



October 31, 2008

Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin
Medical College of Wisconsin, CCN Rm 2536
8701 Watertown Plank Rd
PO Box 26509
Milwaukee, WI 53226-0509

RE: ABC for Health Comments on the Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin 2009-2014
Five-Year Plan

Advocacy and Benefits Counseling for Health, Inc. (ABC for Health) is a Wisconsin-based nonprofit public interest law firm dedicated to ensuring health care access for children and families, particularly those with special needs or who are at risk. ABC for Health's mission is to provide health care consumers with the information, advocacy tools, legal services, and expert support they need to navigate through America's complex and confusing health care financing system.

The proceeds from the conversion of Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS) to a for-profit corporation created a tremendous opportunity to transform the public health landscape in Wisconsin. Through the unprecedented allocation of over 800 million dollars of public capital, Wisconsin's medical schools were charged and trusted with a leadership role to best serve the public health needs of the people of Wisconsin. ABC for Health has a longstanding interest in the appropriate allocation of the public's dollars. ABC for Health and our partners have vigorously advocated that these public assets be directed to serve the public health needs of Wisconsin people and communities.

The second Five-Year Plan sets the stage for AHW to expand allocations of these funds congruent with the conversion fund's original purpose – the promotion of public health and public health initiatives statewide. UW and MCW must continue work to build project sustainability into the next five years and provide continued support to expand effective and sustainable projects and collaborations.

ABC for Health maintains that the following recommendations be acted upon:

- ✓ Equalize the distribution of public funds. Prioritize the funding to clearly mandate that at least 50% of the funds be directed to improving community public health in Wisconsin.
- ✓ Improve the quality of proposals submitted. AHW must provide comprehensive support and detailed strategies to enhance outreach and assistance to community agencies that seek funds but lack the technical know-how to submit high scoring proposals.





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- ✓ Modify and coordinate the evaluation process for program proposals. Currently AHW emphasizes that an evaluation process should aid in the improvement, effectiveness and degree of impact of funded programs. ABC for Health suggests that AHW and WPP harmonize their review process. Such collaboration could include a review panel with members of faculty of each school, community partners, state or county public health officials, and other key stakeholders. A revised review process gives the two programs an opportunity to fund projects that clearly demonstrate consistency with the state health plan and Wisconsin-focused public health needs.

- ✓ Detail Strategies for Further Community Engagement. ABC for Health looks forward to detailed strategies on how AHW intends to promote community engagement. The plan emphasizes the need for partnerships and recognizes how beneficial collaborations are to communities and scholars. Partnerships allow a variety of ideas to come together and impact programs and communities more effectively.

Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of this conversation and provide comment on this second five year plan.

Sincerely,

ABC for Health, Inc.

Brynne McBride
Assistant Agency Director