

VERMONT TOBACCO EVALUATION AND REVIEW BOARD

BOARD MEETING

Wednesday, March 4, 2015

3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Department of Liquor Control

Montpelier, VT

Minutes

Members in Attendance: Amy Brewer, Greg MacDonald, Dawn Fuller-Ball, Lindsay Simpson, Mike Hogan, Scott Connolly, Darlene Peterson, Rhonda Williams, Helen Wagner, Alexi Potter

Guests in Attendance: Rebecca Ryan

February Meeting Minutes

Edits:

Helen asked for a correction to the February minutes to clarify the VDH position pertaining to the proposed VTERB changes that as an agency under the Governor, VDH supports the Governors FY16 budget recommendations. Under other business, bills in the legislature: Fourth bullet should include language “tobacco products.” Last bullet: “building” should be plural. Where Office of the Attorney General in collaboration with DLC is written, should add, “and the Tax Department.”

Helen made motion to approve minutes from February 4, 2015 as amended. Alexi seconded. Voting in favor: AB, GM, DF, SC, DP, RW, HW, AP. Abstaining: LS. Motion passed, minutes approved.

Public Comment

None.

Announcements

Helen shared that the Attorney General reviewed the documents prepared by the VTERB and met with members of the Coalition for a Tobacco Free Vermont (Jill Sudoff-Guerin, Rebecca Ryan, Tina Zuk and John Schullenberger) in late February, resulting in the Attorney General agreeing to contact the VDH commissioner indicating that he feels that the role of VTERB as an independent entity, its financing for the administrator position, and independent evaluation component should remain intact. Subsequent to that meeting he has communicated by email with Representatives Kitty Toll and Mitzi Johnson (House Appropriations Committee) indicating his position. Helen shared the email that the AG sent to the Representatives with Tina Zuk understanding that she would share that email with the other Coalition members who were at the meeting (referenced above) with the thought that they would perhaps send it along to Representative Ann Pugh. The AG also agreed to take a look at a proposed op-ed piece for the Burlington Free Press and Vermont Digger, drafted by the Coalition. It is currently being re-drafted by the Office of the Attorney General and Helen hopes to have it to the Attorney General by the end of the week.

Rhonda shared that VDH heard about CDC funding; there will be a \$51,000 cut, and no additional competitive funding. VDH hasn't yet received written comments from CDC about the application, only verbal strengths and weaknesses, but when they do get the written responses, Rhonda will share them with the Board. Rhonda reminded the Board that when CDC announced their next round of funding, they had less money overall to grant and they changed their funding formula. At that time, the expectation was a 15% decrease. VDH applied for the maximum amount understanding that CDC would determine how much they would provide depending upon elements in the application. Rhonda distributed an updated VDH TCP budget which includes the new CDC award and the reduction of \$45,000 from Global Commitment as is proposed in Governor's FY16 budget proposal. In the competitive funding application, that funding would have provided salary support to currently existing VDH TCP staff, but since VDH did not receive the competitive award from CDC, that salary support had to be shifted back into the MSA budget – approximately \$80,000. A more formal presentation and discussion will be scheduled for the April VTERB meeting. Highlights: reduction to community coalition line by \$40,000. Not to reduce coalition funding across the board which would diminish coalition capacity, but to eliminate funding for one currently funded coalition, based on performance. Reduction of funding to RescueSCG by \$36,000. Reduction of CAI training funding by \$15,000. Eliminate funding to Rutland Regional Medical Center. Increase of funding for evaluation (currently contracting with JSI) by \$25,000.

Rhonda shared rationale for not reducing the threshold of coalition funding below \$40,000. Amy shared concern for potential for two evaluators if VTERB gets restored in the FY16 budget. Rhonda reminded the Board that even with RTI and JSI we still would not be at the 10% CDC recommended minimum for dedicated evaluation dollars. Rhonda built into the evaluation RFP that whoever is selected would be expected to work closely with RTI.

Lindsay Simpson shared that the AOE hired a school-based tobacco use prevention education coordinator, to begin March 5, 2015. Lindsay will send an email to Kate once the staff person is on board, and Kate will forward the announcement to the Board.

Rhonda announced that Sarah Wylie, on the VDH tobacco control team, will be moving to Oregon with her family in October 2015.

Media spring campaign: Down and Dirty

Scott introduced the Down & Dirty spring campaign. The media committee met twice to review this campaign with one round of feedback on both the copy and the media strategy. Media campaign voted to recommend approval of the materials and ad to VTERB.

