

Office of Economic Opportunity

Mission: The Office of Economic Opportunity helps poverty-stricken families to achieve economic independence. There are many rural areas and sections of urban North Carolina where the Community Action Agency funded by OEO may be the only group able and willing to reach out to the poor. Families may receive help in finding a job or housing or any number of services that lead to independence. The office also provides grants to homeless shelters, helping an average of 2,000 homeless individuals and families per day to get shelter, food, health care, and child care as well as psychological and substance abuse counseling. In 1981 the Office was assigned the responsibility of administering the federal Community Services Block Grant Program. Since that time, the Office has assumed the responsibility for administering additional programs: Community Action Partnership Program (CAPP) and Emergency Shelter Grants Program (ESGP) and Weatherization Services. <http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/oeo/>

Priority Conditions/Issues: Priority conditions or issues include: age; education; race/ethnicity; and geographical location

Service Delivery Challenges: The office cited federal/state legislation, funding, and coordination of services among agencies as their top service delivery challenges.

Socio-cultural Challenges: The only socio-cultural challenge identified was “beliefs that health care is not important as some other needs and not making regular appointments”.

Disparity Focus Areas: The key focus areas for the Office are income and education based on federal mandate, office mission, and allowable activity criteria. With reference to available resources, the Office observed, “if health is identified as a priority problem, funds may be proposed to eliminate the disparity based on potential of providing the service, available resources, benefits to the target population, and the extent to which the proposed assistance will impact the economics of the family”.

OFFICE OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY – HEALTH DISPARITIES IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTION STEPS	TIME LINE	EVALUATION	DATA NEEDS	AVAILABLE RESOURCES
1. Increase awareness of health and service disparities, especially disparities related to race/ethnicity, disability and socioeconomic status.	Distribute disparities fact sheets to network of grantees	As provided by Task Force	Fact Sheets distributed	Fact Sheets	Health Disparities Staff OEO Field Staff
2. Communicate, document, and champion best-practices in eliminating health disparities	Promote the utilization of health selected strategies to grantees	As provided by Task Force	As strategies are provided	Strategies	Health Disparities Staff OEO Field Staff
3. Promote, develop, and enhance community's capacity to engage in healthy living and elimination of disparities in health status.	Encourage coordination/partnerships of grantees with local health partners	ongoing			Health Disparities Staff OEO Field Staff
4. Monitor progress towards the elimination of health disparities	Encourage the use of any state developed data to advocate gathering more health related data on intake forms	ongoing			OEO Staff
5. Promote customer friendly services that meet the needs of under served populations (i.e., low-income and minority groups)	Increase emphasis on the collection of health related data among grantees	April,2003			OEO Field Staff
6. Increase resources/investments to eliminate health status gaps	Utilize health related needs assessment information in project development of goals, objectives and activities	April, 2003			OEO Staff

OFFICE OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY – HEALTH DISPARITIES IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTION STEPS	TIME LINE	EVALUATION	DATA NEEDS	AVAILABLE RESOURCES
7. Build, support, and fully utilize a diverse workforce capable of working in cross- cultural settings.	Encourage grantees to develop more health related projects	ongoing			OEO Staff
8. Identify and advocate for public policies that aid in closing the health status gap.	Evaluate agency discrimination policies related to disabilities	ongoing			
9. Demonstrate Accountability and Ownership for Health Outcomes	Promote utilization of health related measurements of success for performance reporting in health related projects	Ongoing			Health Disparities Staff OEO Staff