

State Innovation Model

October 2015

SIM Consumer Advisory Board Rural Healthcare Forum

Rural communities comprise 40% of towns in Connecticut and represent about 10% of the population. Rural residents experience health disparities related to access and equity as a result of their rural status.

To address the current status of health and healthcare in the rural Northeast, one of two predominately rural areas of the state, about 100 providers, consumers, payers, local and state government officials, and members of the SIM Governance met for a **Rural Healthcare Forum** at the Generations Family Health Center in Willimantic on October 15, 2015. The SIM Consumer Advisory Board held the forum to engage consumers and other stakeholders in discussing the issues related to the current system, along with barriers and successes around new initiatives that will change how health and healthcare are delivered including payment and a more person-centered, team driven system.



Senator Mae Flexer greets participants at the SIM CAB Rural Healthcare forum as participants listen and voice concerns of issues impacting them.

Arvind Shaw, Executive Director of Generations Family Health Center, worries about health workforce shortages in Connecticut's rural regions. He noted that limited access to services such as psychiatry and behavioral health are major challenges to improving health. In addition, the lack of transportation was identified as a critical issue in the northeastern corner of Connecticut where some towns have virtually no transportation at all. For some, the ambulance is the only form of transportation to access medical care.

Robert Smanik, President and CEO of Day Kimball Healthcare, noted the success of collaboration between Day Kimball Hospital and other service providers in coordination of patient care through the Quest initiative.

Behavioral Health panelists emphasized the shortage of psychiatric specialists, and noted the vast majority of behavioral health care is provided in the primary care office. There may be up to a 2 month waiting time to access services, and no-show rates are as high as 40% due to lack of transportation, telephones and others issues related to social determinants, such as housing, economic limitations, and lack of education. Panel reactor, Susan M. Johnson, of the CT House of Representatives, spoke about the narrow focus on substance abuse and not on the underlying issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder and bipolar depression. She said there is a need for additional supports in the community to address issues that lead to substance abuse such as anti-poverty programs.



Mark Schaefer, Director of State Innovation Model, speaks about the goals of creating a culture of value that focuses on continuous quality improvement, reduced cost, and healthier people.

Donna Grant, Executive Director, of TEEG, spoke regarding the need for local solutions. She said some things that work in Hartford and Bridgeport areas don't work in eastern CT. To that end, many of the speakers addressed the advantages that telehealth could provide to the rural care setting. Not only could it provide a mechanism for both primary and specialty care, but also telemonitoring of patients at home. Jennifer Herz, of CBIA, stressed the importance of prevention and the need to be engaged in wellness and health.

The Connecticut State Innovation Model's goal is to transform the healthcare system for the entire state. Staying tuned to the unique needs of Connecticut's various regions and populations will help build a system that will improve community health and health equity, ensure superior access, quality, and care experiences, and improve affordability.

Special thank you to everyone who made this event possible:

SIM Consumer Advisory Board

Speakers:

Arvind Shaw, Generations Family Health Center; Robert Smanik, Day Kimball Healthcare; Donna Grant, Thompson Ecumenical Empowerment Group; Wendy Martinson, Hartford HealthCare at Home. Connecticut Senator Mae Flexner, 29th senate district, Diane Manning, United Services, Lance Nabers, Generations Behavioral Health Program, James O'Dea, Hartford Healthcare Behavioral Health, Kristie Scott, Perceptions Programs, Kathy Montague, Generation Oral Health Program and Susan Starkey, Northeast District Department of Health. Reactors: Patricia Baker, Jennifer Herz, Alta Lash and Rep. Susan Johnson. Richard Hoover, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services / Health and Human Services attended on behalf of Region 1, HHS

The CT SIM Rural Healthcare Forum was co-sponsored by SIM Consumer Advisory Board, CT Health Foundation, Generations Family Health Center, PATH Parent to Parent / Family Voices of CT, the Connecticut Office of Rural Health and Windham Regional Community Council.



Members of the SIM Rural Healthcare Forum Planning Committee: Jeffrey Beadle, Christine Nguyen-Matos, Susan Starkey, Debra Polun, Mary Winar, Nanfi Lubogo, Linda Colangelo, Jeannina Thompson, Patricia Checko.