



**Virginia Health Catalyst
Water Equity Taskforce
September 17, 2020 | 10:00 - 11:30 a.m.**

MINUTES

Attending: Tonya Adiches (Virginia Department of Health, Dental Health Program); McAllister Castelaz (Horizon Health Services, Inc.); Nelson Daniel (Office of Drinking Water); Brenda Davy (Virginia Tech, Department of Human Nutrition); Bob Edelman (Office of Drinking Water); Carla Hegwood (Virginia Department of Health); Heidi Hertz (Office of Governor Ralph S. Northam); Emily Keenum (Virginia Early Childhood Foundation); Marty Kilgore (Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth); Terry Lasher (Virginia Department of Forestry); Beth Leftwich (Virginia Department of Social Services); Erin Ling (Virginia Tech, Virginia Household Water Quality Program); Dr. William Mann (Olde Towne Medical and Dental Center); Barry Matthews (Office of Drinking Water); Dwayne Roadcap (Office of Drinking Water); Hannah Robbins (Virginia Foundation for Health Youth); Danny Saggese (Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth); Scott Vogel (Office of Drinking Water)

Staff: Sarah Bedard Holland, Lauren Sawyer, Brita Bergland, Chloe Van Zandt

Meeting video [link](#)

Proceedings:

Desired Outcomes:

- Build consensus on WET's top priorities and areas of opportunity
- Identify areas for funding – research, larger programmatic work that we've talked about

Meeting summary:

- The group reviewed and discussed the new Dr. Rosinger research on disparities in tap water consumption (article attached)
- WET's potential impact lies in affecting the individual barriers to water equity – as a group, we can move the needle on these barriers.
- The group then reviewed the original meeting structure and agreed-upon a group structure moving forward:
 - Water Equity Taskforce (this group): bring issues upfront, share resources, network, review the progress of the workgroups and cross-pollinate information
 - WET Steering Committee: advises the group, will reconvene and include VDH participation when necessary and when bandwidth becomes available
 - WET Workgroups – establish 2 WET workgroups to focus on areas agreed upon by the whole group
 - Staffed by Catalyst, identify a chair, meet every 4-8 weeks, develop their own work plan for their area of focus
- The group then identified two priority areas for 2 workgroups through discussion and voting. The two workgroups are:
 - **Water Communication:** Using CCR's has a lever to promote water trust and literacy.



- **Water Equity in Rural Virginia (WERV):** Looking at rural water use and avoidance through research to understand water coping behaviors. The group will incorporate current VFHY programs and potential for research (water fountains in schools, YStreet water assessments in schools), and the research from VT on rural water equity.

Meeting Minutes:

WET Timeline

- How much has changed since our first WET meeting in December 2019?
 - Online gives us ability to engage with partners who are farther away
- If we don't have accessible, trusted, affordable water that people actually drink, it wouldn't matter if the water was fluoridated
- During COVID, we utilized the framework from the US Water Alliance to dig into research that led to the Water Equity Road Map for Virginia Health Catalyst
 - Two different documents:
 - Overview of WET and why this group exists; promotion to partners not already in the room
 - Comprehensive snapshot of water equity and a framework to improve in VA
- WET mission: all
 - Future projects (bigger focus): water affordability, resiliency for climate change,
- Funded through small part of Maternal and Child Health federal grant from VDH
 - All of you are giving your time and expertise – THANK YOU!

Opportunities

- WET's impact lies in affecting the individual barriers – we can move the needle on these

New Data – Dr. Asher Rosinger (July 2020) – [LINK to ARTICLE](#)

- Significant disparities across water consumption using NHANES data (national survey)
 - Adults living in poverty or are part of a minority group (Hispanic, Asian, NH Black) are much more likely to drink tap water
 - Children of color are less likely to drink water
- Children can start drinking water at 6 months
- Children who do not drink water consume twice as many calories from sugar sweetened beverages – spans across ethnicity groups
- Water quality violations impact perceptions of water quality
 - Ex: Flint, MI water crisis
- Vulnerable communities face the most stress when it comes to water access
 - Intermittant access (turning on and off) particularly affects mobile home communities
- Hannah: does NHANES ask *where* kids are drinking water/SSBs? Is it home, school, etc.?
 - Danny: through Rev Your Bev kids are drinking more SSBs at home (35) than at school (15%). Parents saw it as an economic issue: soda is cheap and if their child isn't going to drink water, they have soda.
 - Emily: doesn't surprise me that they're drinking more SSBs at home.



