

**Maine Quality Forum
Advisory Council
August 13, 2004
Minutes of Meeting**

MQF Advisory Council members present: Robert McArtor, Clifford Rosen, Richard Bruns, Jonathan Beal, Laureen Biczak, Rebecca Colwell, Jim McGregor, Lisa Miller, Dan Roet, David White, and Janice Wnek. Dennis Shubert, Maine Quality Forum, Tom Dunne, Dirigo Health Agency and Maureen Booth, Muskie School of Public Service were also in attendance.

Minutes

Minutes of the July 9, 2004 meeting were accepted as distributed.

Introductions

Dr. Shubert welcomed Chris McCarthy, a new staff member of the MQF. Chris has a MA in Community Psychology and will be working on the agency's website.

Dirigo Health Update

Ellen Schneider with the Governor's Office of Health Policy and Finance, updated the group on Dirigo Health.

- The first interim state health plan was issued. This one year plan is public and community health oriented with an emphasis on the chronic care needs of the state. Ellen Schneider notes that an 8 member group hopes to attend a breakthrough series on How to Move your System towards Chronic Care Management. In response to a question on who will be included in that group, Ellen Schneider noted that Lisa Letourneau from Quality Counts has been invited.
- The Governor's Office is initiating a Tough Choices campaign to talk to citizens about their healthcare system, what they want from their healthcare system and the tradeoffs involved. The campaign will take place in three regions of the state, each of which has a tertiary facility and approximately 400,000 residents. Regional boards will be formed to help arrange these local discussions.
- An ad campaign is about to be launched to inform consumers on cost, quality and access issues. Ads will run 6-7 weeks, beginning in mid August.
- The Governor's Office adopted an Emergency Rule governing the establishment of a Capital Investment Fund. The Capital Investment Fund is an annual limit on the third year cost of CON projects.

Tom Dunne informed members that Anthem negotiations continue to make progress. While the final timetable for implementation is subject to negotiation, Anthem's proposal indicated that the product would go to market October 1, with coverage effective January 1, 2005.

Savings Offset Payment

Tom Dunne reviewed the status of the savings offset payment (SOP) which will be used in future years to help fund discounts for the Dirigo Health Plan and the Maine Quality Forum. While the legislation is with respect to limits and reporting requirements of the SOP, many details on how to calculate the SOP have yet to be worked out. Recommendations will be made to the Dirigo Board on the details and time frame for proceeding.

Low Interest Loan Fund

Dr. Shubert reported on the low interest loan fund, one of several strategies that will be used to promote electronic technology. Working through the Small Business Administration (SBA), the Dirigo Board agreed to contribute \$50,000 to pay the upfront fee that would allow providers with otherwise marginal credit ratings to receive loans at prime rate. While this program will assist in technology start-up, several members raised concerns about the ongoing costs to a practice of updating and maintaining technology.

Development of Strategic Plan which Involves Maine Quality Forum

Dr. Shubert reported that the MQF, as a state agency, is required to submit a Strategic Plan by September 1, 2004. Given the accelerated schedule, Dr. Shubert acknowledged that a traditional group planning process was not possible. Dr. Shubert explained that the Strategic Plan will be based on the direction that the Advisory Council has previously reviewed. Members of the MQF will receive an electronic draft for comments before it is submitted.

Technology Assessment Committee

Jonathan Beal, Chair of the committee, summarized actions taken since the last Maine Quality Forum meeting:

- Laureen Biczak arranged a telephone conference for on July 12 with Lou Dorogi, Director of State Licensure, and members of the Committee. Following that conference call, Licensure provided survey information of their review of hospital staffing, nurse staffing issues throughout the state. Although useful, surveys have been completed on only 9 of the 44 hospitals.
- Jonathan Beal sent a letter to all 44 hospitals in the state requesting certain specified information on nurse staffing plans, their quality improvement plans, and implementation data. Hospitals have until September 3rd to submit their response to the Muskie School which will conduct preliminary analyses. Although hospitals are not legally required to supply this information, hospitals were urged to do so in the letter so that the Legislature could get a full and complete picture of staffing practices in Maine.
- The first meeting of the Provider Group took place on July 29. In addition to a general orientation on the MQF and its role, the Provider Group was asked to give feedback on a preliminary background analysis prepared for the MQF on the issue of

nurse staffing ratios. A second meeting of the Provider Group is scheduled for August 26 to complete their input into nurse staffing indicators of quality.

Essential Public Health Services

Dr. Shubert reviewed the essential functions performed under public health that were part of an advance handout. The Advisory Council acknowledged the public health functions and the overlap with the MQF activities.

National Quality Forum Consensus Standards for Cardiac Surgery

Dr. Shubert informed the MQFAC about draft standards developed by the National Quality Forum on cardiac surgery. Questions arose how these standards compare to those developed by the Northern New England Cardiovascular Study Group, a long established group which came together years ago to reduce variations in patient outcomes. An early premise of the Study Group was that data should remain confidential and used primarily for quality improvement. In the event that existing Maine data cannot be released, the Maine Quality Forum is looking to adopt the National Quality Forum standards as a benchmark for analyzing performance data. It was agreed that these and other draft quality indicators proposed by the National Quality Forum would be shared with the Performance Measurement Committee for review and input.

MQF Website

Dr. McArtor referred to charts comparing the performance of Maine hospitals against a series of performance indicators. While this type of data is important to get in the hands of consumers, Dr. McArtor cautioned that every effort must be made to assure accurate representation of the data in a manner that would be useful to consumers. To this end, Dr. McArtor proposed that the MQF contract with David Wennberg to review the contents of the initial website for validity and that, going forward, the Performance Measurement Committee be delegated that task and, where found necessary, consult external experts.

The tension of wanting to get information out to the public and the need for sufficient vetting of the data in advance of publication was seen as an ongoing reality. Dr. Shubert underscored the plan to invite providers to respond to performance reports on the website via a chat room or other method. Questions were raised about the lack of a scientific basis for some data interpretations proposed for the website. In some instances, Dr. Shubert acknowledged that his goal was to give consumers his opinion as a physician. Members concurred that it should be made clear to consumers when personal opinions are being rendered.

Public Comments

Two issues were raised during public comments:

- In response to a question on whether nurses in advanced practice would be eligible for low interest loans, the answer was yes.

- The Maine Quality Forum Advisory Council was cautioned about the need to assure that electronic medical records be capable of talking to each other and that sufficient attention be given to ongoing expenses of upgrading and maintenance.

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 PM.