

HOUSTON AREA HIV HEALTH SERVICES RYAN WHITE PLANNING COUNCIL

EST. May 5, 1998

REV MAY 14, 2009

POLICY No. 200.03

MEETINGS

PURPOSE

This policy is to establish guidelines by which meetings of the Houston Area HIV Health Services Ryan White Planning Council (RWPC) will abide.

AUTHORITY

The RWPC through adoption of Roberts Rule of Order and bylaws 12/07; Article II; Sec. 2.01-2.01) and by order of the Chief Elected Official of Harris County, ensure that there will be a procedure for meeting(s) conducted by the RWPC.

INTENT

The intent of this policy is to include all citizens who are infected and affected by HIV and who live in the Houston Eligible Metropolitan Area (EMA) in the decision making process.

DEFINITIONS

“Meeting(s)” will be defined as an encounter where two or more people of the RWPC meet to discuss business related to that body and a binding vote is intended to be taken. All meetings will be open to the public (except where noted.) The public is encouraged to participate (see Policy No. 100.01) and will be notified of meetings according to Open Meetings requirements. All meetings of the above mentioned will be held in an environment that will be accessible to all interested parties.

“Standing Committee Meetings(s)” are public meetings. Exceptions to this are hearings conducted by the Grievance sub-committee of the Operations Committee, “personnel issues”, and any other exception allowable under the Open Meetings Act.

“Work Group or Subcommittee Meetings(s)” will be defined as meetings that have been so designated by the Chair of the Council, the Chair of a Standing Committee, or through the recommendation of a member at a regular standing, or sub-committee meeting and agreed to by that body. All finished products by work groups will be viewed by the appropriate Standing Committee prior to submission to the Steering Committee, unless the Standing Committee approves by vote, an alternative submission process.

“Other Committee Meeting(s)” will fall under the definition of Meetings. These are Committee(s) that are part and parcel of Standing Committees. While they are not officially a committee, their function is to carry out the business of the Council. Each of these entities is to conduct meetings in areas that are accessible to the public. The public can make comments about the services that affect them without fear of retribution from any member, or group of members of the Houston Ryan White Planning Council.

FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups do not involve voting and will not be considered open meetings. These are gatherings where individuals are invited to participate in open discussion about services offered in the Houston EMA. Members of the committee that convene the focus groups will be subject to Conflict of Interest guidelines (see Policy #800.01). Participation in focus groups will be according to the approved methodology for a particular focus group, and people who are not appropriate to attend or view the focus group (including Council members) will not be allowed to participate.

If any member of the public feels that s/he has been singled out or denied services based on guidelines specified in a contracting agency(s) agreement with the Administrative Agency (HIV Services), then a grievance can be filed with that agency and/or HIV Services.

ROLE OF THE COMMITTEE CHAIR

It is the role of the chair of any committee to facilitate the discussion and reach a majority or consensus of the group. It is important that when there is not a clear majority or consensus in committee meetings that a majority and minority report be given to the body which authorized that committee to convene. It is imperative that all members of the committee be allowed to express his or her concerns. The chair is to be fair and impartial.

ROLE OF THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

It is the responsibility of each member of any committee to first identify if there is a conflict of interest violation. If so, this member must state that by holding up the red flag (see Policy No. 800.01). If a committee member is the service provider of the topic under discussion, it is imperative that this member listen objectively to comments or concerns both negative and positive from the public, other council members or agents of the Administrative Agency. Each member of the Council has the power to enact a grievance if the need arises (see Policy No. 1000.01). Let this policy remind committee members that the Houston Area HIV Health Services Ryan White Planning Council will abide by confidentiality guidelines as set forth in the most current Ryan White Program and health and safety codes of the Federal Government and Texas Department of State Health Services.

TELECONFERENCING AT MEETINGS

Due to unusual circumstances, such as illness or travel, Council and committee members are allowed to participate in a Ryan White committee meeting via telephone as long as the Office of Support has access to the technology needed to accommodate such a request. Regarding Council meetings, members may not use teleconferencing to participate in a full Council meeting except under unusual circumstances, such as severe weather or a public health emergency (for example an outbreak of the flu). In this situation, the Office of Support, in consultation with the Chair of the Council (or the Vice Chair and then Chair of the Operations Committee if the Chair or Vice Chair is unavailable), will decide if members can participate in a full Council meeting via conference call, again depending upon the availability of the technology needed to accommodate the call. Due to the limited technological capability of conference calling, Council members will be included in the call on a first come, first serve basis. In this unusual situation, the general public will be encouraged to submit public comment through fax or email, they may listen to the conference call at the location where the staff will be in attendance, and/or they may request a digital copy of the recorded proceedings (if available) or a paper copy of the meeting minutes after the meeting has taken place.