



HealthWatch Wisconsin Strategic Planning Session for the Northern Region
Wausau, July 12th at the Lake View Center at Marathon County Health Department

Introductions, what brings people to HealthWatch Wisconsin?

The meeting began with general introductions and an overview of HealthWatch Wisconsin. The group was a representative cross section of a diverse group of service providers and family members from Marshfield and the north-central Wisconsin area.

- The group identified mental health and dental health as being areas where there was severe difficulties in accessing services;
- The Northern Region is a large region and transportation is challenging in many areas;
- There were also sub-specialty populations – a growing Latino population and an Amish and Hmong population that pose challenges for service;
- Mental health – specifically for children – is an area where it is extraordinarily difficult to find providers;
- In addition, therapy services and private nursing services for children with special health care needs are challenging to identify and have approved by the state;
- There is a special need for children age 18-21 for coverage;
- There were also concerns that pharmaceutical coverage “is going the way of dental coverage.”

Goals, what do we want HWW to achieve and how?

- Address capacity and infrastructure issues in north-central Wisconsin, which create problems in terms of accessing care, and although people may have access to coverage, the lack of infrastructure and great distances means that many people cannot access the care that they have coverage for.
- Work on mental health issues, which are particularly problematic in north-central Wisconsin;
- Address the suicide rate in northern Wisconsin, which is one of the highest in the state;
- Improve access to dental care; currently there is an 800 person waiting list for dental services at the local community health center;
- Address challenges in respite care;
- Develop a home visiting program;
- Develop a more appropriate medical home and primary care home to assist people who have challenges in securing coverage and services.

Organizational Governance and Membership:

- The structure of HealthWatch Wisconsin was discussed and the group agreed that a membership organization would be the best option to pursue;
- We discussed that there could be tiers of membership, based on the size of the organization, but that a membership fee of \$15 for an individual would not be too steep;
- As for organization members, it would be structured based on the size of the organization;
- There was discussion about HealthWatch Wisconsin seeking institutional support and underwriting from the business community.
- This would have to be done in a careful manner to avoid any appearance of conflict of interest; for example, if an insurance company or other organization attempted to underwrite activities in order to compromise HealthWatch Wisconsin's advocacy agenda for universal health care;
- We discussed that it would be important to develop an advisory board that was comprised of representatives of the local HealthWatch groups and that part of HealthWatch Wisconsin and the membership fee should be directed back to the groups with a segregated fee that helps to support the local coalition.

In conclusion, the participation of many individuals at the meeting provided an opportunity for a wide variety of input. There was general consensus that HealthWatch Wisconsin would be an important vehicle to help promote an agenda for health care coverage and access and that issues both at a statewide and local level could be pursued and promoted through HealthWatch Wisconsin.