

## **Meeting Summary**

July 29, 2010 Pompton Lakes Health CAG

In response to the June meeting, DHSS developed a draft template of a survey to be discussed. The meeting began by summarizing the discussion from the June meeting where attendees had expressed the need for a community health survey.

The following topics were discussed:

- Survey design (head of household/census approach)
- Questions are framed in line with two national health surveys (National Health Interview Survey – NHIS- and Behavioral Risk Factor Survey – BRFSS) so the data we collect in Pompton Lakes is comparable to national survey data.
- Target population is current and former residents of current households. This enables one to have a definable denominator for calculating rates by knowing the total number of people in the participating households
- Former residents and issues surrounding the ability to contact all former households. In order to avoid built-in bias, we would need an effective process for defining the population of all former residents.
- Biases – selection, response, interviewer (discussed throughout meeting)
- Data collection methods were discussed (mailed survey to be self administered verses trained interviewers collecting information). Trained interviewers would provide more reliable data. CAG members were opposed to having a community member participate in conducting the survey by either interviewing or collecting personal health information.
- Councilman informed CAG members that the borough is considering hiring a team of scientists/oncologists from Cornell University to conduct a study to determine whether health conditions experienced by residents are due to exposure from DuPont contamination.
- Credibility of surveys in general and concerns over bias, reliability, and accuracy of self reported health conditions.
- Discussed techniques to assess bias resulting from self reporting (by accessing medical records to confirm diagnosis in a sample/subset of completed surveys). Discussed cost issues and the complexities of accessing confidential protected health information.
- What is the purpose/goal of doing a health survey? Different opinions about the merit of conducting a survey and desire to avoid just doing a ‘feel good’ survey.
- Goals expressed were a desire to ‘make the community whole again’ and make DuPont clean up their mess.
- There was a request to expand the health conditions listed on the survey but additional health conditions were not specified. One CAG member asked if we could collect information on gall bladder disease. (Note: the specific list of health conditions can still be determined).
- DHSS provided a handout with population migration characteristics in Pompton Lakes based on the 2000 US Census. At the time of the census survey, 16% of the 10,631 Pompton Lakes residents were renters and 69% of these people lived in their home for less than 5 years. Approximately 33% of all the residents (renters

and owners) had not lived in the same house five years before the 2000 survey date. Of the 8,963 Pompton Lakes residents who owned their homes, more than 50% had lived in the same home for more than 11 years and 30% lived in the same home for more than 21 years.

- Possibility of DuPont funding a health study. There were different opinions expressed by CAG members regarding funding by DuPont. Some members clearly do not want any DuPont involvement in a study, while others would feel comfortable with money being escrowed. The township is willing to further discuss this possibility with DuPont.
- A few CAG members asked about breath and blood tests to assess levels of PCE and TCE in the body. DHSS explained these tests are predominantly used in occupational settings where exposures are extremely high and individuals have been exposed very recently. In addition, these tests are not sensitive enough to detect exposures to low levels of PCE and TCE. DHSS encouraged people to talk to their physicians about their exposure concerns.

Follow up:

- DHSS committed to providing cost estimates for alternative survey designs.