

Steps Newsletter

Strong communities where all people are active, healthy and free of the burden of chronic disease.



Steps to Health King County, Washington

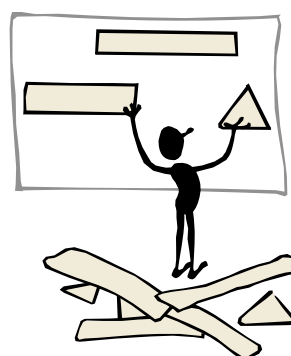
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Steps Leadership Team: Chair - Laird Harris, Vice Chair - Devon Love, Treasurer - Penny Nelson

Steps Experiences Help Improve Policies by Laird Harris

Why are so many policies that affect human services either counter productive or simply wide of the mark? Policy makers wonder why their efforts don't produce the intended results. Service providers and recipients often wonder what policy makers could have been thinking when making their decisions. This frustrating disconnection too often leads to mistrust and lack of teamwork between well intentioned people who share a common mission to improve people's lives.

The fact is that most service providers are too busy with their day-to-day tasks to think about how policies could be changed to make their efforts more effective. Even if good ideas come to them, there are few realistic opportunities to have them heard. Policy makers are typically fully occupied with "big picture" issues such managing competing priorities, resolving budget issues and responding to public expectations. Studies, statistics and anecdotes, rather than personal observation, provide the information base for their policy decisions.



Steps to Health can fill this gap of understanding. We are an unusual organization that includes both service providers and people with direct connection to policy. Steps actively engages frontline providers in identifying opportunities for positive policy change. We believe this experience-based approach will result in Steps becoming a valued resource for policy makers in government and private institutions who share our goals of reducing the burden of chronic disease in our communities.

For more information about how you can participate in Steps policy activities contact: Gail Tanaka at gail.tanaka@metrokc.gov.

Steps Issues in the News

Ask questions and avoid dining disasters

seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/health/2002998791_platkin17.html

Study finds steroids don't prevent asthma

seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/health/2002986253_asthma11.html

Poverty an indicator of obesity in teens

seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/health/2003014775_obese24.html

20 things we could do to be healthier

seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/health/2003001893_health18.html

A tip for restaurants: smaller portions

seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/health/2003036573_diet03.html

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The Times They are a Changin' by Lorrie Alfonsi

Integration!!! How are we all working together and finding new and old ways to do this? What are some of the activities we are engaging in? How do we track this? How will we evaluate if this is working and how do we measure success?

These are questions that we have been working from as we travel down the integration pathway.

It has been a year since the Steps support infrastructure staff has come on board. As our responsibilities have been more fleshed out, job descriptions have been reviewed and updated.

Diana Vinh is now working with the Community Health Specialists, not only providing the clinical supervision but implementing the new diabetes protocols as well. She also continues to follow up on worksite wellness as we venture on down the road.

The Integration Committee will be staffed by Lorrie Alfonsi, Project Manager. Having worked with all the projects from the beginning and monitoring the contracts, Lorrie will be able to work with the projects to identify linkage and integration points, in consultation with the evaluation team liaison, Emily Bourcier.

We look forward to the rest of year 3 and the final 2 years of the project.

Aloha!!! Lorrie

Neighborhood Health Advocacy Committees

NHACs are in three neighborhoods namely, Burien, South Park and Rainier Valley. Residents as well as people who work in these areas participate in monthly meetings that provide a venue for discussion and information on chronic illnesses such as diabetes, asthma, obesity and promotion of physical activity.

One of the participants, Linda, has been consistently coming to the meetings because she feels that it is a safe place for her to bring up her concerns about her health conditions without fear of being judged. She feels that talking to peers, neighbors or friends is less intimidating than talking to professionals who tell you what you have to do.

Laurie comes to the meetings because she wants to support her friend, be involved in her community and bring back information to her family and co-workers. She's brought another co-worker with her to join the weekly walks as well as the meetings.

Darlene volunteered to be the community coordinator because she feels that it is important for her neighbors to hear about important health information and introduce her two young children to ways of preventing chronic illness through a healthy lifestyle.



Willie Austin with members of a Neighborhood Committee

These are just some examples of why some people come to the meetings. People know that dealing with chronic illness is not easy but if there is a place to talk about how you are dealing with your daily health challenges, then you don't feel so alone.

We have faced various challenges in getting the groups together, i.e., from finding a permanent venue, to turnover of coordinators. Recruitment and participation is always a challenge. However, we continue to forge ahead because we know that it takes time to get people to come on board especially with regard to health. If one person's life has improved and she attributes it to participating in our weekly walks or attending the monthly meetings, then the NHACs are worth the time and effort.

Upcoming Events

Collaboration on health and the environment website:

<http://washington.chenw.org/RIgroup/>

Fun to be Fit Fair - July 19th from 12-4pm at the Genessee play field

Contact Kerstin Mabie at MabieK@psnhc.org for more information

Steps Extranet site

To access the extranet site www.kcsteps.org

send an e-mail to Jeff Ing at: Jeff.ing@metrokc.gov and he will give you a password for the site.



To comment on or submit articles to the Steps newsletter please contact Diana Vinh at Diana.vinh@metrokc.gov Please submit articles by the first of each month to be included in that month's newsletter. The next letter will come out 8/15/06.