

News from Maternal and Child Health Access



MCHA Advances Access to Oral Health for Pregnant Women and for Children: **THE ORAL HEALTH ADVOCACY PROJECT**

I imagine you are pregnant and in pain from a hole in your tooth that causes headaches so severe that you take medication to relieve the pain, even though you're not sure you should.



I imagine you have a six year old with tooth pain. Now imagine that your husband recently lost his job, and with it, your family's dental insurance.

In Los Angeles County, dental disease is one of the largest unmet health care needs for pregnant women. In 2010, periodontal disease affected almost one in five women, higher than gestational diabetes and hypertension.

Imagine you are pregnant and in pain from a broken tooth - you describe the pain as a "10". You are told you may need a root canal and a crown but that Medi-Cal may not cover it and the services will cost hundreds of dollars; and then you are told that the services indeed are covered, but that it will take a month to get authorization from Denti-Cal and that you should try not to break the tooth because the dentist would then have to extract the rest of it.

Now imagine being pregnant, poor, and 18 years old with six cavities that need filling. Your dentist tells you she can only fill three. In 2006, over 50% of pregnant women in Los Angeles had oral health problems during pregnancy; yet over 30% of them did not see a dentist.

These real-life stories come from the hundreds of low-income pregnant women that Maternal and Child Health Access (MCHA) serves every year. We advocate on behalf of each woman, and the issues the women and their children experience are the basis of our work to advance improved policies for oral health access for pregnant women and families. Recognition is growing of the connection between oral health and overall health, and between oral health and specific diseases and conditions.

(Continued on Page 2)

Imagine that you have a 14 year-old child with a chipped front tooth. He may need a crown or implant, and you are told your Medi-Cal won't cover that. Your child is embarrassed and does not want to go to school without a tooth.

Imagine that you have a nine year-old child with autism who has a cavity, may need a root canal done and needs to see a dentist who can sedate. One person tells you Medi-Cal doesn't cover this. The agency that works with your child has not been helpful. Then you find out that because your child must be seen in a hospital that a number of authorizations are needed from your child's medical plan, even though his dental care is not in a plan. Now imagine that your child is in pain - and has been for six months.

When MCHA talks to the state agency that can get your daughter back to her dentist, the state representative says that you signed a form at a clinic. You remember that you signed the form, but didn't know that it meant you could not keep your child's dentist and would be subject to waits you had not experienced before. The state representative says this happens all the time.

MCHA provides education to our clients on the importance of good oral health and advocates for services - individually through case management, in our weekly classes and with dentists. Each February, during National Children's Dental Health Month, our monthly community meeting focuses on oral health.

(Continued on Page 2)

ORAL HEALTH ADVOCACY PROJECT (Cont'd from page 1)

Pregnant Women Continued from Page 1

For pregnant women, this connection is critical; gum disease has been linked to low birth weight and premature birth, the leading cause of death in the first month of life. This evidence prompted MCHA to begin working on expanding access to dental care for low-income pregnant women in 2001. In 2005, MCHA successfully sponsored legislation that expanded dental benefits to more women.

Despite recent cuts to adult dental care, pregnant and postpartum women with Medi-Cal (dental benefits known as Denti-Cal) continue to be eligible for pregnancy-related services, and services for conditions that might complicate the pregnancy. According to Assembly analyses, the State Department of Health Services' estimated in 2005 that for every dollar spent on dental cleanings and basic treatment for pregnant women, \$1.11 to \$1.35 is saved by avoiding neonatal intensive care services for premature babies.

Too often misconceptions about oral health care during pregnancy prevent prenatal care providers from referring pregnant women for care and dentists from treating pregnant women. Health care providers and dentists are not always well informed about what services Medi-Cal covers for pregnant women and it can be difficult to find a dental provider that is both willing to treat pregnant women and accepts Medi-Cal insurance.

For all of these important reasons, MCHA started the Oral Health Advocacy Project in 2009, a partnership with the Community Clinic Association of Los Angeles County (CCALAC). The project is funded by a First 5 LA Community Opportunities Fund grant, and in the past by a grant from California Hospital Medical Center's Community Fund, with the goals of:

- Improving access to needed oral health benefits for low-income children and pregnant women.
- Providing outreach and technical assistance to low-income pregnant women and to dental providers who accept Medi-Cal.
- Gathering and analyzing available data related to access barriers and utilization of dental services.
- Monitoring the provision of dental benefits for low-income and other pregnant women, particularly given upcoming health reform changes.

