

When Communities Speak: The Promise of Health Advisory Boards in Collaborative Health Research

Berkeley Franz, Daniel Skinner, Chantelle Shaw, Keilah Ketron

Health scholars are increasingly recognizing that community collaboration is important for improving population health. One promising community organization that holds potential for accomplishing the goals of increasing community engagement in population health initiatives is the health committee or advisory board. These groups typically represent a sample of local residents that meet regularly to define problems, summon resources, and participate in research and interventions. At the same time, little is known from a scholarly perspective about the current state of health advisory boards in the United States and whether they are suitable sites in which to forge collaborative research partnerships. Using a systematic web-based analysis of publically-available governance documents, follow-up phone calls, and in-depth site visits, this poster presents an overview of health advisory boards in the United States and assesses the wisdom of advocating for an expanded role in community health interventions and as an important site for future community-based participatory research. Information gathered from these documents was organized into a table cataloguing the genesis of these bodies, their organizing principles, logistics such as the election of chairs, setting of agendas, record-keeping and reporting, and the extent to which local residents controlled committees. These findings will inform future planning efforts and produce recommendations for developing a community-engaged research partnerships for improving population health.