Welcome

HCH Goes to Washington: Legislative Visits During the 2013 National Conference and Beyond

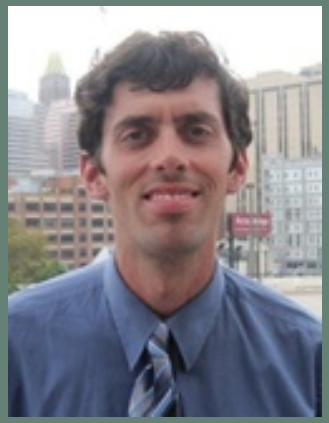
Tuesday, February 5, 2012

We will begin promptly at 2 p.m. Eastern.

Event Host:

Dan Rabbitt, MSW
Health Policy Organizer

National Health Care
for the Homeless Council



NATIONAL HEALTH CARE for the HOMELESS COUNCIL

Presenters

Dan Rabbitt, MSW

Health Policy Organizer

National Health Care for the Homeless Council

Cathryn Marchman, JD, LCSW

Legal, Policy, and Compliance Officer

St. Joseph's Mercy Care Services

Amy Grassette

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HCH Goes to Washington: Legislative Meetings at the 2013 National Conference and Beyond

February 5, 2013

Health Care and Housing are Human Rights

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Agenda

- Legislative meeting basics
- Current legislative issues
  - Health Center Funding
  - Low-Income Housing
  - Medicaid
- Impact on HCH projects and consumers
- Personal experience attending legislative meetings
  - Clinicians
  - Consumers
- Logistics at the National Conference

Why Legislative Advocacy?

- Most HCH projects depend heavily on public funding.
- Most HCH patients depend heavily on public support.
- Mass homelessness was caused by policy decisions – only policy decisions will prevent and end it.
- It is entirely LEGAL to advocate a certain position to your elected representatives.
- The HCH community is an advocate for those experiencing homelessness. This requires individual advocacy AND policy advocacy.

Legislative Meetings

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Scheduling Legislative Meetings

- Find and call your Members of Congress:
  - www.house.gov and www.senate.gov
  - Capitol Switchboard (toll free): **1(877) 210-5351**
- Identify yourself, what you would like to meet about, and ask to speak to the scheduler.
- Provide further detail to the scheduler about your availability and your issues.
- Follow-up regularly until the meeting is set.
- Contact a day or two before to confirm.

Preparing for Legislative Meetings

- Why are you meeting? What is the purpose? Consider what authority the legislator does and does not have.
- How will you make your argument? How will you appeal to the legislator's interests? What are likely counterpoints and how will you respond?
- Who should attend the meeting? Who will say what and in what order? Clinical and consumer perspectives are invaluable.
- What materials will you leave behind? Written materials should always be provided.
- When and where? Give yourself plenty of time.

During Legislative Meetings

- Emphasize your project's importance to the official's constituents.
- Think about three 5 minute sections:
  - Introduction of who you are, what you do, and why you are there.
  - Description of the problem and its impact.
  - Your legislative request to solve the problem.
- Stay on task and do not get sidetracked – **you often only have 15 minutes.**
- If you do not know the answer to a question, say so. It is much better than answering incorrectly. Offer to get back to them.
- Take notes.

After Legislative Meetings

- Always thank them for their time and stay respectful. Today's opponent can be tomorrow's ally.
- Follow-up with any requested information.
- If the office was undecided on the issue, follow-up to determine their stance.
- Plan for long-term relationships and long-term effectiveness. Build rapport.
- Be a resource and stay in touch.

Legislative Issues: February 5-March 15

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Political Climate

- Deficit reduction debate has dominated Washington for almost two years.
  - $1.5 trillion in cuts.
  - $600 billion in revenues.
  - Many public officials feel significantly more deficit reduction is needed.
- Agreement has been very difficult.
  - Conservatives demand all cuts, mostly to low-income programs, and no increases in revenue.
  - Progressives demand some revenue increases along with cuts.
- Safety net is seen as vulnerable, without powerful supporters.

