

News from Maternal and Child Health Access



MCH Access Welcomes "WELCOME BABY!"

The new mom is 18, a first-time mother to a premature baby. Mom very much wants to breastfeed and is working hard to help her small, tired and developmentally immature newborn overcome her birth challenges. Mom faces challenges of her own, living with several family members in a crowded apartment, sharing a room, and taking public transportation to get to and from her many appointments. The baby booties we provided in our gift layette help warm baby's cold feet, especially important since "preemies" can have difficulty regulating their body temperature. The support and encouragement of the home visitor is helping during these rough few days and weeks of accommodating to a new baby.



point. The various engagement points present a unique difference and logistical challenge compared with other home visitation models that enroll women either prenatally OR at birth. Given our beliefs about the window of opportunity that prenatal care provides to address issues, the evidence of the importance of the prenatal period for decision-making about breastfeeding, and the environmental and developmental influences

during pregnancy, we are pleased to be able to work with women and their families prenatally. We approach families from a standpoint of empathy and understanding of the central role parents play in their child's development.

It is only appropriate that our initial newborn visit would illustrate so perfectly both the need and the value of the new Best Start LA/Welcome Baby! home visitation program. Preterm births are on the rise, and the national and worldwide economies are suffering, with Los Angeles already an expensive place to live. Families have doubled and tripled up for some time, even before the economic downturn worsened the situation for the working poor and poor. We know with education and support, families can achieve their goals for how their babies are raised, fed and nurtured. But the challenges are many, even for those with steady jobs and strong emotional support.

The program will offer two prenatal visits, a hospital visit, a visit by a nurse within 72 hours of discharge from the hospital, a check-in phone call at two weeks post-discharge and visits at roughly one, four and nine months of age. We feel grateful to be able hire nurses and other home visitors during a time of economic recession and hope to employ from the community surrounding California Hospital as much as possible. Another key feature of our program is the opportunity for new home visitors to learn from two longstanding community agencies that have offered home visitation for decades: Maternal and Child Health Access and the Hope St. Family Center at CHMC. Teams of home visitors and nurses will be placed at both sites and learn from the ongoing programs there.

The first 5 LA-funded Welcome Baby! home visitation program is situated within "Best Start LA," part of First 5 LA's engagement of families as key catalysts in molding and transforming the broader environments experienced by their children. Best Start LA will work in partnership with families and other stakeholders to prioritize and develop solutions for transforming communities into pregnancy-, baby- and toddler-friendly environments. Para Los Niños is the contractor for the Best Start LA initiative. Maternal and Child Health Access (MCHA) and California Hospital Medical Center (CHMC) were awarded a five-year contract for Welcome, Baby! earlier this year. Home visits started after months of hiring, program development, and training. Although First 5 has funded home visitation in the past, MCHA and CHMC are honored to be the pilot for this new, universal model. MCHA is pleased to have hired Luz Chacón as Program Director, an experienced public health, breastfeeding and health education specialist.

Since our goal is to try and reach most women prenatally, our community partnerships are key. Designed as a community collaborative, MCHA welcomes the opportunity to work in partnership with providers delivering at CHMC and those offering services in the area. These include the Women, Infants and Children's (WIC) supplemental program and Esperanza Community Housing Corporation, to provide pregnant and parenting women who deliver at CHMC with universal access to primary health prevention, parenting education, breastfeeding education, insurance enrollment assistance, and community services. Due to the sheer volume of enrollment, the program will need to leverage existing community services. We will help women who may have been lost to prenatal or pediatric care to get back to their providers and help them reach new services or continue services for a broad range of issues, but we believe our biggest impact will be in perinatal depression, breastfeeding support, environmental home safety and security and identifying normal growth and development.

Welcome Baby! (the exclamation point is part of the title) will offer a set of services to nearly all women giving birth at CHMC. In 2007, CHMC delivered over 4,500 infants from over 60 community providers. Women will be recruited at three "entry points" – at two points prenatally and in-hospital after birth – with the option to decline participation at any

For more information about the program as it develops, see our website or contact:
Luz Chacón, MPH, CLÉ, Director, Welcome, Baby!
(213) 749-4261 ext. 303.

FOOD STAMP ENROLLMENT AND HEALTH

One of the joys of working at Maternal and Child Health Access (MCHA) is that everyone here loves food. We love to talk about food, eat food and above all, share food. At lunch hour we meet around the table, taste each other's cooking and swap recipes. Eating and sharing food is not only a basic physical need, it is also what brings us together and reaffirms our communal, cultural and familial bonds.

It is only natural that we would be just as concerned with our clients' access to affordable and healthy food as we are with their access to health care. For years, our Perinatal Outreach and Education Program has provided referrals to local food banks and emergency food vouchers. Most importantly, we have offered classes where parents discuss food issues, learn new and reaffirm traditional, healthy shopping and cooking habits and participate in hands-on food preparation workshops.

Food insecurity has always been an issue for many of the low income families who come through our doors. High rents and low wages have for years created an economic environment in central Los Angeles where families are often forced to choose between paying the rent and buying food. Many families could qualify for assistance through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP- formerly known as Food Stamps); however, due to barriers such as illiteracy, stigma and complicated application and documentation requirements Los Angeles County has historically had a low food stamps participation rate. In fact, only 50% of eligible households in Los Angeles participate in SNAP.

In fall 2008, Maternal and Child Health Access received a grant from the California Association of Food Banks to begin a food stamps outreach program. Partnerships with non-profit organizations have proven to be an efficient and user-friendly way to increase participation in SNAP, which injects federal dollars directly into our local economy. The Department of Agriculture released a letter in November this year recommending that

states partner with local non-profit organizations to provide assistance to potential applicants.