Rhonda presented information about Down & Dirty including the background for the campaign including the objective, target audience, and reach. It is a social norm change initiative that started in April 2013. The buy includes TV, YouTube, Google and Facebook. Proposed budget for the broadcast of this spot is \$43,400 over 8 weeks, beginning 3/16/2015. Rhonda also shared an evaluation summary with highlights of RSG evaluation of brand awareness with target audience on Facebook. Results show that Down & Dirty has successfully reached at risk country teens. The target audience is aware of the brand and is responding to the brand. This campaign began in Vermont but is now in three states: Vermont, Virginia and Mississippi. This lowers our overall cost for ad development. This

came to be as a result of VDH presentations at CDC and APHA conferences which sparked interest from several states.

Amy asked if we know geographically where the reach is. This may be helpful for coalitions to know. Rhonda says we can see that through geocoding and will ask Rebecca for that data.

Action: Rhonda will ask Rebecca for information on the geographic reach of the Down & Dirty campaign in Vermont.

Alexi asked if we want to ask RTI to develop an evaluation manuscript publication on Down & Dirty? There are significant findings in this campaign that we would want to publish and give ourselves credit for all this good work. We might need an additional contract with RTI for this work. But it is something we could explore, or to consider doing internally. This is a much better candidate for national publication than, for example, the Local Opinion Leader survey work and results.

Helen asked if the success of the campaign is resulting in quantifiable changes in behavior, such as reductions in tobacco product sales and usage as a result of the campaign. Rhonda shared that this will be part of the coming evaluation with JSI. We will discuss this further at next evaluation committee meeting.

Rhonda shared the TV spot (which will be aired on network and cable) for the Board to view.

Dawn shared that this will appeal to many of her students. Lindsay noticed that this targets males more than females. Rhonda confirmed that and said this is deliberate, based on usage rates among young adults being higher among the male population. Alexi said it looks appealing to the target audience and pointed out that she liked in the hunting ad the “visit us facebook.com slash down and dirty life” statement at the end of the spot and wondered if it could be added to this spot or to future ones. Helen agreed. Rhonda acknowledged that Vermont has a higher proportion of Facebook likes than Virginia and wondered if that tag line might be a contributor. Rhonda will bring this idea back to the VDH team.

Helen shared that it would make sense to include females more than they currently appear in this spot. It seems that there may be more of a female presence in the on-line version than would be evident in the TV version. Alexi’s impression is that females wouldn’t necessarily feel excluded from the message. Rhonda said that the research done in Vermont, on which this ad is based, looked the reference points, such as patterning and peer norming, so how RSG uses genders is very intentional.

Scott made motion to approve the Down & Dirty ad and media package as presented. Dawn seconded. Voting in favor: AB, GM, DF, SC, DP, RW, HW, AP. Abstaining: LS. Motion passed. Down & Dirty media spot “True Country” is approved.

Legislative Updates

There are six bills currently proposed:

H.59 An act relating to banning the sale of flavored liquid nicotine

H.93 An act relating to increasing the smoking age from 18 to 21 years of age

H.171 An act relating to restrictions on the use of electronic cigarettes
H.233 An act relating to the taxation of e-cigarettes
H.265 An act relating to raising the cigarette and tobacco products tax rates
H.293 An act relating to compliance testing of tobacco licensees

Coalition for a Tobacco Free Vermont sent out a summary this week with information on other legislative activities which is attached as addendum to these minutes.

Rebecca said there is an additional bill H.416: an act relating to smoking outside places of public access which will ban smoking from within 25 feet of entrances and exits of buildings that are publicly accessible.

Proposed Legislative Changes Discussion

Amy shared the article written by Emerson Lynn in the St Albans Messenger which the Coalition used as a legislative drop. Amy also shared the one-pager on the value of the independent Board and evaluation created by VTERB as well as the memo from the Coalition provided to the House committee on appropriations. Kate met with Representative Keenan in House appropriations. Kate has an invitation to testify on Wednesday March 11 before House Human Services. She is inviting Amy to participate and would like to consider inviting Alexi as an independent voice and evaluation expert. Kate will ask if the committee would like to hear from both Amy and Alexi in addition to Kate herself. Amy said that she attended and spoke at both the VIT public hearing as well as the Franklin County legislative breakfast. Many other opportunities to speak and have conversations with legislators are taking place. Kate and the Coalition can help VTERB members navigate the legislative process should they like to become involved.

Rhonda recognized that with the rise in health care costs and tobacco's role in that and reminded the Board that we've discussed in the past the value of having health care representation on the Board, perhaps in the low income representation seat.

Committee Chair Reports

Media

Scott shared that the media committee has a busy spring schedule and we welcomed a new member of the committee: Rob Williams.

