

# News from Maternal and Child Health Access



## MCHA And The ACA **THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT IS HERE!**

**MCHA** is a multi-faceted organization. The heart of our work is serving low-income pregnant women and their families in many aspects of their lives. Our direct service programs - including helping women enroll in health coverage that will meet their needs, home visiting for new mothers and babies, case management, providing food and shelter, and health education - help women and families live healthier more productive lives. But we don't stop there. Our on-the-ground experience informs our proactive policy agenda, working to ensure that safety net programs are effective, available, and efficient. We leverage our expertise by training advocates, government agencies, and others about the intricacies of health programs for the public so that they can better serve Los Angeles communities. It may not surprise you, then, that Maternal and Child Health Access (MCHA) is working in more than one way with the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

### Outreach and Enrollment

Just in time for an onslaught of phone calls and interest in the ACA, Covered California, the private insurance market set up by the state and federal governments, provided grants for certified "entities" to outreach to uninsured people about changes in health care and coverage. MCHA's years of experience working with low-income communities makes us a great resource for the hundreds of thousands of uninsured people looking for healthcare. Our very first enrollment experience was with a middle-aged couple. The husband has diabetes, arthritis, and severe back pain and has been waiting



Staff n Outreach and Enrollment include, from left to right, Celia Valdez, Director; Maria Mendoza; DeeDee Davila; Yolanda Garcia; Agripina Estrella; Ana Valenzuela; Diana Martinez and Vilma Canales.

nine months for an MRI (imaging test) for the cause of the pain; we were able to get him an appointment in December. They were extremely happy with the ability to learn about options and get health coverage: "You made something very grey become very clear". They've already made their first payment and are set for January. Once we find people, or they find us, we can enroll them in Covered California, or Medi-Cal, the state and federal health coverage for low-

income people, or the Access for Infants and Mothers program, for pregnant women with income above Medi-Cal limits, or other options. Our work does not stop there, as we follow the individual or family to be sure they get enrolled, are using the health coverage and get re-enrolled each year. For this, the state will pay organizations and brokers a small amount, **IF** the application is successful. So we may do a fair amount of work and not get paid, because the individual or family is not eligible for unforeseen reasons, and we will do a **LOT** of work if the individual or family **IS** enrolled, to be sure they stay enrolled and use the health coverage. Agencies really have to have an ongoing grant or other funding to be able to do this work.

We've seen folks extremely happy to have insurance options, folks who didn't know they were already covered for insurance, as part of being a recipient of county General Relief funds, and folks for whom we have to scramble now because while they will get coverage January 1, they need it now and literally can't wait.

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## MCHA WORKING WITH ACA (Cont'd from page 1)

### Training

There are many polls indicating that the people who will benefit most from the ACA's promise of affordable health care, don't really understand what the law means for them. It is more critical than ever that clinics, hospitals, social service agencies and others understand the intricacies of the law, so they can make the promise real. MCHA's training department is the "go-to" agency – ensuring agency staff – from clinics, hospitals, social service agencies, Los Angeles County departments – and individuals, such as insurance agents – are well-trained from an advocacy perspective. Our goal has been both to teach the letter of the law on health care programs for low-income people, as well as how to advocate for individual health care rights. "How programs are supposed to work and how they work in reality – and what to do about it." Since the passage of the ACA in 2010, MCHA and our training partner Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles (NLSLA) have added bits and pieces of health reform changes to our trainings, and since about August of this year, have been full steam ahead on a new health reform curriculum. This curriculum integrates rather than isolates the main programs in California available for enrollment through California's Health Exchange (computer marketplace). The examples we use have benefitted from the creativity of NLSLA's "famous families" income – examples of incomes using the Kardashians, the Simpsons, and other TV luminaries and household composition. MCHA and NLSLA turn what could be dry and complicated material into a fun learning experience!



Our training team with the famous, "We've Got You Covered" training binder.

### Home Visitation

Home visitation for newborns and usually, pregnant women, helps to support new parents by offering information on child health and development. It is practiced throughout the world and produces positive outcomes that, over time, yield returns of up to \$5.70 per taxpayer dollar spent, in improved health, reduced child abuse and injuries, reduced domestic violence and improvements in school readiness and achievement. Federal health reform authorized the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program and grants to states to improve health and development outcomes for at-risk children through evidence-based home visiting programs. This means funding will only go to select programs for which there is evidence of success. Although MCHA is not a recipient of this funding (few agencies yet are) the process shapes our work in our two home visitation programs, and our funding for our programs. Up to 25 percent of a state's award may be spent on promising approaches; our Welcome Baby program may be one such approach.



A happy Welcome Baby family.