The Project addresses policy and programmatic barriers that impede access and provision of oral health services. Some of our accomplishments in the nearly four years of our project include:

- Individual advocacy and assistance for hundreds of women and children.
- Expanding the scope of dental services covered by Denti-Cal and Medi-Cal: After painstaking analyses and comparisons of Denti-Cal Provider Bulletins containing both Medi-Cal aid codes (which populations are covered) and dental procedure codes

(Continued on Page 3)

Children Continued from Page 1

Throughout the year, we give out toothbrushes and dental coloring books and materials. Our health education classes are usually full to overflowing; a recent topic addressed, "Preparing your child for his/her first dental visit." We have embraced and spread the idea of having a first dental exam by "first tooth or first birthday" as an easy-to-remember health message.

However, access to oral health care can be difficult in Los Angeles for low-income people. MCHA advocacy assists families experiencing extreme difficulty accessing dental care through Denti-Cal (fee-for-service dental care) and dental managed care plans. The vast majority of children enrolled in Medi-Cal are enrolled in fee-for-service and about 15% are in dental managed care plans. However, the state is moving children from the Healthy Families program into Medi-Cal beginning in March in Los Angeles and in January elsewhere in the state and for new applicants.

We expect the numbers of children enrolled in dental managed care to swell.

Under a state "pilot program," only two counties in California offer dental managed care for Medi-Cal recipients: Sacramento where it is mandatory and Los Angeles where it is optional. The Center for Health Reporting investigated dental managed care and found that few poor children enrolled in managed care have visited a dentist, "Managed care leaves many LA Kids desperate for dental care", <http://centerforhealthreporting.org/article/managed-care-leaves-many-la-kids-desperate-dental-care901>. Moreover, fewer children in Los Angeles than in Sacramento visited a dentist (25% average in

(Continued on Page 3)

Vera, a prenatal patient at a nearby clinic, called MCHA to let us know that during a recent appointment she asked about dental benefits during pregnancy and was told that Medi-Cal didn't cover any such benefits.

However, while waiting in the prenatal exam room she saw our pregnancy poster, took a picture of it with her cell phone, and later on called MCHA to get more information about the benefits!



Pregnant Women Continued from Page 2

(which services are covered), MCHA staff identified important services for certain pregnant women that had been omitted in the bulletins. We began working with the Department of Health Services Denti-Cal division to restore oral health benefits to thousands of women. In addition, MCHA advocated for access to additional services not listed but needed to ensure healthy birth outcomes (see article: <http://www.first5la.org/articles/mcha-id-s-medi-cal-glitch-saving-dental-benefits-for-pregnant-women#.UHxGYNxfNog.email>).

- **Clinic policies:** We are working with CCALAC to encourage their clinics to endorse policies and procedures to address oral health for pregnant women.
- **Materials:** We have distributed hundreds of sets of Provider Bulletins explaining dental benefits, charts to simplify understanding of Medi-Cal codes and dental benefits, and thousands of posters featuring pregnant women. These materials are posted on our website or can be ordered.

SURVEY OF DENTISTS: We conducted a survey of nearly 1600 dentists and dental offices about whether they accepted pregnant women as patients, Denti-Cal barriers, and perceived issues with oral health care for pregnant women. A poster order form and information about the Provider Bulletin explaining dental benefits was included with the survey. From this survey, we added more providers interested in seeing pregnant women to our referral lists, clarified with individual dental offices misconceptions about dental care for pregnant women, and learned about billing and other barriers that may deter dentists from joining Denti-Cal. This information will be shared with the state and dental working groups in Los Angeles.

CONSENSUS CONFERENCE: MCHA is also planning an Oral Health Care for Pregnant Women Consensus Conference in 2013 in Los Angeles to bring together the prenatal and oral health provider communities about the need to ensure pregnant women receive preventive care currently allowed and easier access to treatment when needed.



parenting and art classes throughout the spring and summer of 2012. MCHA paired Zumba classes with healthy food demonstrations; since one of the classes fell on Mother's Day in Latin America (May 10), participants took the opportunity to talk about what they love about being a mom. Many said the parenting classes provided taught them ways of parenting they never experienced as children.