- Link between water system and the home – if people say “my water tastes funny” is anyone looking at infrastructure in the home, not just public water system
- Bob: Consumers can reach out to have their water tested for quality and taste
 - <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/24694452.2018.1530587?needAccess=true&journalCode=raag21>
 - There’s over 100 regular contaminants in drinking water – how does the consumer know which to look for?
 - Dr Mann: ODW only tests for regulated substances
 - We have the power to be influential in highlighting other substances that aren’t regulated but could be dangerous
- Consumer Confidence Report (CCR): annual water quality report that each public water system is required to send to its consumers to show the quality, contaminants, etc.
 - Hard to read and understand – no standard template
 - Fluoride listed as a contaminant – it’s a good thing to have in your water but is scary to see something unknown in your water as an average consumer
 - Danny: how do we make CCRs accessible and understandable?
 - WET has an opportunity to work with one health district to test low-literacy CCRs with context about what is in the water – help us understand what template is most effective to spread through the state
 - Brenda: national review of CCRs literacy levels are high school (11th grade)
 - Recommendations for CCRs exist
 - Chloe: some are offering CCRs online – no follow-up to understand from community members if this was helpful
 - Danny: Dispel fears about water quality using messages to families in Rev Your Bev
 - Hard to find the answer to seeing if water was safe in SWVA
 - Ask: does the water meet testing requirements? Doesn’t necessarily mean that it’s safe
 - Something must happen between the water system and the home that makes water unsafe
 - Lead in school water fountains

WET Structure and Focus

- WET workgroups to take on the projects
 - WET taskforce (this group today) bring issues up front, share resources, network
 - WET steering committee advises the group (VDH participation)
 - WET workgroups - help pick the workgroup topics!
 - Staffed by Catalyst, identify a chair, meet every 4-8 weeks, develop their own work plan
- If funding becomes available for a pilot project, they can make their own workgroup
 - Applied for funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation with a shovel-ready project idea related to communication – Catalyst will let you know if/when we get this award
- Workgroup focus annotation activity:



- 3 – affordability
- 5 – access
 - What about water fountains available at places other than schools? Paris, France has a really extensive water access network throughout the city (Down the Earth on Netflix)
- 5 – water quality
 - Help failing private wells?
 - Identify emerging contaminants
 - HB1257 and HB586 require VDH to look at PFAs concentration/contamination and propose MCLs
- 2 – policy
- New members to identify: people that work on CCRs
- Bob: there are regulatory requirements for what has to be in a CCR – EPA has a tool to generate a CCR. Meets the basic requirements of the document, but it's not very readable. Differences between CCRs across water systems depends on staff available to write it.
 - No place to publicly see entire state's CCR data. Only large water systems required to submit CCR data electronically
 - Barry: look at small water systems – coupled systems of poor quality and poor CCRs – to have the most impact. Less of an issue with larger systems
- Hannah: best practice model to report your CCR – help streamline the ability for more than one county/water system
 - Brenda's report has recommendations for improving the readability of CCRs
 - Hard to justify implementing this in smaller systems without the staffing necessary
- **Literacy/communications workgroup**
 - CCR: suggestions and workplan regarding this project
 - Building and maintaining trust in water systems
- Should there be another workgroup?
 - McAllister: need more research about why communities aren't drinking water
- VFHY: research project in SWVA about trust in and quality of water in homes, schools
 - Part of Y street youth campaigns will assess their schools
- Erin: project in SWVA about perceptions and use of public and private water supplies
 - Leigh Anne: water coping behaviors – if you don't trust your home water, what do you do instead? SSBs, bottled water, etc.
 - Not always related to actual quality
- **Workgroup 2** (Water coping behavior): understanding the overlap across all topics (policy, access, quality)
 - Includes research component – VFHY pilot project
 - Understanding what we can do to change the perceptions
 - Data here can inform communications workgroup projects
- Establish meeting schedules as workgroups

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 p.m.