



Maternal and Child Health Access

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MCH Access Monthly Meeting

Thurs., March 18 10 AM – 12 noon

1111 W. 6th St., Fourth Floor, LA, 90017

Park in back, entering two-story parking on 5th St.

Updates: Newborn enrollment, MCH legislation, Medi-Cal “reform”

Mini-training on advocacy, common problems and errors in Medi-Cal, Healthy Families

Invited: guest speaker on Pediatric Dental issues

In this mailing:

- **March 18** –Town Hall Meeting on health care
- **March 25** – March for Children!
- **10 things to do** to protect immigrant programs
- **Feb. 9 Orange Co Register and Feb. 23 LA Times** - CHDP Gateway and newborns
- **March 5 Update**, MCH Access – see below
- **Feb. 19** – *SF Chronicle*, “Health care storms blowing from Sunshine State” about waits for Florida’s “KidCare” program, as proposed here
- **New income levels** for programs, effective 4-1; on back, new ORSA (LA County) income levels
- SB 1275 (Ortiz) information and sample letters
- **New 2004 Breastfeeding Resource Handbook**

Materials - meeting 2-19-04 (call for copies):

- *LA Business Journal* 1-26- 2-1-04, “Doctors in Distress: Cuts May Cause More to Halt Treating Medi-Cal Patients”
- March of Dimes press release 2-3-04, “Premature Birth Rate in US Reaches Historic High: Now Up 29% Since 1981”
- 1-2-04 letter to DHS hospital CEOs about NICU consolidation in LA County
- Comparison SPA 4 and 6 NICU-related stats
- Parenting classes at Breesee Community Center
- Public Notice for 3-4 Tenet hearing
- Quality Care Coalition letter to Tenet
- Quarterly reporting for Food Stamps/Cash Aid coming in June this year!
- Immigrant programs – 10 things you can do; sample letter, “immigrants are Californians, too!”
- Contact information for Board of Supervisors
- Information on ordering “African American Fetal and Infant Deaths, 1998-2000” should be on LAC/DHS website soon.

- Emergency contraception survey - slow start
- SCPHA Annual Conference registration
- JAMA 2-11-04, Health Disparities Report
- Save the Date – May 17 Immigrant Day
- March 5 - State Hearing on Ending Poverty
- SB 1275 (Ortiz) information and sample letters
- Flyer for March on 3-25, “Say YES to children”

Guest Speaker: Lark Galloway Gilliam, Community Health Councils and Coalition for Quality Health Care: Tenet Hospital Sale

The Coalition for Quality Health Care is a group of organizations that has coalesced in response to the announced sale by Tenet Health Corporation of 19 hospitals in California: 14 in Los Angeles County comprising 3000 beds, 4 in Orange County with 760 beds and one in San Pablo.

Tenet is the second largest hospital chain, formed when National Medical Enterprises merged with AMI. They own 36 hospitals in California and had as many as 41 at one time.

It is unclear by when they want to sell these hospitals – by June or by December has been rumored. They were doing well, with record profits, but the need to sell may be a result of their problems with investigation in to their Medicare practices and a decline in their stock price. They have consolidated - buying up hospitals and then closing down the less profitable. Tenet does NOT cite the nursing shortage, but rather, the need for seismic retrofitting. However, all of the hospitals were purchased after the retrofitting requirement was passed, so Tenet should have known the need and the cost, and it is unclear if that is the real issue, since most of the hospitals have received extensions on the deadlines for meeting the seismic requirement. Many of the hospitals are

profitable. Lark distributed a chart showing the types and levels of care provided at each of the threatened hospitals, the profit for each hospital and other attributes. Ten of the hospitals are maternity hospitals, with five NICUs among them. The Coalition has recommendations for the state: that a law be passed limiting hospital ownership; that a charity care requirement be instituted and that hospital consolidation be addressed. The group is attempting to meet with Tenet and develop a public oversight process for the sales. A county Emergency Medical Services hearing (required by state law whenever an emergency room closes) will be held March 4 at the Hall of Administration. For more information, see CHC's website: www.chc-inc.org or call (323) 295-9372.

Problems at Single Point of Entry for Joint Medi-Cal/Healthy Families Apps - Celia Valdez

Celia spoke about an upcoming meeting among advocates and MRMIB representatives. The company that processes the applications in Sacramento changed at the end of last year, from EDS to Maximus. The lead-up to the change occurred from October to December of last year; however, problems continue into 2004. The types of problems are:

- Health-e applications lost or never processed
- Mailed-in applications lost or never processed
- Incorrect documentation requested
- Applications erroneously rejected

The above affect mostly Healthy Families, as the Medi-Cal processing takes place at the counties. Receipt of the Medi-Cal applications was delayed at the County level and some were lost.

- The site where payments could be made in person changed from Rite Aid to Western Union. However, some Western Unions are charging folks (only CERTAIN Western Unions participate for free to the enrollee).

- Problems with the 800 number (busy, voice mail that verifies applications says only "pending" about all applications, etc.)

MCHA and other advocates developed an appeal form that was distributed. The appeal form "problem report" on the MRMIB website (in the "Frequently Asked Questions" section) may also be used; however, it does not include a place to request payment for medical expenses that may have been incurred when an application was lost or erroneously rejected. MRMIB has indicated they will pay medical expenses when they can be shown to be at fault for the lack of coverage.

Update: MRMIB is working on problems on a case-by-case basis. Contact Larry Lucero and cc' to Janette Lopez: llucero@mrmib.ca.gov; jlopez@mrmib.ca.gov. They should get back to you rapidly; let Celia know of the problem as well. Advocates are pushing for MRMIB to address the problems more proactively and systemically.

Breastfeeding issues/Update – Luz Chacon

Luz presented information on SB1275 by Senator Deborah Ortiz, "The Right to Informed Infant Feeding Choices". It was submitted as a spot bill so the current language is minimal and contains a misprint regarding the nurse training component. As amended, the bill will *recommend* that nurses receive evidence-based training on breastfeeding and the safe preparation of formula and appropriate bottle-feeding techniques. The bill would also restrict formula marketing in hospital maternity units. The bill focuses on reducing two of the key barriers that occur during the early postpartum period: lack of adequate assistance and aggressive formula marketing practices. Luz distributed a fact sheet on SB1275, a supporter form and sample letter of support and urged people to send letters to Senator Ortiz (enclosed). As an example of another breastfeeding barrier, Luz discussed an incident wherein an MCHA client was asked by an MTA bus driver to stop breastfeeding. Section 43.3 of the California Civil Code grants women the right to breastfeed in any public location. Despite this law, many women still get harassed. MCHA is following up on this case with the MTA and Breastfeeding Task Force. Call Luz if you also have such MTA examples.

King-Drew NICU issue: MCHA, Great Beginnings for Black Babies, Community Health Councils, PAC/LAC, Mothernet and others are trying to learn more about the NICU issues at King-Drew and form a response. We are concerned about: the way the planning took place for decisions about NICU consolidation in LA County and lack of community input. We are also learning about the differences between the NICU at King-Drew and that at Harbor-UCLA, which has been said could accommodate all infants requiring intensive care in the area while King-Drew is downgraded from a Regional to an Intermediate NICU. It is our understanding that prior to such a downgrade, a Beilenson hearing will be held specifically about the NICU. To become involved, call Lynn at (213) 749-4261.