Current State of Play: The Sequester

- The Sequester was designed to hurt both conservative and progressive priorities: 50% pentagon; 50% domestic programs.
- Originally meant to go into effect on Jan 2, 2012, the sequester was delayed until March 1, 2013 under the American Taxpayer Relief Act.
- Many expect the Sequester to take effect, at least for a few weeks.
- Would cut HUD, health centers, SAMHSA, Ryan White, and more.

Current State of Play: FY13 Funding

- FY13 funding (through Sept. 30) still needs to be determined.
- Without legislative action, the government will shutdown on March 27, 2013.
- **Main priorities:** use additional health center funds in the ACA to expand, prevent further cuts to low-income housing programs.
- Senate FY13 bill includes language to use all ACA dollars. The President's FY13 Budget does not.

Current State of Play: FY14 Budgets

- President has not released his FY14 Budget.
- The House is planning a Budget that would be balanced in 10 years, requiring huge spending cuts.
- The Senate is planning a Budget that would raise revenue, have some cuts, and replace the sequester.
- Entitlement **cuts to Medicaid**, SNAP, and other low-income programs may be included in any or all of the FY14 Budgets.

Legislative Uncertainties

- Many things will happen between Feb. 5 and March 14-15:
  - Will the automatic sequester cuts be replaced?
  - If they are replaced, what are they replaced by?
  - Will FY13 funding still be unresolved?
  - What will be in the President's Budget? House or Senate?
  - Will the political climate change?

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What is Certain

- March 14-15 will be an important time.
- The decisions made will impact HCH projects and patients.
- Council staff will provide up to date information at the Conference.
- HCH administrators, clinicians, and consumers are our best advocates.
- If you are attending the Conference, we need your help!

Legislative Priorities During the 2013 National HCH Conference

- Health center funding
- Low-income housing funding
- Medicaid

Health Care and Housing are Human Rights

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Impact of health center funding

Sequestration

- No Expansion for HCH
- Reduction: patients served, services, jobs, etc.
- Unmet need leads to more unmet need

Regular FY 13 Appropriations

- President's Budget vs. Senate Bill
- HCH's strongly support the Senate Bill
- Why?

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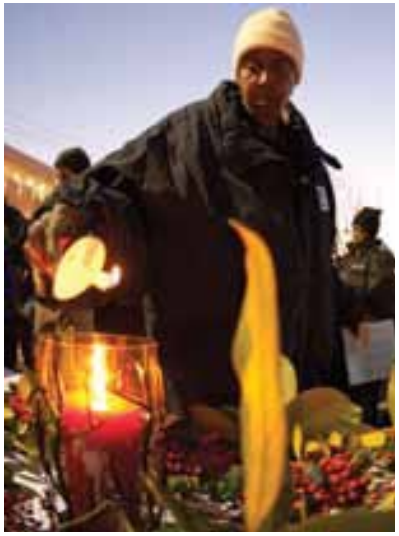
Framing the health center message

- Support for Senate FY 13 Bill
- Educate New Members
- SJMCS relies on health center funding
- Funding cuts =
  - Decrease patient care/services
  - Fewer providers
  - Greater strain on the safety net



Impact of low-income housing funding

- If Sequestration occurs:
  - 111,000 Section 8 Vouchers lost
    - Approx 2,700 of those in Georgia
  - Thousands with disabilities will lose supportive services
  - Hundreds of thousands of vulnerable & low income households would lose housing or shelter

Framing the low-income housing message

- Housing is Healthcare!
  - SJMCS' housing already extraordinarily limited
- Housing has been cut already
- Decrease in housing impacts every other social service sector
- Housing cuts = evictions = increase shelter = decrease employment = deterioration of affordable housing = degradation of neighborhoods = halt to economic growth of neighborhoods

