

Environmental exposures across urban and rural communities in the Deep South

West Central Alabama Community Advisory Board

June 11th, 2013

4:00-5:00 PM

Gee's Bend Ferry Terminal
(1001 Earl Hilliard Road Camden, AL 36726)

Meeting Minutes

Members in attendance: Brenda Anthony (ADPH Public Health Area 7), Mary Evans (UAB CSCH), Julia Gohlke (UAB SOPH), Ethel Johnson (WCACHIL), William Lampley (Cooperative Extension, Sumter County), Aundretta Montgomery (Community Leader), Pam Stenz (Cooperative Extension, Wilcox County), Sheryl Threadgill-Matthews (WCACHIL), and Steve Wood (Dept of Health, Wilcox Cty).

Observers in attendance: Molly Bernhard (UAB SOPH), Travis Porter (UAB SOPH)

Discussions:

Role of the CAB: The CAB is tasked with ensuring the design of research that evaluates the effects of environmental exposures on community health in West Central Alabama, with an initial focus in Wilcox County, is in line with the environmental health needs of communities in West Central Alabama. The CAB will also design and conduct a yearly workshop, which will be used as one tool to ensure communication between community members and researchers.

Decision-making process: Any CAB member can raise an issue to be voted upon. Decisions will be made by a simple majority vote of a quorum of members. A quorum was defined as a simple majority of all members, which would be 5 with the current membership.

Membership: Members decided total membership will initially be limited to nine, with balance between: 1) researchers (2 total), 2) community-based organizations/community members (3 total), and 3) governmental or non-governmental issue-based organization representation (4 total). The CAB is open to allowing additional members based on appropriate expertise. Additional members and/or vacancies in each category will be filled via nomination by any current member and will be voted upon by the CAB with simple majority of a quorum. It was decided that limitations on terms were not appropriate. The CAB sees no need for a chair, co-chair, or additional officers at this time. This will be re-evaluated on a yearly basis.

Regular meetings: A twice-a-year in person meeting schedule was agreed upon. This decision will be revisited at least annually.

Reporting: Reporting, including meeting minutes and updates, will be communicated via email.

At-risk populations of interest: Potential at-risk populations to heat-related health outcomes were discussed. Proposed populations included diabetics, individuals with autoimmune disease, elderly, children, and individuals with hypertension, and high Body Mass Index (BMI). Aundretta Montgomery suggested that children are an important population to consider, particularly older children that could keep up with wearing the small monitor on their shoes and likely spend a significant amount of time outdoors. Brenda Anthony mentioned that the ADPH home health unit reports low use of air conditioning in the elderly, likely due to cost as well as perceived exacerbation of arthritis symptoms. In addition, a family-based design to include recruitment of parents or grandparents and their children was considered a useful strategy to help delineate age-related differences and also provide additional support to increase compliance for individuals participating in the study.

Yearly workshops: These workshops will be designed to educate both communities and researchers on community needs in rural Alabama, the unique priorities and cultural issues that may affect research design, and eliciting opinions of community members on utility and relevance of research to their needs. Brainstorming led to ideas for possible workshops. Ideas included incorporating capacity building programs with food and family gatherings, and a tour of the environmental issues, such as septic and sewage systems, in use in rural areas. Steve Wood mentioned the training center at University of West Alabama specifically dealing with septic design issues in the region.

Additional topics discussed: The CAB discussed the septic and sewage issues that were identified as one of the top priorities in focus groups. Steve Wood noted that he deals with inadequate sewage treatment regularly and identified the upfront and maintenance cost of putting in a septic system, especially given the dense prairie soil in SW Alabama as a complication, as a key issue for landowners. He noted it becomes particularly problematic on land where the density of trailers has increased, heightening the health risks. Sheryl Threadgill-Matthews noted the work of Dr. Walter Mason (UAB) several years ago in estimating the health risks associated with this issue in Wilcox County.