

Virginia Health Information Outreach Planning An Assessment of Health Information Needs in Virginia

With funding from the National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NN/LM), the Virginia Council of Health Sciences Librarians (VaCOHSL) conducted a multi-disciplinary state planning process to further collaboration among stakeholders and to improve access to health information in Virginia. The Virginia Health Information Outreach Planning (VHIOP) team met October 3, 2003. The general purpose of the meeting was:

To facilitate access to a collaborating alliance leading to the timely provision of health information for the benefit of the public, professionals, corporations and state institutions

The goals of the meeting were:

- Assess current status of health information resources and services to health care providers, students, and consumers and assess current status of providers of health information (libraries and librarians) across the Commonwealth.
- Identify unmet health information needs for resources, services, and training and identify an organizational structure to insure effective, ongoing services and resources and successful VHIOP project outcomes.
- Determine actions to meet current and projected health information needs in Virginia and identify potential NN/LM and other funding opportunities.

Key findings were identified.

- Promote awareness of available health information and educate the information user (e. g. providers, public, library staff).
- Train information providers so they are aware of and use available resources.
- Further collaboration among VHIOP participants and other stakeholders to increase awareness of and use of existing health information resources.

VaCOHSL conducted a follow up planning meeting on April 23, 2004 to reconvene the VHIOP planning team and initiate the process for implementing the October findings.

The goals of the April meeting were:

- Provide a format to further collaborations that improves access to and awareness of health information for Virginia residents.
- Establish plans to implement projects that promote awareness and access to available health information.
- Establish plans to train health information providers in Virginia.
- Establish plans to overcome lack of baseline data that is necessary to plan effectively and deliver health information throughout Virginia.

Three projects were identified for action: **INFO-Rx, Resource Directory, and Training.**

INFO-Rx - *The goal is to expand the ACPF/NLM Information Prescription pilot project to more Virginia audiences, including health professionals, consumers, and librarians in Virginia.* As background, Virginia's six-month pilot Information Prescription project provided information and tools to assist physicians in referring their patients to MedlinePlus.gov. The pilot focused on how libraries might promote MedlinePlus to consumers and local health care providers. Health Sciences Library staff conducted

training for public library staff and promoted the project to local physicians, multi-type library groups, and health care clinics. In July 2004, the Virginia INFO-Rx project received a Consumer Health Information Award from the National Commission of Libraries and Information Sciences (NCLIS). The final report of the project may be found on the VaCOHSL web page - <http://www.cbil.vcu.edu/mac/vacohsl/vacohsl.htm>

Future strategies to expand the project by call for additional MedlinePlus training, building upon existing institutional outreach activities, promoting partnerships with Virginia military and professional associations, and tapping into multi-type library structures. Libraries are invited to use the web-based INFO-Rx Tool Kit to participate in the program. The Tool Kit is available at <http://nmlm.gov/hip/infoRx/index.html>.

Resource Directory - *A regional electronic directory of relevant health information resources will be developed and will also serve as a model for a state directory.* Judith Robinson will work with the Tidewater Health Sciences Librarians (THSL) to identify available resources in the Tidewater region and how the resources may be accessed. The team will provide the Directory product for review by VHIOIP and VaCOHSL members.

Training - *Presentations/training sessions will be held at annual conferences and paraprofessional forums such as VLA, VEMA, etc.* The team will create a train-the-trainer program, coordinate the delivery of additional public library courses, and develop a clearinghouse of health related educational courses/materials in Virginia that will also feed into the NN/LM (National Network of Libraries of Medicine) clearinghouse. A health information track is planned for the annual VLA Conference in Williamsburg on October 28. Program titles are: InfoRx and How to Find Reliable Consumer Health Information. Conference information may be found at www.vla.org.

Next Steps - The VaCOHSL executive committee has met to review project implementation and will made a report to members at the October 14, VaCOHSL Business meeting which will be held during the 2004 MAC/MLA Conference in Raleigh, NC. The VHIOIP planning team will reconvene October 28, 2004, in Williamsburg to discuss progress and establish future actions. The final report from the April VHIOIP planning meeting may be found on the VaCOHSL web page at <http://www.cbil.vcu.edu/mac/vacohsl/vacohsl.htm>. Contact VaCOHSL President, [Karen Dillon](mailto:kdillon@carilion.com), at kdillon@carilion.com or 540-981-7258, for more information on health information outreach planning efforts in Virginia.