### Pediatric dental coverage

Our Oral Health Advocacy for Pregnant Women and Children project has followed the state's process for inclusion of pediatric dental benefits in the Covered California private plans. MCHA joined children's groups in calling for "embedding," or inclusion, of children's dental care in all Covered California health plan choices. Instead, families will be able to separately purchase dental care for their child, and in 2015, dental care will be included in all Covered California dental plans. Dental care is considered an "Essential Health Benefit" for children but not adults. This is one of the reasons MCHA is so adamant about making sure Medi-Cal-eligible pregnant women and children get into Medi-Cal, since Medi-Cal covers preventive dental care during pregnancy and postpartum, and after May, 2014, will cover most dental care for all adults. Dental care is a Medi-Cal benefit for children.



### Policy

As noted, MCHA has helped to shape and implement the Affordable Care Act since its inception, especially for pregnant women. Our goals have been to ensure the eligibility and enrollment process works as smoothly as possible; that California takes advantage of improvements and enhancements to health care afforded by health reform; and that low income pregnant women and families do not lose access to Medi-Cal and the comprehensive benefits needed by low-income children and pregnant women. More specifically, we have urged that women who enroll in private Covered California plans and then become pregnant and, if under 200% of poverty, Medi-Cal eligible, have realistic access to the services Medi-Cal provides under pregnancy. These include: the Comprehensive Perinatal Services Program of case-coordination, nutritional services, mental health support and health education; dental care (not a service for adults in Exchange coverage); more comprehensive breastfeeding support, and the right to give birth in a birth center as opposed to a hospital.

Also, we have reminded the State Department of Health Services and the Covered California staff since 2010 to include the Access for Infants and Mothers program (AIM), funded almost completely by federal funds, in the Exchange screening for pregnant women. Yet somehow, AIM was omitted from the new enrollment process launched October 1st by Covered California for the programs for which Californians must be screened before being offered higher-cost private programs. AIM, which is funded by the federal Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), is one of those programs for which pregnant women must be screened. We are concerned pregnant women who may be eligible for AIM have been applying for coverage on-line at Covered California's website, by sending in the new Single Streamlined Application (SSApp), or calling the Covered California Service Center and may have been enrolled in private plans instead – delaying critical medical care and costing more money for families. MCHA's detailed recommendations for addressing this crisis, most of which the AIM Board adopted on November 20th at their last meeting, are posted at our website.

## MCHA Client Speaks Up

Latisha Simons, a single parent, is a survivor of intimate partner violence and a difficult upbringing that lasted until her late adolescent years. It is no wonder that she has suffered from depression. Enrollment in the Welcome Baby program helped turn that around. Funded by First5 LA, the Proposition 10 Commission that distributes Los Angeles County's share of some of the taxes on cigarettes, Welcome Baby is a pilot program run by MCHA and California Hospital Medical Center that is now being replicated in 13 other hospitals countywide. Latisha overcame many challenges during her participation in the program, including working with Beyond Shelter to finding stable housing, coping with depression, and finding a job.

She had a restaurant job at LAX but it ended very late at night and she would have to walk home with her children from the babysitter. Latisha would meet with her Parent Coach, i.e. MCHA staff, at a local



Jae'Lynn, King, Latisha, Kiauni (godmother) and Jazmine.

clinic because she didn't have a place of her own. She was living with family members, then later shelters and transitional housing. During all of this, she was a positive role model to her children, devoted to her children's emotional and physical health, and a firm believer in non-violent parenting. In addition to the new baby, she has twin five year-old daughters. At the last visit of the program, we were finally able to meet her in her new home. MCHA recommended Latisha speak at a gala in early November for our partner organization working to combat maternal depression, the Los Angeles County Perinatal Mental Health Task Force. The audience was visibly moved by her story and her words. Her children and their godmother accompanied her to the fundraiser, where the picture above was taken. It was a very special night for Latisha to share her story of success, assisted by Welcome Baby, with her family there in support.

## MCHA NEWS AND NOTES

### Oral Health Advocacy Conference: Feb. 24, 2014

MCHA, under the leadership of Monica Ochoa, Coordinator of our Oral Health Advocacy Project for Children and Pregnant Women, is leading the planning for a first-ever conference (in Los Angeles) on the oral health services currently available to low-income pregnant women, barriers to obtaining those services and what interested agencies and providers can do to help.

The conference is extremely timely given recent strong recommendations by the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists that Ob-GYNs perform routine oral health assessments at the first prenatal visit and encourage their patients to see a dentist during pregnancy. Modeled somewhat after "Consensus Conferences" in New York and Los Angeles, the conference will build on agreement that has been reached about the need for oral health care during pregnancy, help debunk myths about the ability to both receive and bill for such care, and expose issues encountered by women and providers trying to obtain care. According to experts, oral health is an important component of general health and should be maintained during pregnancy and throughout a woman's life.

