



ADVOCACY & BENEFITS COUNSELING FOR HEALTH, INC.
32 N. Bassett St. • Madison, WI 53703 • 608.261.6939 • fax: 608.261.6938 • www.abcforhealth.org

October 31, 2008

Eileen Smith, Director
Wisconsin Partnership Program
UW School of Medicine and Public Health
Room 4221
Health Sciences Learning Center
750 Highland Avenue
Madison, WI 53705-2221
wpp@hslc.wisc.edu

RE: ABC for Health Comments on the Wisconsin Partnership Program 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 WPP 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 funding between the MERC and OAC at 50%. The OAC can exercise its power in the Order of the Commissioner of Insurance and equalize the distribution of these public funds directed towards improving community public health in Wisconsin to 50%.





ADVOCACY & BENEFITS COUNSELING FOR HEALTH

- ✓ Prioritize and Clarify Use of Funds to Transform the School. The plan devotes significant attention to the facilitation of a transformation of the School of Medicine and Public Health with less attention on how the program will directly and indirectly impact the health of Wisconsin populations. While we support the transformation of the school of Medicine and Public Health, we maintain that WPP funds must be prioritized and directed at specific action to improve the health of people in Wisconsin. Funds to transform the medical school and faculty should be drawn from other educationally related funding sources.
- ✓ Detail Strategies for Further Community Engagement. ABC for Health looks forward to detailed strategies on how WPP 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.
- ✓ Improve the quality of proposals submitted. WPP 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.
- ✓ Modify and coordinate the evaluation process for program proposals. Currently WPP emphasizes that an evaluation process should aid in the improvement, effectiveness and degree of impact of funded programs. ABC for Health suggests that WPP and HWPP 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.

Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of this conversation and provide comment on this second five year plan. We will also forward our comments on to the Wisconsin United for Health Foundation and Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin.

Sincerely,

ABC for Health, Inc.

Brynne McBride
Assistant Agency Director