



KRISTI SANDS VAN SICKLE

Brevard Healthcare Forum

Offering Better Healthcare through Collaboration

In today's highly competitive healthcare market, there is still one place where Brevard County's major healthcare organizations consistently come together to collaborate.

Each month, the Brevard Healthcare Forum, a countywide coalition of healthcare decision-makers, meets to share data and expertise in order to identify and address the area's most pressing healthcare issues. These decision-makers currently include representatives from Health First, Parrish Medical Center, Wuesthoff Health System, Brevard County Health Department, Brevard Health Alliance, Circles of Care, Inc., Devereux Florida, and the Healthy Start Coalition. The current chair of the Forum is Keith Lundquist, Vice President of Marketing for Health First.

The Brevard Healthcare Forum was initially established in 1995 by Florida Institute of Technology's School of Business to assist the community in obtaining easily accessible, high quality healthcare at reasonable costs. Over time, the organization has broadened its scope to include patient safety and healthcare accessibility. The Forum is now sponsored by Florida Tech's College of Psychology and Liberal Arts.

The Forum's accomplishments since inception, particularly from a patient safety perspective, are numerous. Most notably, the Forum's Patient Safety Task Force:

- Developed a pandemic flu plan for Brevard County that was the first such effort in Florida and the nation
- Trained hospital staff on infant abduction and brokered a countywide agreement to discontinue published birth announcements.
- Standardized the emergency codes used by all of the hospitals in Brevard County, and then statewide.
- Standardized wristband colors used by area hospitals.
- Reviewed best practices in Brevard County related to patient fall avoidance.
- Developed and implemented training program on the prevention of surgical fires

The Patient Safety Task Force is currently pursuing the issue of too few Baker Act beds in the county and assisting the three Brevard County health systems in a joint effort to make all their campuses tobacco-free by the Great American Smokeout on November 20, 2008.

In addition to the data and expertise offered by local healthcare organization leaders to create and implement projects such as those described above, the Brevard Healthcare Forum includes three appointees to the Health Council of East Central Florida, Inc., as well as participation by the Executive Director of the Health Council, Karen van Caulil.

The Health Council of East Central Florida, Inc. is the local health council for Brevard, Orange, Osceola, and Seminole counties, and one of 11 Local Health Planning Councils created in 1982 by Florida Statute, Chapter 408. Local health councils are private, non-profit community health planning organizations governed by boards of directors appointed by County Commissions to represent the concerns of healthcare consumers, providers and purchasers. They serve the residents throughout the State of Florida by performing functions defined by statute, including:

- Collecting and analyzing healthcare data
- Describing community health status
- Identifying healthcare resources
- Collaborating with the community to prioritize healthcare issues of local concern
- Recommending strategies to improve access, affordability and quality of care

In fact, based upon a recent review of health and demographic data, childhood obesity, adult chronic drinking and access to health care were identified as priority issues in Brevard County and the Forum is developing projects or programs to address these areas. The first of


these is a free family fun event called “Get Active! Brevard” cosponsored by the Brevard Healthcare Forum and Brevard County Parks and Recreation to address childhood obesity.

“Get Active! Brevard” is scheduled for 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Saturday, April 26, at the Community Center and surrounding outdoor fields at Viera Regional Park. The event is focused on educating children ages 5 to 12 years and their parents about proper diet, nutrition, exercise and wellness and will provide interactive opportunities for learning and exercise that includes lectures, presentations, a skate park and climbing wall, to name a few.

“The Health Council of East Central Florida has a strong partnership with the Brevard Healthcare Forum. Together, we are actively working to find solutions to a myriad of health planning issues and challenges on behalf of all Brevard residents,” said van Caulil.

Local health councils are strong advocates for improving healthcare for all Floridians. Collectively, health councils provide invaluable information on the healthcare needs in our communities. A recent analysis showed that health councils leveraged an additional \$62.89 in program services for every \$1 invested by the State of Florida.

As we enter another era of budget restraint, Florida’s future rests on our ability to be well informed and make decisions based upon objective and timely data. It is through collaborative relationships such as those among organizations that comprise the Brevard Healthcare Forum and the relationship between the Forum and the Health Council that we are able to maintain critical information links with our communities and collect the necessary data sets upon which to set policy in a cost-effective and thoughtful manner.

 **Author:** Kristi Sands Van Sickle, Psy.D., is the Executive Director of the Brevard Healthcare Forum.



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