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](mailto:Monicao@mchaccess.org) (213) 749-4261 ext. 360.**

### Univision for ACA

MCHA's Health Coverage Outreach Department led by Director Celia Valdez met with Univision studio producers to help shape questions for a nationally televised (in Spanish) "Obamacare Town Hall" – and then were able to invite families and staff to the Town Hall itself on December 5th. The event took place at the Mark Taper Auditorium at



Celia Valdez Director Outreach and Enrollment for health coverage, addresses the nation, broadcast on HMEU!

the (Los Angeles) Central Library and focused on issues of concern for Univision's Latino audience. Nearly 60% of uninsured Californians are Latino; thus it is critical that myths and concerns about health reform for this population are addressed.

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## FIRST5 LA CELEBRATES 15 YEARS MCHA there to honor the occasion!



Fourth and fifth from left, Luz Chacon, Welcome Baby Director and Teresa Garcia, Welcome Baby Asst. Clinical Supervisor, join First5 LA CEO Kim Belshe, Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley Thomas, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Director Dr. Jonathan Fielding, other First5 staff and Commission members and dignitaries celebrating fifteen years of progress.

On Tuesday, November 19th, **First5 LA** celebrated 15 years of service to the pregnant women and under five-year olds in Los Angeles County. MCHA has been involved in First5 LA's work every step of the way, from design and implementation of coverage for low-income children ineligible for other health coverage programs to our current role as pilot program for Welcome Baby universal home visitation in the downtown Los Angeles "Metro" area. Luz Chacon, Program Director, and Teresa Garcia, Assistant Clinical Supervisor, were able to attend and honor First5 LA!

### MCHA's families benefit from donations

#### • DIAPER DRIVE

MCHA is lucky to be one of the 20 recipient organizations of LA Diaper Drive, an organization that gives diapers to charities and community-based organizations that already work with low-income families in the Los Angeles area. MCHA distributes the diapers to women in our classes, in our parenting and breastfeeding support groups, in our home visitation programs, and to others in need.

The organizations above note that one in three Los Angeles families is struggling to provide diapers for their infants and sometimes reuses diapers. An adequate supply of diapers can cost \$100/month.

*An adequate supply of diapers  
can cost \$100/month.*

#### • BABY2BABY

This organization supplies families in need with essential baby gear and clothing for their children up to age 12. MCHA has received cribs, bassinets, slings for wearing babies, strollers, diapers and clothing in new or nearly new condition for our families in the programs mentioned above. We have been able to ease many moms' lives with the items above, making it easier to transport kids and come to our classes and appointments.

#### • HEARTFELT

Once again, MCHA was fortunate to be the recipient of the Heartfelt Foundation's good will, as we received 200 back-to-school backpacks for clients. Chock full of school supplies, the backpacks were eagerly received by kids in our weekly child care during the adult health education classes, or whose parents visit for health insurance or food assistance. Heartfelt has been a longtime supporter, providing holiday excursions and a huge party at the Santa Monica pier for hundreds of MCHA families annually.

## Thanks to Our Generous Contributors:

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

- Associated Students Chaffey College
- Baby2Baby
- Berke Family Foundation
- Film Art LA
- Fred Siegel Foundation
- Heartfelt Foundation
- LA Diaper Drive
- LA Shares
- Liberty Hill Foundation (Carol Lee)
- National Multiple Sclerosis Southern California and Nevada Chapter
- Shelter Partnership- Anita Morales
- Ten Thousand Villages of Pasadena
- The Laugh Factory
- United American Indian Involvement
- Blue Shield Foundation
- California Association of Food Banks
- Emergency Food and Shelter Program, United Way
- First 5 LA / Proposition 10 Commission - Children & Families First
- Los Angeles County Dept of Public Health
- The California Endowment
- The California Wellness Foundation

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\*Organizations listed for  
 identification purposes only.

## 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.
- 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
- 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
- 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

### For our offices...

- 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

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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 and can craft the message to your specifications! See our website  
to direct a donation in honor of someone special, [www.mchaccess.org](http://www.mchaccess.org),  
or use the envelope in our mailing. For orders after December 20th,  
know that the card or order 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.

**Thank you!**

**El Puente** hacia la esperanza  
PRESENTS

The 13th Annual  
**Anti-Mall: People b4 Profit**

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15TH 2013**  
**11 AM to 5PM**

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**4232 Whiteside St.**  
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