Evaluation

Kate presented the RTI contract scope of work modifications which will shape the work RTI will conduct and complete for the rest of this fiscal year contract (through June 30, 2015). These changes came out the work and recommendations made by the evaluation committee in January and subsequent phone calls with VTERB admin, VDH and RTI. Modifications include:

- monthly conference calls that will address RTI recommendations for 2014-1017 workplan, helping us to gauge our progress toward our goals, and prioritizing evaluation activities as listed in the 2014 site visit.
- a historical 12-year retrospective summary of the VTCP as well as recommendations for reaching our 2020 goals
- no additional cessation evaluation work
- additional support for the AOE particularly with a new staff person on board at the AOE including recommendations for shaping school-based programs based on

CDC guidelines and recommendations, and an evaluation planning matrix and progress monitoring measurements.

Kate handed out the collection of RTI publications that they have published over the years.

Cessation

Greg presented the results of the 802Quits program for 2014. Vermont has an 18% smoking prevalence, but when you break it down into income level the differences are stark. Households with income over \$60k have smoking prevalence of 9% versus households with income less than \$60,000 which have a 29% prevalence of smoking. Among Medicaid recipients Quitline usage was up 52%. Quit-on-line increased by 252%. More Medicaid insured are coming into the Quitline and staying with the services for counseling services. Quit tool orders are also on the rise. In 2013, there were approximately 38 orders a month. After a direct mail campaign in 2014 there were 750 orders, and total for the year was 1500 orders – this is a dramatic increase in orders. Dramatic increase in tablet and mobile phone interaction with 802Quits. **More growth in usage of Medicaid insured than non-Medicaid insured which indicates success in reaching target audience. Growth in every age tier, particularly among 25-34 year old demographic.** These successes are a result of VDH better identifying targets, media more specific in hitting the target audience and partnerships are stronger. Amy reminded us to celebrate that Vermonters who are disproportionately affected are accessing services and staying with quit supports. Robust year for the cessation program!

Rhonda said the slides provided by VDH on cessation successes can be posted on the VTERB website.

Action: Rhonda will share the 2014 cessation data slides with VTERB.

Rhonda shared that VDH is working with the Vermont Department of Human Resources to better reach state employees who are not in the wellness portal. Considering text, direct mail. They are also working on creating tobacco-free treatment facilities and integration of tobacco cessation into treatment. VDH is also working with the Espert program which is a brief intervention to treatment program. Vermont is one of the last of the cohort of 26 states that have Espert funding which is designed to help opiate and alcohol treatment but providers are now saying they want tobacco to be a part of their work and they need more assistance. There are 9 sites in Vermont to help poly-use clients with substance treatment now including tobacco.

Rhonda distributed slides that provide information on the Medicaid benefit expansion and promotion initiative. VDH put in an abstract for APHA, and will start the process of publication.

Meeting adjourned at 4:50pm

**Next meeting April 1, 2015
DLC, Montpelier
3:00pm – 5:00pm**

Tobacco Update – March 2015 (Coalition for a Tobacco-Free Vermont)

Program funding – the Governor has proposed eliminating \$199,000 for evaluation of Vermont's Tobacco Control Program, the tobacco board and board administrator, plus reducing VDH's portion of the budget by another \$45,000. This is something we're definitely fighting against, not the least of which because it violates a three year agreement the Administration made to level fund the program. Working with the Coalition for a Tobacco Free Vermont we submitted written testimony to House Appropriations and testified to the committee as well. We also met with the new Administration Justin Johnson about the issue as well as the tobacco tax. He said he thought the Governor would be more inclined to support the tobacco tax than other taxes being proposed and if we got some money back it should go back into the program. We met with the Attorney General as well. He agreed to send a memo to Appropriations and write an opinion piece expressing his concern over the stripping of evaluation funding and elimination of VTERB as a formal board.

Tobacco tax – We're supporting a \$1.25 increase in the tax. Rep. Till has introduced H.265 to increase the tax by that amount. We met with the House Speaker recently and he said the tobacco tax was "definitely in the mix" in terms of raising revenue. The Ways and Means Committee hasn't discussed this tax but 3 members of that committee – Reps. Till, Clarkson and Branagan are sponsors of the bill. The tax would raise \$14.6 million, prevent 2400 kids from smoking and get 2700 smokers to quit.

E-cigs – The Ways and Means Committee does seem interested in passing a tax on e-cigs. It's expected to generate \$500,000 in revenue. Reps. Till and Branagan are sponsoring this bill as well, H.233. We have not weighed in on this.

Rep. Frank has introduced H.171, which the coalition supports, which would restrict the use of e-cigs in public spaces largely due to concerns over reversing norms we've created against smoking for youth.

Rep. Komline has introduced H.59 which would ban flavored liquid nicotine except menthol.

Other – Rep. Till has introduced H.93 which would require a minimum age of 21 for purchasing tobacco. While this sounds like a good measure, it's something we only support if the three prongs of effective tobacco control – a well-funded program, strong clean indoor air laws and a substantial tobacco tax -- are all in place. Otherwise it's a policy effort that can be a distraction to policy initiatives we know really work.