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AREA-WIDE COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH PLANNING COUNCILS

People of South Dakota are concerned about the availability of health services. Many people, however, feel there isn't a great deal they as individuals can do about the problem. This is not altogether true.

Fragmented Health Services

Health services in this country are provided by a large variety of public and voluntary agencies and private practitioners whose perceptions of community health needs differ, not only from one another but also from those for whom the services are intended. The consumers of health services also have different perceptions depending upon their particular health needs, income or place of residence.

Users of Services on Health Councils

The American system of health care delivery has oftentimes been described as a "non-system". One means of bringing about some order to the system and improving the effectiveness of our existing manpower and facilities is the organization of area-wide comprehensive health planning councils. Such councils; which are being used extensively in other parts of the nation, are just now coming into use in South Dakota. The membership is composed of both providers and users of health services with a majority membership of the latter. Councils serve as clearing houses for all matters relating to health in their areas.

Planning Areas

An area may be defined as a metropolitan city, a part of a state or parts of two or more states. If multi-jurisdictional planning districts have been designated, the boundaries of the health planning area must conform to the district boundaries.

Total Health Needs

Comprehensive health planning is a process which is concerned with the total health needs of the people of the area and the factors which contribute to their physical and mental health along with the healthfulness of their environment. The planning itself is a continuous process, the results of which are arrived at by mutual agreements between those who provide the health services and those who use them.

Specialized Health Needs

Comprehensive health planning differs from functional or specialized health planning in that it considers all health needs rather than focusing upon specified individual needs such as mental illness, sanitation, or hospitals or upon a specific population group such as children, the elderly or the poor. It does not replace the need for specialized planning but seeks to provide a framework for the coordination of such efforts now being conducted by public and private health agencies, boards and associations.

Interdependence of Health Needs

A comprehensive approach to health planning is not only desirable but imperative because the organization and interdependence of specialized health services is such that actions taken in regard to one service or to one geographic area affect other services and areas. Planning can help eliminate costly duplication of services in some areas and gaps in others.

Councils Are Advisory

Health planning councils do not have any authority over providers of health services. They can only recommend specific actions. Their effectiveness is in the representation on the council. If both providers and consumers agree upon specific recommendations, there is a high probability these recommendations will be implemented.

Law Aids Planning Councils

The 1972 legislature passed a certificate-of-need law which strengthened

the effectiveness of health planning councils. The law requires that such a certificate be filed with the State Health Department before any improvements, additions or new health facilities construction costing over \$50,000 can begin. The certificate must be approved by the local health planning council if one exists in the area. The measure is designed to prevent overbuilding of under-used health facilities, or facilities which duplicate services already adequately provided.

Financial Support

Comprehensive health planning councils may be supported on a 50% Federal matching fund basis. Funds are used to hire a staff to collect data and prepare plans as directed by the council. Area-wide health planning councils might also sponsor health training workshops and evaluate community health improvement projects and proposals such as mental health clinics, hospitals, and nursing homes.

Galen Kelsey, Extension Resource Development Agent

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