Impact of Medicaid

- Any reductions in Federal funds impacts states, beneficiaries and providers:
  - States will either cut eligibility, cut benefits, increase cost sharing, cut provider rates and/or raise taxes
  - Will reduce the likelihood a state will choose expansion

Framing the Medicaid message

- Medicaid and the HCH bottom line
  - Different for SJMCS
  - Define this for your agency
- Explain impact to patients
  - Barriers from increased cost sharing
  - Limited access
  - Continued uninsurance

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Experience as a clinician

- Tell your story
- Tell your client/patient's story
- You are sharing a lived experience

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Lessons learned

- Be concise and to the point
- Be honest and respectful
- Be yourself
- Be passionate
- Be a voice for the voiceless!
  - Do NOT underestimate one person's ability to raise awareness and build support!
  - Do NOT underestimate the impact you can have!

Experience as a consumer

- Speaking at a Joint Congressional Briefing on family homelessness.
- Speaking with local Congressmen about Health Center funding cuts.
- Scheduling a visit with my Representatives while in Washington, D.C.
- Speaking with local politicians about local issues like panhandling.

Lessons learned

- Be prepared-know you material before scheduling a visit.
- Know where they stand on the issue.
- Be clear about why you are there.
- Be yourself.
- Be professional.
- Don't be nervous.
- Show your passion for the issue.
- Personalize the issue. How have you been affected?

Plan for Hill Visits at the Conference

- Identifying State Team Leads to assist in scheduling Hill Visits.
- Identifying Conference attendees who want to participate.
- Developing list of key Members of Congress especially important to meet.
- Developing written materials and talking points.
- Coordinating Meeting scheduled for Wednesday March 13 at 5pm at the Conference Hotel.

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Interested in Being a Team Lead? Contact Dan Rabbitt

- Schedule at least three Hill Visits.
- Attend the Coordinating Meeting March 13.
- Assist in coordinating other attendees from your State.
- Attend scheduled Hill Visits.
- If you cannot attend all Hill Visits or the Coordinating Meeting, you can make other arrangements.

Team Lead Details

- Dan will provide:
  - Important Members of Congress
  - Interested attendees
  - Constituents of Members
  - Issues of particular interest
- Communicate with attendees and colleagues attending the Conference
  - Are you comfortable with Dan sharing your contact info?
- Let Dan know the details once meetings are scheduled

Interested in Attending a Hill Visit? Contact Dan Rabbitt

- Attend the Coordinating Meeting March 13
- Attend one or more Hill Visits
- Bring your unique experiences and perspectives to your elected officials.
- Materials and talking points will be provided.
- Consider even if you have not done legislative meetings before!

Logistics at the National Conference

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Logistics at the National Conference

- Coordinating Meeting: provide folders of materials, go over current issues, strategize, answer questions, and allow teams to meet.
- Team Leads: provide logistics to team about time and location of meetings, determine who can go, and strategize about what to say.
- Website: www.nhchc.org/hillvisits2013, provide materials, information on scheduled meetings, and contact information.
- Dan will support: 443-286-5537 or drabbitt@nhchc.org.
- No time is set aside at the Conference for legislative meetings, so they will overlap with other Conference programming.

Q & A

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Resources

- National HCH Council website: www.nhchc.org
- 2013 National HCH Conference: www.nhchc.org/2012/12/2013-national-health-care-for-the-homeless-conference-policy-symposium/
- 2013 Conference Hill Visits: www.nhchc.org/hillvisits2013
- National HCH Council Advocacy Tool-kit: http://www.nhchc.org/policy-advocacy/advocacy-tool-kit/
- U.S. House of Representatives: www.house.gov
- U.S. Senate: www.senate.gov
- Dan Rabbitt, Health Policy Organizer:
  - drabbitt@nhchc.org; Office: 443-703-1337; Cell: 443-286-5537

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For more information about the National HCH Council

- Contact us at council@nhchc.org.
- Other educational opportunities including technical assistance and regional trainings can be found online at www.nhchc.org.