Children Continued from Page 2

Los Angeles County visit vs. 31% in Sacramento), even though in Los Angeles children may leave dental managed care and enroll in fee-for-service Medi-Cal. One of the families assisted by Monica Ochoa, Oral Health Advocacy Coordinator, agreed to share their story with the reporter to help expose the many access barriers children and families face when enrolled in a dental managed care plan.

In response to the dismal dental care access, MCHA and our grant partner, the Community Clinic Association of Los Angeles County (CCALAC), have proposed action plans for better state oversight of dental care quality for low-income children. In addition, we are working to improve access and capacity at community clinics to quality oral health care for children and pregnant women. MCHA has hosted the state-sponsored Los Angeles Dental Stakeholder Meeting monthly on the second Thursday of the month.

In addition, Lynn Kersey, Executive Director of MCHA, and Tina Kim, Policy Specialist at CCALAC, testified November 9 at an Assembly Budget Subcommittee on Health and Human Services hearing, "An Examination of Dental Care for Children Enrolled in Medi-Cal and Healthy Families in L.A. County":

<http://abgt.assembly.ca.gov/sites/abgt.assembly.ca.gov/files/Nov9-Kids%20Dental%20Care%20in%20L%20A%20.pdf>.

Ms. Kersey testified that parents are not given enough information about their child's coverage, noted how the state could increase parents' knowledge, described the barriers to care for low-income families and the marketing abuses that cause parents to sign up for managed care without their knowledge, and discussed the need for pediatric dentists.

For more information about the Oral Health Advocacy Project, and for additional resources, see our website or contact **Monica Ochoa, Coordinator, at Monicao@mchaccess.org (213) 749-4261 ext. 360.**

MCHA unveils New Mural In Childcare

With the support of a Best Start Metro Los Angeles Collaborative Partner Project grant last summer, MCHA conducted nutrition, exercise, non-violent

parenting and art classes throughout the spring and summer of 2012. MCHA paired Zumba classes with healthy food demonstrations; since one of the classes fell on Mother's Day in Latin America (May 10), participants took the opportunity to talk about what they love about being a mom. Many said the parenting classes provided taught them ways of parenting they never experienced as children.

In addition, childcare and weekly educational class participants designed a mural based largely on childhood memories growing up. Many of them immigrants, the mural depicts scenes of farming and rural life. There were a lot of ideas about agriculture, the symbols of the women's culture and traditions, the fields where many of them worked as children and young adults, and memories of their childhood.

A celebration was held for the artists: art student Manuel Lopez from East Los Angeles College and former MCHA case manager and artist and professor Dolores Carlos. Manuel Lopez came back to classes later in the summer to teach art to the children and draw some portraits.

At the mural unveiling, Ms. Carlos noted, "It doesn't matter the age or education of someone to be able to learn something – we are all teachers."

Sounding Out Success – One Client's Story

Roxana has been a part of MCH Access since our beginnings in 1996. She came to us when her daughter was a few months old. She is a single mother who raised two children in the United States, her girl, who is now 17, and a younger son, 15. Roxana came from a small village in Guatemala, fleeing the father of her four children there. She had her first child at about 14. She told MCHA staff that the children's father was abusive and she came to the U.S. "running for her life."

Roxana had to come alone, leaving her four kids behind with the father, and suffered many traumas along the way. Eager to learn and make a new life, she participated regularly in health education classes, attended nearly every MCHA field trip, and came to us with her problems - which over the years have been many. Two of her children came up from Guatemala but as noted in recent books and documentaries, the reunification in the new US culture is often difficult at best.

Roxana never went to school so she couldn't read and write, but got a good introduction to it with MCHA's literacy classes many years ago. Finally, on her own, she went to Centro Latino for Literacy in downtown Los Angeles, and graduated from three of their programs:



Roxana celebrates her three graduations with her family

- LEAMOS (Let's Read!), a self-paced, web-based and tutor program
- LISTOS (We're ready) course follows Leamos. It teaches students Spanish grammar and helps improve their writing, spelling, grammar, math and financial skills
- Ambassadors of Centro Latino for Literacy, promoting LEAMOS classes

A couple months ago Roxana came in to show staff her homework – she read from a children's counting book – "one apple, two bananas..." She was sounding out the words and was so proud of reading them. It was thrilling to see how good she feels about herself doing this.

