

SEARCH Meeting
Trinity Episcopal Church
January 9, 2018
Minutes

Karin Rolett welcomed the group, suggesting that the reactive stance of 2017 become one of resolve and lead to a proactive approach in 2018.

Risa Larsen reported that donors have given generously and that there is \$300+ for administrative expenses of SEARCH.

Victoria Hicks and Karin Rolett summarized the outcomes of the December 5th meeting. The most common thread was to connect with and protect the most vulnerable, the children and uninsured.

The directions of SEARCH work suggested by those outcomes were to:

1. Broaden BRRH board membership
2. Plug the hole created by the lack of surgical services and L&D
3. Promote a transparent billing system
4. Stay in conversation with BRRH
5. Monitor outcomes from changes made to our healthcare systems
6. Be aware that SEARCH should not replicate existing groups
7. Research the health of our community, i.e., who is served/not served, how this reflects national trends.
8. Consider the economic consequences of changes in local healthcare

The group proposed that in the area of advocacy we support lobbying groups, public forums, communication with stakeholders and advocacy around the issue of “healthcare justice.”

Three SEARCH 2018 Action Areas were proposed and discussed:

1. To advocate for transparency in billing, including how bills are figured. We need to learn what the base billing charges for an ER visit are and then to educate the public about where to go first. (There was push-back as to whether or not SEARCH should be helping people negotiate the healthcare system.)
2. To determine the needs of the most vulnerable. The mandated Community Needs Assessment is just getting underway. (It happens every three years.) We will try to add three questions to the survey, such as “Who do you trust for your healthcare? How do you make decisions about where to seek healthcare?” Diane Creek will ask if we can still add questions to the survey. Several people suggested ways to get better information. Lynda Kinnane remembered that they used to do “listening sessions” that were effective. Jim Carroll said that MCHP was trying to do a better job of collecting information from their patients about housing, transport, food security, etc., and they might be able to add our questions to what they ask. Ron Rolett

suggested that we use places like MY Habitat for Humanity in Spruce Pine and Reconciliation House in Burnsville as survey sites once we have created the survey.

It was reported that the results from the CNA study should be available in 2018. An ad hoc committee will be formed to work on this action item. Volunteers included Lisa Schultz (though she will not write the survey) and Jean Hunt.

3. To convene a roundtable of health-related agencies and providers. This was suggested as step one towards the ultimate goal of having a public forum of legislators, hopefully before the primaries in May.

Groups who should be invited to part one are PATH, Healthy Yancey, Yancey Middle School Health Centers, health-e-schools, senior services, YAY, health centers, Healthy-Mitchell, etc.

“We need to figure out what services are being provided that aren’t being utilized and what services the community needs that aren’t being provided.”

Susan Larson talked about the healthcare coalition in McDowell County that was started five years and has spun off sub-groups focused on topics such as workplace safety and childcare. It was suggested that we try to get someone from that group to talk to SEARCH, possibly Meghan Merritt

The phone service NC-2-1-1 already exists as a way for people to get help with a variety of human service needs (funded by the United Way). The question is are people using it? Do they even know what a comprehensive resource it is? Should SEARCH make an effort to educate the public about it? Becky Carter offered to contact 211 to find out how widely it is being used. We would also like to know if there are gaps in the information being distributed and if that information is current. The Outreach Task Force was suggested as a logical group to take this up.

Volunteers self-identified (if they were present) to work on the roundtable were Jon Ward and Mike Lamm with tangential advice from Lynda Kinnane and possibly help from Juanita Brown. No one volunteered to chair the group. The Government Relation Task Force would be enlisted to work on it since it will ultimately involve elected officials.

4. Define Essential Services to meet the healthcare needs of Mitchell and Yancey counties. Risa Larsen volunteered to chair this ad hoc committee to formulate the list of essential services, which would be unique to this area and would probably not be the services which Medicare considers essential. She will work with Jean Hunt.

Different people brought up personal points of view on topics related to healthcare. These included impassioned pleas for a single-payer system from Jim Carroll and Liz Peverall, the need to listen to the people in the arena (doctors and providers) from Tommy James, the need to get contact lists from healthcare agencies so that we can approach legislators with names and numbers (Charlie Hofheimer),

the need for SEARCH to connect with Healthy Yancey, which meets the first Thursday of every month at the Yancey County Public Library, and Healthy Mitchell, which has its own 501©(3) status and meets every other month at Helen's in Bakersville and because it has nonprofit status could be a fiscal agent for fundraising efforts.

The next full meeting of SEARCH will be Thursday, February 8, at 7:00 p.m. at the First Baptist Church in Burnsville.

Minutes recorded by Britt Kaufmann, editing by Susan Larson