

Oklahoma Turning Point Initiative

At a Glance

The goal of the state Turning Point office is to provide the needed technical support to local Turning Point partnerships around the state as they address the health issues in their communities. We have six regional staff that is available to assist communities in developing and maintaining partnerships. In addition, this year we were fortunate enough to add an epidemiologist to our staff with the support of our partners from the Office of Primary Care and Community Health Services. This important addition has allowed us to produce a series of "State of the County Health Reports," which provide data to partnerships needed to help assess, develop, and implement their community health improvement plans. These reports will be available electronically when all of the counties are completed. The addition of epidemiology staff underscores the continued support Turning Point receives from the Oklahoma State Department of Health, the Secretary of Health, and the State Board of Health.

The Certified Healthy Business (CHB) program continues to grow with over 100 applications received this year. The Business Committee of Oklahoma Turning Point Council, which coordinates the CHB program, has decided to evaluate the program, and develop a new strategic plan to accommodate its rapid growth. Also, the State Chamber became a sponsoring partner with the CHB program this year.

Finally, a formal partnership has been established this year with the Public Health Institute of Oklahoma (PHIO). This will enable our community partnerships to seek collaborative funding opportunities with PHIO to implement their health improvement plans.

Why Are We Doing What We Are Doing?

Earlier this year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention published an article about Oklahoma's Turning Point initiative, entitled "Transforming Public Health Through Community Partnerships". It gives a good overview of "Why Are We Doing What We Are Doing." That article may be accessed at: http://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2005/nov/pdf/05_0072.pdf. I have extracted some key statements that highlight the importance of Turning Point in Oklahoma:

"Oklahoma has had the unfortunate distinction of consistently ranking toward the bottom of the national health rankings. Despite efforts to reverse these trends during the mid 1980s and through the 1990s, Oklahoma's health status indicators failed to move in any significant positive directions. In fact, Oklahoma has been the only state since 1988 in which age-adjusted death rates have actually increased. ...Clearly, this caused a great deal of concern among Oklahoma's health leaders, and innovative solutions were sought to reverse these negative trends. In 1997, an opportunity became available from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Called Turning Point, the request for proposals encouraged local and state applicants to 're-think' the delivery of public health, placing the emphasis on state and local collaborative partnerships, and receiving from community partners their priorities for public health interventions. Although this would represent a radical change in how public health would be delivered in Oklahoma, ...the application was submitted with the following opening quote: *'Healthy Communities' is our vision for Oklahoma in the 21st century. In order to achieve this vision, work must begin now to change the health culture in Oklahoma through state and local partnerships. ...we begin a new working dialogue in Oklahoma, in which community partners engage in a stronger leadership role and state partners assume a stronger technical resource position.*"

Thanks to all of the partners, both state and local, who share their vision and passion to improve the health of Oklahoma. The many hours that you give of your time *will* have an impact. Just look around and see all that is happening to improve our health that wasn't happening just a few years ago! We recognize the efforts you are making in your communities and truly appreciate your commitment. Your involvement in this endeavor will be sure to result in an improved state of health for all Oklahomans.

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