

INTRODUCTION

Council History and Description

The Valencia Community Partnership (VCP) is sanctioned by the Valencia County Commission as the comprehensive health council for the county. The VCP originated in 1993 as the Valencia County Coalition for Families, Children and Community (VCC-FCC), and was "...dedicated to helping build better futures for children and families in Valencia County." The Valencia Maternal Child Health (MCH) Council served in an advisory capacity to the VCC-FCC. In 1999 the VCC-FCC was reorganized as the Valencia Community Partnership, transitioning from a service organization to a focused health assessment and planning council while retaining its 501© 3 status. Recognizing that the Maternal Child Health (MCH) Council and the VCP had shared concerns for the health of Valencia County residents and the MCH Council had considerable experience as a strategic health planning council, the MCH Council and the VCP voted in 2002 to merge into one, comprehensive health planning council, dedicated to serving the needs of the entire Valencia County community.

The Valencia Community Partnership has an open membership with countywide representation. General membership meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month at 8:15 am at the Youth Development, Inc.-Valencia office at 428 South Los Lentos in Los Lunas. These meetings provide opportunities to the general council membership to learn about various programs, services and strategies, to be trained in environmental approaches to prevention and health, and to network and form partnerships. Town Hall meetings for community agencies, schools, governments, and the community at large are scheduled periodically to ensure community-wide engagement in the health improvement process. The community is notified of Partnership meetings through the local newspaper and by means of an email contact list of nearly 200 community members who routinely receive minutes, announcements, and updates on council activities.

The Valencia Community Partnership has representation and shared membership with other Valencia County planning organizations and task forces. In contrast to the VCP, these other entities are organized around specific issues or undertakings, such as the DWI Planning Council or the Local Emergency Planning Council. Shared membership allows the VCP access to local anecdotal information which can supplement compiled data in these areas, and to remain cognizant of resources and initiatives, which serves to reduce duplication and to strengthen health coordination.

Council planning and development is driven by the leadership team which is elected by the general membership. VCP leadership currently includes representatives from county government, local school districts, the local DWI Planning council, the County Extension Service, a local counseling organization, the Domestic Violence Shelter and a community member. Council coordination and administrative support is provided by Youth Development, Inc. (YDI) which also serves as the fiscal agent for the DOH contract that supports the work of the VCP. The leadership team, including ex-officio representatives from YDI, works collaboratively with the entire health council membership to assess the well being of Valencia County residents, establish priorities based on the assessment, develop strategies around the priorities, and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies in a systematic and ongoing planning

process. Currently the leadership team is focusing on developing and maintaining the VCP website, www.vcpnm.org; presenting county-specific data and research to the VCP membership and the community and using the feedback from the general membership and the community in general to formulate the county health profile and strategic plan; and increasing the VCP membership along with community-wide recognition and support of the VCP health council as it strives to address the identified health priorities.

The leadership team meets as often as is necessary to expedite health council business, which translates to at least one meeting per month and, often times, more. Contact information for the leadership team and the YDI/VCP coordinators is available on the website, www.vcpnm.org.

The Valencia Community Partnership has representation and shared membership with other planning organizations in the county. Some of these include the Local Emergency Planning Council, the Community Coordinated Response Team, the Judicial District 13 Local Collaborative, the Valencia County Students Concerned About Tobacco and the DWI Planning Council. In contrast to the VCP, these other entities are organized around specific issues or undertakings. Shared membership allows the VCP access to local anecdotal information and data which serves to strengthen health coordination. The schematic on the following page describes the relationship of the VCP to these entities and others in the community with regard to strategic health planning.