

Health Care is Our Business, a Healthy Community is Our Goal

Visioneering Wichita Health Care Strategic Alliance White Paper – September 28, 2006

Introduction to Visioneering Wichita

Visioneering Wichita was initiated in 2004 as a regional effort to develop strategies for the future of Sedgwick County and the surrounding metropolitan statistical area (MSA) of 580,000 people, including Harvey, Butler, and Sumner Counties. This planning process included the thoughtful conversation of more than 8,650 residents through 36 focus groups, 10 community meetings, 4 vision task forces, and a steering committee.

In December 2004, a strategic vision was published (see www.visioneeringwichita.com) to challenge the community to achieve lofty and attainable goals by 2024 to address foundational issues regarding economic development, education, quality of life, government, infrastructure, and private sector leadership. The purpose is to enhance our community to be more desirable for young people to live and work in the Wichita MSA. Benchmarks were developed to measure job growth, per capita income, education, family stability, downtown development, arts/recreation, leadership, and racial diversity, opportunity and harmony.

Regarding the quality of life foundation, *the vision is that by 2024, the Wichita MSA will be a healthy, safe community that has a vibrant recreation, entertainment and arts focus that embraces diversity and builds pride.* In the area of health, nine action areas were put forth to improve health and health care.

Introduction to the Health Alliance

The Visioneering Wichita Health Care Strategic Alliance (Health Alliance) was created in 2005 to lead, coordinate, and report on efforts to enhance health in the region. *Our mission is to increase the accessibility and quality of health care while lowering the cost.*

The Alliance comprises more than 40 health care businesses, non-profit organizations, and county health departments, all striving collaboratively and in their own ways to contribute to the regional mission to improve access and quality of care and lower the cost. The Health Alliance is led by a team of volunteers and supported by the Wichita Metro Chamber of Commerce and the Wichita State University Self-Help Network.

The first thing the Alliance did was narrow the list of nine action areas to four to address in the near term:

- Promote **disease prevention** by encouraging healthy lifestyles, wellness, and fitness and education programs (including addressing tobacco, obesity, drug, alcohol and violence issues).

- Have **comprehensive coordinated health care**, including mental, dental, and medical care for all people.
- Ensure the availability and **adequate supply of qualified health care professionals**.
- Communicate and **promote existing health services**.

Guiding Principles

To improve health, the Health Alliance seeks to determine the key factors necessary to ensuring the people of south-central Kansas are healthy. To guide our work, the following guiding principles embody regionalization, diversity, and collaboration:

1. Health is more than health care. Health encompasses prevention of disease and promotion of healthy activities.
2. A healthy workforce is a key factor in job growth and economic development.
3. Providing targeted, culturally appropriate information helps individuals understand what decisions they can make to be healthy.
4. Business leaders and the health care industry have common concerns about access, quality, and cost.
5. Businesses can take actions to affect the cost, quality, and accessibility of health care.
6. Actions taken to reach the indigent population will increase the overall quality of care and access in the community.
7. When individuals and families have a medical home – a single place to access health care when needed – overall costs can be reduced through enhanced prevention and reduced emergency needs.
8. Health disparities among people of different races, genders, and income levels must be reduced.
9. Business principles apply in health care, including return on investment, use of evidence-based practices, and efficiency.
10. Regional partnerships will be critical to our ability to achieve our mission.

Health Focus Areas

Through the Health Alliance’s work in 2006, it became clear that measuring and continually improving healthcare in the region would be facilitated by the identification of specific health issues to focus on-going work. Health professionals discussed and debated the possibilities, and the Leadership Team determined that focusing on the following nine health issues would help the community focus efforts for improving quality, access and for reducing healthcare costs:

- Asthma
- Drug/Alcohol Abuse
- Mental Health
- Nutrition
- Oral Health
- Palliative Care
- Physical Activity

- Tobacco Use
- Unintentional and Intentional Injury

Each of these areas of focus have measurable health indicators used by communities across the nation. The Sedgwick County Health Department is currently researching possible measures for these nine areas and working with the Health Alliance Cost, Quality, and Access committees to present to the Alliance at its November 30, 2006 meeting its recommendations for beginning to establish key measures in each area.

Strategies

To achieve our goals, we will follow these initial strategies:

Strategy 1. The Health Alliance will engage partners who are in a position to address health and health care concerns for the Wichita MSA. The Alliance will facilitate discussions on what does & does not work for businesses, highlighting the needs of businesses (i.e., healthy workforce).

Strategy 2. The Health Alliance will identify and apply for funding that can help build the capacity of health leadership in the community.

Strategy 3. The Health Alliance will measure and track progress on the nine health areas to determine the extent to which progress is being made on each.

Strategy 4. The Health Alliance will support, engage, and assist those working in the nine health focus areas, especially as their efforts relate to costs, access, and quality.

Strategy 5. The Health Alliance will engage those working on health and health care policies/advocacy to support efforts that improve cost, access, and quality.

Strategy 6. The Health Alliance will use social marketing techniques to help address and support the nine focus areas.

How is Success Measured?

A key measure of success will be if average annual health expenditures can be kept below the already-projected growth trend line. Efforts are underway to measure the success of the various strategies under development regarding access, cost and quality of health care. The benchmark would also provide an opportunity to compare our metropolitan area with other communities such as Kansas City, Omaha, Des Moines, Denver, Tulsa, and Oklahoma City.

Accomplishments to Date

In its first year (2005-06), the Health Care Alliance (1) conducted quarterly Health Care Forums *to communicate and promote existing health services*, (2) made serious strides in measuring its success through benchmark subcommittees on quality, accessibility, and

cost, (3) identified four priority action areas, and (4) coordinated a successful legislative effort through Visioneering Wichita's Unified Legislative Alliance with state support for 25% expansion in the capacity of nursing programs in existing post secondary public education institutions in South Central Kansas.

What's Next for the Alliance?

Action steps for each of the six strategies were developed in July 2006 and are in process of implementation. Key to the success of the Visioneering Wichita Health Care Strategic Alliance is sustained effort over the next 18 years to ensure meaningful actions are taken to improve the health of the Wichita-area workforce and to control the rapidly rising trend line of health care costs.

While all six strategies are important, serious attention will be devoted to Strategy 2 to build capacity in health leadership, including collaboration, education, research, and advocacy. The concept of a Wichita Area Health Collaborative is being developed. Such an organization would be a central resource for employers, employees, and the community to raise awareness of the relationship between community health and economic development. It would support and further the work initiated by the voluntary efforts of the healthcare alliance members by recognizing the need for not only the leadership of people of good will but also of the need for an infrastructure and formal leadership that wakes up every day focused on improving health across the region—across businesses, non-profit organizations, and county health departments.

The Visioneering Wichita effort began and has been sustained for three years with start-up grants from several foundations, governments, and businesses. In the health arena, several loose coalitions exist already to promote shared values and common goals. These coalitions are constantly challenged by issues of sustainability and support. It has become clear to the many people who have dipped their toes in the water of the Health Alliance that to achieve the level of change required to continually improve health in the region, it cannot risk being yet another of these well-meaning groups, without a dedicated leader, authority, or a budget. A system of leadership is required to effect real change. Such leadership must also be able to represent the interests of the community in bringing together the key partners in the regions health to address issues of quality, access, and cost.

Participation

The Health Alliance continues to welcome anyone and everyone to participate in its efforts (Alliance meetings, community forums, cost committee, quality committee, access committee). Contact dlongfellow@wichitachamber.org to be added to our e-mail distribution list or to inquire about further participation. Check out our website at www.visioneeringwichita.com for upcoming meetings or other information about the Alliance.