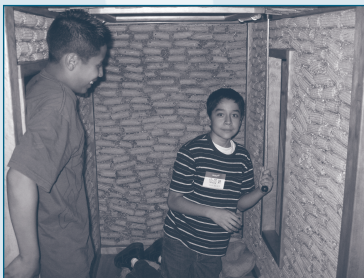
We are able to assist families to complete the application, making sure the supporting documentation is accurate and in order. We follow up on the application until it is either approved (85% in our program) or legitimately denied (15% in our program). We also assist clients who already have food stamps with annual recertification and quarterly reporting requirements, barriers that cause many participants to fall off of the program.

We began our food stamps outreach program just at the economy plunged into recession. The USDA just released new data indicating that 49.1 million people nationwide live in food insecure households, up from 32 million in 2007. Half of all children in the U.S. will have been on food stamps at some point in their lives.

In the past, many of our clients struggled accessing food stamps because they could not read or fill out the 18 page application, or had trouble navigating the documentation requirements. It gives us great satisfaction knowing that families can come to a place that they trust and receive accurate and professional information and assistance as well as continued follow up and advocacy. In addition to individual advocacy with clients, our participation in food stamp outreach makes us better advocates for food stamp simplification and system changes that could improve the number of people accessing food support. Just as we believe that access to health care is a fundamental human right, so is access to good quality, affordable food to nourish our communities.

1. Food Research and Action Center: Snap Access in Urban America, A City By City Snapshot, <http://www.frac.org/pdf/urbanfoodstamps09.pdf> Sept. 2009.
2. Economic Research Service, United States Department of Agriculture: http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodSecurity/Stats_Graphs.htm
3. Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine: <http://archpedi.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/abstract/163/11/994>

FALL TRIP TO THE SKIRBALL CULTURAL CENTER



It is not often that families from our area attend museums with their children and rarer still that they attend when the museum is open especially for them. This was the opportunity provided in October by the Skirball Cultural Center's Weekend Community Group program. A group of about 60 parents, children and MCHA staff were personally guided through the Skirball Center's Noah's Ark Exhibit. It was a wonderful first-time experience for the children, who were completely mesmerized by the interactive installations and animal puppets made of recycled materials from the animal's countries of origin. The families heard an amazing story of the flood told by a Master Storyteller, received a personal guided tour,

were able to play with and manipulate the animals and the wind and the rain and make an art project at the end. The children couldn't believe the giraffe, pictured here, was so incredibly large animal and that they themselves could make it move!

Two of the moms whose children are very shy and who usually don't participate in anything in public were pleased when they found a musical group playing percussion that invited the kids to play along. They had a lot of fun dancing to the music.

The trip was made possible by the Skirball Cultural Center's Weekend Community Group Program, by Councilman Ed Reyes, whose offices provided the bus for the trip and by Subway restaurant, who discounted lunches for the group. Thanks to everyone involved for a fantastic, never-to-be-forgotten visit!



Our Heartfelt Thanks to Our Most Recent Contributors and Grantors:

Our apologies for any misspellings or omissions. Please call (213) 749-4261 or info@mchaccess.org with corrections.

- Baby 2 Baby
- Berke Family Foundation
- California Association of Food Banks
- California Community Foundation
- California Consumer Protection Foundation
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- The Commonwealth Fund
- The David and Lucile Packard Foundation
- United Way of Los Angeles – Emergency Food and Shelter Program

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Wish List {Our United Way donation number is 595702 for workplace giving.}

- Holiday gifts for families, such as gift cards for food or department stores, blankets and children's toys.
- Educational toys, children's books in Spanish and English, art supplies, school supplies
- Sewing machines that work well or need only small repairs
- Digital camera
- New or gently used maternity or baby/children's clothing
- Beds that include mattresses still in good shape (often our clients sleep on the floor)
- Small color printers
- New or gently used bedding/towels
- Childproofing items: locks, table corners, cabinet closures, plug covers
- Desks and office chairs in good condition
- Storage site for donated furniture (near downtown)
- New or gently used slings or other baby carriers
- Childproofing items: locks, table corners, cabinet closures, plug covers
- Desks and office chairs in good condition
- Office supplies: paper, toner, pens, staples, you name it
- Household items
- Yarn for knitting, craft supplies, fabric or gift certificates to stores with these items, such as Joann's, Michael's, or Michael Levine's
- Bookcases
- Sturdy cardboard file boxes
- Professional photography for our office, brochures and newsletters.
- Small gifts (\$5-10) to use as prizes at our health education classes
- Computers in good condition

For our offices...

- Small round office tables
- Desks and office chairs in good condition
- Bookcases
- Sturdy cardboard file boxes
- Computers in good condition

Maternal & Child Health Access

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mch Advocate

Have enough stuff?

Ask friends and family to donate to MCH Access!



We will send them a wonderful holiday (or other occasion) card of the beautiful mural hanging in our office, "Imagining Tomorrow", shown above. This mural was a project of our Women's Collective, working with Jose Ramirez, a prominent Los Angeles artist. The women attended workshops to learn design, drawing, perspective and painting skills and painted with their babies in slings or playing alongside. We have created a non-denominational card and can craft the message to your specifications.

See our website to direct a donation in honor of someone special, www.mchaccess.org, or use the envelope in this mailing. After December 22 or if out of state, the card may not arrive by Christmas.

COLECTIVA ITEMS FOR SALE!

See our website for dates and times of area sales, or come into our office on/before Dec. 23. We have aprons, trendy tote bags and more! All of the items are handmade by women who meet to create, gain support from each other and from MCHA and who sell the items at craft fairs and other venues. For more information, see the article in our Fall, 2004 newsletter <http://www.mchaccess.org/pdfs/newsletters/MCHA-Newsletter-Fall-2004.pdf> or contact MCH Access at (213) 749-4261

Thank you!