

The Friedell Committee For Health System Transformation in Kentucky

Kentuckians are concerned about their ability to obtain health care for themselves, their families and others in their communities. While specific health concerns vary among individual populations, the current fragmented and dysfunctional healthcare system does not meet the needs of the Commonwealth's citizens. From the repeated concerns expressed by Kentuckians that the health care system must have a strong values base, the following principles have emerged:

- 1) Health systems are **accountable to the public** in every aspect of care and resource use.
- 2) Health systems are responsible for **promoting the health of individuals and populations.**
- 3) Health professionals are responsible for providing **safe and effective care**
- 4) Each individual has **equal access to effective care** without regard to race, gender, culture, geography or socioeconomic status.
- 5) Care for each individual is **safe and of high quality.**
- 6) Care for each individual is **affordable.**
- 7) Care for each individual is **efficient and of high** value to recipient and family.
- 8) Patients and families are **treated with respect.**
- 9) **Patient rights** are clearly expressed and honored.
- 10) **Individuals and communities share responsibility** for their health and for the cost of care.

After several years of advocating for inclusion of these values in successive health care reform proposals, and realizing that the existing proposals offered only piecemeal changes without systemic reform, Dr. Gilbert Friedell, Director Emeritus of the University of Kentucky Markey Cancer Center, and Ms. Jane Chiles, former Executive Director of the Catholic Conference of Kentucky, convened a group of individuals in 2005 to consider the issue. The group -- which later became the Friedell Committee -- agreed that these principles should serve as benchmarks against which the present system can be measured, as foundational elements in a transformed system, and as criteria for evaluating the results of system change over time.

The group also agreed at the outset that their objectives could be best served by establishing a statewide committee, modeled after the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, to ensure the inclusion of this set of values in any assessment of the current health system and in any proposed system modification(s). In 2007, after two years of speaking out about this issue and collecting public opinion, the group established the Friedell Committee for Health System Transformation.

The Prichard Committee pioneered the idea of a citizens' committee, rather than one composed of education professionals, to address deficiencies in the Kentucky educational system. That Committee's work over the past 25 years contributed to much of the success in landmark education reform in Kentucky. The Friedell Committee has taken a similar approach in establishing a statewide, non-partisan, non-profit, independent citizens' committee to ensure that health system transformation is values-based. We believe that the Prichard Committee model in general is most appropriate, given the parallels of complexity in both education and health, and the necessity for public involvement in achieving high performance in each of them.

At its outset, the Friedell Committee for Health System Transformation has recruited approximately 50 citizens from different backgrounds and regions, most of them from outside the health field, to meet twice a year. Some have connections to health professionals and organizations, but all serve as individuals and not as representatives of specific organizations. There is an 11 member Board which meets quarterly to set policy and provide oversight. An Executive Committee of 5 members, including the four officers and one at-large member, meets monthly in order to represent the Board between its scheduled meetings and provide guidance and support for the Executive Director.

The Committee's intention is to demonstrate the appropriateness and benefit of using the ten Principles, at both the community and state levels, as a kind of "values audit" when evaluating current and proposed health systems. Working with existing community groups and with the help of other interested Kentuckians, it is paying particular attention to delineating the multiple sub-issues of each Principle in order to operationalize the audits. The Committee will analyze the audit results in order to offer policy recommendations for transforming the health system at the state and local levels.

The current officers are: Gilbert Friedell, President; Jane Chiles, Vice President; Forrest Calico, Secretary; and Richard Heine, Treasurer. The Executive Committee presently includes the officers plus Bob Gray, Nancy Jo Kemper, and Mark Neikirk, Members At-Large. Board members include Charlie Baker, Mark Carter, Sheila Schuster, Joe Smith, and Laurel True.

On the recommendation of the Executive Committee, with the exception of Gilbert Friedell, and endorsed by Board members, the Committee was named the Friedell Committee for Health System Transformation.

The Committee has registered as a non-profit entity with the Kentucky Secretary of State and is applying for recognition as a tax exempt, 501 (c)(3) organization. It is currently included as a tax-exempt organization under the umbrella of the Blue Grass Community Foundation.

We are soliciting private support from individuals and organizations to carry our program forward. Further information can be obtained from Carolyn Dennis, Executive Director of the Friedell Committee for Health System Transformation, at CarolynDennis@FriedellCommittee.org.