Meanwhile, her oldest daughter is graduating from Cortines Performing Arts High School in downtown Los Angeles, majoring in dance and doing very well. She really wanted to go to The Julliard School in New York for dance but was dissuaded by someone telling her it would be difficult to work and make money in dance. Her goal now is to go to college but also to take a course as a medical assistant or in nursing so she

can work and make some money. She's graduating with honors this spring and is already hard at work raising money for her cap and gown, class ring and everything else that goes along with graduation from high school. She and her family are a true success story.

MCHA NEWS AND NOTES

Celia Valdez, Director of our Outreach and Enrollment for Health Programs was interviewed on Telemundo 52, "Acceso Total" the day after the national election. She had to prepare to speak on the impact of the election on the progress of health reform without knowing in whose hands it would be – President Obama or a possible President Romney. The Acceso Total program is part of a partnership that Telemundo manages with The California Endowment to highlight healthy living messaging directed to Spanish speaking audiences. Ms. Valdez did a great job highlighting the importance of health coverage for Telemundo's audience and what now exists for people as a result of health reform.

Monica Ochoa, Oral Health Advocacy Coordinator, will present a poster on dental care for pregnant women at the Southern California Public Health Association (SCPHA) 2012 Annual Conference. The meeting will be held on December 10, 2012 at The California Endowment's Center for Healthy Living. The theme for the conference is Public Health Across the Lifespan: The So Cal Way! The goal of the meeting is for participants to be able to help make Southern

California a place where children and adults are healthy, safe and learning. MCHA's work eliminating barriers to care, providing education and improving materials and information from the state is helping to do just that! See <http://www.mchaccess.org/dental.htm>

Luz Chacon, Program Director for the Welcome Baby program at MCHA, will present with Diana Careaga, Program Director for First 5LA, at the same meeting: Welcome Baby - A universal approach to early family strengthening. In addition, they will present at the Zero to Three National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families Training Institute in Los Angeles. There is a "Hot Topic" discussion with the same theme – family strengthening, and focusing on the strengths of MCHA's Welcome Baby approach of a cross-trained staff and the program's impact on breastfeeding rates, perinatal depression, bonding and attachment and medical homes. Welcome Baby has shown impressive breastfeeding statistics, improvement in perinatal depression and return for medical visits postpartum – better than the national average! See the Welcome Baby e-news at: http://www.mchaccess.org/welcome_baby.htm

Thanks to Our Generous Contributors:

Our apologies for any misspellings or omissions. Please call (213) 749-4261 ext. 110 or info@mchaccess.org with corrections.

- Baby2Baby/Kelley Patricof and Norah Weinstein
- Blue Shield Foundation of California
- California Association of Food Banks
- California Hospital Medical Center/Dignity Health Care
- California Poison Control System/UCSF
- California State Employees Charitable Contribution
- California Water Service Company – Rebecca Long
- Gaia Capital Management, Inc. – Jim Pursley and Vivian Lopez
- Heartfelt Foundation – Kathy Grant
- LA Shares
- Los Angeles County Children and Families First, Proposition
- 10 Commission
- Los Angeles Diaper Drive – Carolyn Kunitz
- Los Angeles Dodgers
- Los Angeles Emergency Food and Shelter Program
- Los Angeles Kings Hockey Club
- National Health Foundation
- Neighborhood Legal Services
- Office of Congresswoman Lucille Roybal Allard
- Office of Councilmember Ed Reyes
- Office of Supervisor Gloria Molina
- Para Los Ninos
- Pollo Campero – Ingrid Martinez
- Ralphs Grocery Company
- Shelter Partnership
- St. John's Well Child and Family Center
- The California Endowment
- The California Wellness Foundation
- The Green Bean – Traci Green
- The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
- The Morrison and Foerster Foundation
- The World Famous Laugh Factory
- Toys for Tots
- Trader Joes – Silver Lake – Azar Yader
- Trader Joes – Los Angeles – Andrea Payne
- Trader Joes – 3rd and Fairfax – Ashley
- Trader Joes – Los Angeles – David Tadlock
- WERC – Worker Education and Resource Center, Inc.

INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTORS (Cont'd)

Howard and Nancy Adelman	Barbara and Douglas Hadsell	Patty Quilizapa
Sean Andrade	Gail and Douglas Hayek	Susan Rabinovitz
Dolores Arond	Barbara Kersey	Randy Renick and the law firm of Hadsell Stormer Richardson & Renick, LLP
Michael Barish	Michael Keys	Gary Richwald
Marc Belanger	Sharon Klein	Joanne Roberts
Susan Berke Fogel	Alicia Kokkinis	Sandra Rosenblum
Stacie Bradford	Michael Leighs	Lynn Rosenfield
Paula Braveman	Elizabeth Landsberg	Marjorie Sa'adah
E. Richard and Marianne Parker Brown	Erhardt Lang	Carlton and Judith Sam
Linda Burden	Shana Alex Lavarreda	Mark Scarci
Christina Cardenas	Michael Miller	Lisa Phillips Schmid
Sharie Cheng	Zahra Movaghar	Barbara Siegel
Kathleen Dinsmore	Catherine Murphy	Fred Siegel
Joel Diringier	Monica Ochoa	Laurie Soman
Rocelle Estanislao	Julie Ortiz	Peter Spiro
Sarah Carpenter and Robert Newman	Karina Ozuna	Lilly Spitz
Xena Uretzky Finkelstein	Toni Parker	Marion Taylor Baer
Calvin and Sueann Freeman	Patricia Phillips	Susan Uretzky
Patricia Gibson	Wilma R. Pitts	Isabel Vasquez
Rita Gasparetti	Susan Rabinovitz	Inese Verzemnieks
	Lucy Quacinella	
	Claudia Quilizapa	

Maternal and Child Health Access 2012 Board Roster

Chair
Susan Berke Fogel, JD
 National Health Law Program*

Mike Miller
 Comic Relief*

Secretary
Patricia Phillips, JD
 Phillips Jessner, LLP*

Robert Newman, JD
 Western Center on Law and Poverty*

Patricia Quilizapa, JD
 Aleshire & Wynder, LLP*

Treasurer
Gail S. Hayek
 Chair, Finance Committee

Gary Richwald, MD, MPH
 Communicable Disease/
 Public Health Consultant

Robert Fellmeth, JD
 Children's Advocacy Institute,
 University of San Diego*

Lynn Kersey, MA, MPH, CLE
 Executive Director
 Maternal and Child Health Access

*Organizations listed for identification purposes only.

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

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holiday gifts for families, such as gift cards for food or department stores, blankets and children's toys. • New or gently used maternity or baby/ children's clothing • New or gently used bedding/towels • New or gently used slings or other baby carriers and bassinets • Household items – kitchen items such as pots and pans, dishware, silverware, and plastic storage ware with lids | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small gift items we can use for raffle prizes in health classes • Educational toys, children's books in Spanish and English, art supplies, school supplies • Childproofing items: locks, table corners, cabinet closures, plug covers • Sewing machines that work well or need only small repairs • Soft yarn for knitting scarves and hats – linen cotton, wool best or nice fluffy colors in acrylic – or gift certificates for these items | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fabric for aprons and purses made by our Women's Collective – colorful fun prints or bright solid colors, heavier fabric for lining, nice fabric for bags/purses – fabric or gift certificates to stores with the items, such as Joann's Michael's or Michael Levine's • Grocery, department store or other gift certificates • New or gently used large gift bags for baby items we provide | <p>For our offices...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nice waiting room chairs that match! • Digital camera • Digital streaming large frame to show agency pictures in lobby • Certificate-sized frames that match – for our awards • Office supplies: color and white copy paper, HP Laserjet 5M printer toner, pens, staples • Professional photography for our office and document/website publishing |
|--|---|--|--|

Maternal & Child Health Access

1111 West Sixth Street, Fourth Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90017-1800
tel: 213.749.4261 • fax: 213.745.1040
www.mchaccess.org

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



TO:

If you want to be removed from this mail list, want to receive mailings by e-mail or would like a copy of our prior newsletter, please contact us at info@mchaccess.org

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 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 our mailing. For orders after December 6th, know that the card may not arrive by the first day of Hanukkah and after December 21st, may not arrive by Christmas.

COLECTIVA ITEMS FOR SALE!

You may also request a handmade gift by a member of our Women's Collective – an apron or potholders – and give twice: to your recipient and to the Collective member! You may stop by our office and shop for aprons, pillows, potholders, cards, scarves and more from 9-5, M-F, or by appointment (call us at (213) 749-4261). The Mujeres in Movimiento Women's Collective will have a table at the Anti Mall in Los Angeles:

Dec. 16th, 11 Am – 5 PM "The Vex," 5240 Alhambra Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90032
<http://theantimall.weebly.com/> or on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/AntiMall1>

Thank you!