

OVERVIEW OF THE NEW RIVER VALLEY PARTNERSHIP FOR ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE (PATH)

Since 1995 the New River Valley (NRV) Partnership for Access To HealthCare (PATH) has served as a collaborative, community-focused alliance of 50+ health and human service organizations, other community organizations, and businesses. This partnership resulted from discussions and a review of statistics from a 1994 New River Valley Health and Human Services Needs Assessment which indicated that the number one concern of residents in the New River Health District or Planning District Four--a 1,400 square mile multi-jurisdictional rural, urban, and suburban region in Southwest Virginia including the localities of Floyd, Giles, Montgomery, and Pulaski counties and the city of Radford--was lack of affordable health care.

Mission Statement

The mission of PATH is to maximize access to health care for all residents of the New River Valley.

Purpose

Networking, projects and advocacy

Partnership Successes

PATH has been very successful in public/private collaborations that have made a difference in access to health care:

1. *Med-Ride* -- Med-Ride is one of PATH's first initiatives to increase access to health care services by addressing a documented barrier and need--transportation. This collaborative transportation project was developed in cooperation with PATH partners, area transportation providers, and community volunteers. Med-Ride is housed in the New River Valley Senior Services, Inc., and has been supported by successful grant funding obtained from the Virginia Health Care Foundation; the United Way of Montgomery, Radford, and Floyd; and the Carilion Community Health Fund. The scope of Med-Ride's service is broad and the program offers non-emergency transportation of uninsured, underinsured, and medically indigent patients to health care services including physician, dentist, and mental health offices; hospital outpatient services; local pharmacies for prescriptions; health departments; and free clinics. Med-Ride was one of five projects featured and honored at the March 19, 1998 Virginia Health Care Foundation "Models That Made It" Conference at Virginia Commonwealth University. The conference was co-sponsored by the Virginia Hospital and Health Care Association, Virginia Primary Care Association, Virginia Association of Free Clinics, Virginia Department of Health, and Virginia Commonwealth University's Office of Community Programs. The Virginia Health Care Foundation's focus was to stimulate conferees to replicate the "Models That Made It" in their communities, as well as to inspire new community initiatives to increase primary health care for Virginia's uninsured.
2. *Council of Community Services Directory* -- PATH partners collaborated with the Council of Community Services on its directory of information on health and human services available from public and private providers in Southwest Virginia. The Council's Information & Referral Center of Southwest Virginia also maintains the comprehensive information on-line for more than 2,000 human services programs in Southwest Virginia and is intended to link citizens with public and private agencies and organizations. The Virginia Department of Health, the Virginia Department of Social Services, and the Carilion Community Health Fund have supported this collaborative effort through grant funding.

3. *Pro Bono Counseling Program* -- The Pro Bono Counseling Program--another PATH collaborative initiative which addresses mental health care--provides free mental health counseling for low to moderate income uninsured residents of the New River Valley. Area licensed mental health professionals volunteer short-term, solution-focused counseling to adults, families, and children. The Mental Health Association of the New River Valley serves as the coordinating agency. The program has been supported by successful grant funding obtained from the United Way of Montgomery, Radford, and Floyd; the Carilion Community Health Fund; the Carilion Saint Albans Foundation; and the Virginia Health Care Foundation. The Pro Bono Counseling Program has received the following awards/recognitions: 1998 Mental Health Association of Virginia *Best Service Program*; 2000 Monroe E. Trout *Premier Cares Award*; 2001 National Mental Health Association *Innovation in Programming Award*; 2001 American Psychiatric Association *Gold Community Award*; 2001 Virginia Senate *Joint Resolution No. 391*; 2002 Virginia Health Care Foundation *Models That Made It*; 2004 featured in *Rural Healthy People 2010 Volume 3*.
4. *New River Valley Community Needs Assessment* -- In the spring of 1999, PATH conducted a community needs assessment to obtain an up-to-date health profile of the New River Valley communities. The assessment was coordinated with the New Century Turning Point Partnership in conjunction with Carilion and Columbia hospitals in an effort to look at needs assessments on a regional basis. The assessment consisted of five data components--focus groups, provider survey, secondary health indicator data, citizen mail-out survey, and personal interviews within targeted groups and areas. Community health surveys containing questions on lifestyle behaviors and medical history were distributed to 6,500 randomly selected households in the New River Valley and 118 individuals completed a similar survey by personal interview. This assessment model was replicated throughout the New Century Region.
5. *ARMS (Access to Rural Mental Health Services) Reach* -- In May 2003, the Mental Health Association of the New River Valley was awarded a three-year, \$600,000 federal grant to expand its Pro Bono Counseling Program to a rural mental health outreach program allowing the free mental health clinic to double in size through an extensive outreach component. The collaborative project of four network organizations—the Mental Health Association of the New River Valley, Virginia Rural Health Resource Center, New River Health District, and New River Valley Agency on Aging—along with primary care physicians and school guidance counselors arrange for delivery of outpatient mental health services to uninsured low-to-moderate income and medically underserved populations including residents in senior centers, homes of older adults, health department clinics, physicians' offices, and schools. ARMS Reach is a recognized model for delivering mental health services to rural areas--received the 2006 *Wachovia Alumna Achievement Award* presented by the Virginia Health Care Foundation and was featured in *Rural Roads*, a publication of the National Rural Health Association.
6. *Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) 2007-2009* -- PATH utilized MAPP to improve health and quality of life in the New River Valley through community-wide and community-driven strategic planning. The MAPP Model included these phases: Organize for Success/Partnership Development, Visioning, the Four MAPP Assessments (Community Themes and Strengths, Local Public Health System, Community Health Status, Forces of Change), Identify Strategic Issues, Formulate Goals and Strategies, and the Action Cycle (action, implementation, and evaluation).
7. Served as New River Valley Livability Initiative Community Health Working Group 2012-2014 http://www.nrvpdc.org/Livability/Livability_Report/livability.html.
8. Currently sponsors three work groups to address Physical Activity and Nutrition NRV, Perinatal Substance Abuse, and Advocacy.