on Medicaid as part of a Downtown Community Forum Panel on Health Care on Oct. 17th from 6:30 PM-8:00 PM. The purpose is to discuss the effects of proposed Medicaid cuts and safety net issues.

C2EA Update:

A van of CAC members has signed up to attend the C2EA event planned at Syracuse University by the CNY Network on November 1st. CAC will arrange television coverage of their departure and the issues that PLWA from around the country are going to Washington to educate legislators about.

Legislative Breakfast:

There was a preliminary discussion of the Legislative Breakfast. There were conflicts last year with young people's exam schedules that we want to avoid this year. Two possible times were suggested: Feb. 3rd or Winter Break Feb. 20-24th.

Mary will take the lead on the legislative breakfast. Jessica will be her primary assistant. As soon as we settle on a date, Pat should try to reserve the Dugan Center.

Last year people felt it was too long. Because of the number of issues, there was an initial idea of having two sessions. One for local and state issues. A second session for federal issues. We should request NYAC's participation. Every effort should be made to get Maggie Brooks to the local issues session.

Announcements:

ABC is responding to an RFA for small grants (\$5,000) available for lobbying.

Maggie Brooks, the Monroe County Executive, has been appointed to the Federal Medicaid Commission. The Medicaid Matters Commission is recommending that some of the Medicaid savings come from limits on prices paid for medicines. The Commission on the other hand is talking about changing eligibility for long term care benefits by increasing the look back period and penalty, increasing cost sharing, and generally trying to make Medicaid more like a private insurer.

Committee members talked about alternatives that might be considered including: making drug manufacturers put more medicines in blister packs that could be returnable to institutions pharmacies, especially in the case of nursing homes. Creating better organized loan closets for durable medical equipment to prevent the waste of walkers, commodes etc that turn up in garages.

It was suggested that committee members identify high school and college age youth who might be interested in learning advocacy work. ABC will be developing a program for Youth Empowerment.

Cherri stated that she is very concerned about the violence among city youth. They need to be provided the skills to handle anger. She cited figures that indicated that 20% of all of the murders this past year were youth under age 17. She indicated that gangs are a real problem in Rochester that people are not talking about. Young people are driving in cars, listening to hip hop music, smoking pot, getting buzzed and committing murder and other violent acts. AIDS needs to be seen in the context of the violence on the streets.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday November 19th at 9:00 AM at RATFA.