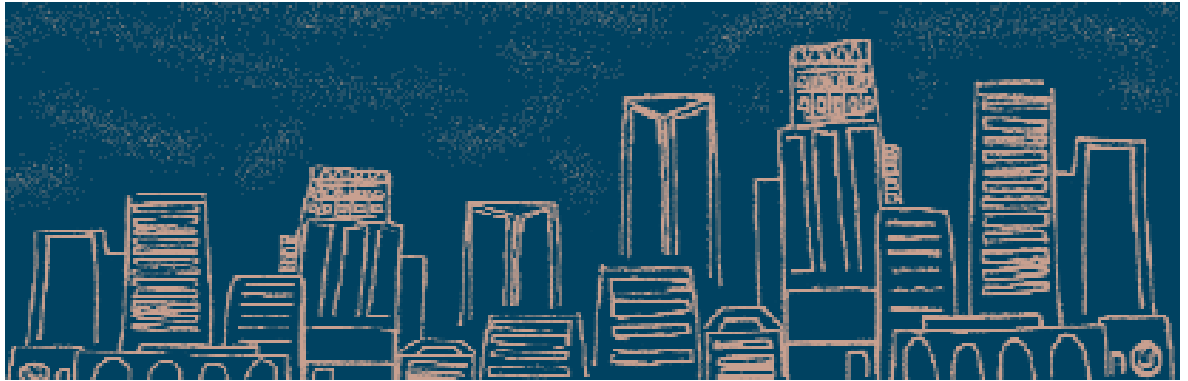


# News from Maternal and Child Health Access



Maternal and Child Health Access (MCH Access) is launching the *MCH Advocate*, a quarterly publication, to provide supporters with news of our work. We'd like to ensure that you know as much about us – our program and policy areas – as possible. We'd like to hear from you about our work and areas we might work together. Please pass on our news to others who might not yet be aware of our work.

You may know us as people who can help with the family sitting in your office who need health care coverage, or people who can provide answers to your questions about a specific program or service. You may have attended our event last fall honoring Board member Patricia Phillips and naming our community meeting room for her. If you've been to our offices you may have seen the mural of a community-friendly downtown Los Angeles, "Imagining Tomorrow," painted by the women in our arts cooperative with local artist Jose Ramirez. You may have referred women to our weekly educational classes, our breastfeeding support group, or to our perinatal case management program. Or you may know us as activists who are working to ensure that "No child is left uncovered" by health insurance in Los Angeles and to insure that the health insurance provided to low income women and their families actually works.

Founded in 1996, MCH Access advocates for meaningful access to health and social services for low-income women and their families on an individual basis, and works to ensure the health care problems seen daily in our agency and the community are addressed on a policy level. We assist women to achieve healthy pregnancies and to obtain quality health care for themselves and their children. We provide information, support and technical assistance to health and social service organizations, and educate policymakers and the public to improve the quality of health and social services for all low-income women and families and to benefit the entire community in which we live.

Today, California faces great uncertainty, as does the nation as a whole. MCH Access wants to be there for the long term – meeting needs and crafting solutions, for the families who have benefited by our work directly and for those who have never met us but who have been helped by policies we have worked to enact and change. Our work is not always politically popular nor is it easily funded. Our most basic program, which assists low-income women through their pregnancies, has continued without sponsored funding for the last five months, following state cutbacks in July. We cannot continue without your help.

Please help us be there for those who rely on us. We need your support, as much or as creatively as you would like to give. By working with individual women and families and making changes at a systemic level, Maternal and Child Health Access is a good return on your investment.

**Lynn Kersey, MA, MPH**

Executive Director

## “Enriching Lives:”

# MCH Access Honored by Los Angeles County Quality and Productivity Commission

On October 29, MCH Access, the Public Health Foundation Enterprises, Inc., Women’s, Infants and Children’s Supplemental Food Program (PHFE WIC) and the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) received an award for the “WIC Newborn Referral Program.”

The award, for which each of the parties received a beautiful plaque, honored the important progress our programs have made to better connect newborns with the Medi-Cal health coverage to which they are entitled but don’t often receive. Maternal and Child Health Access and WIC have long been partners in work to address barriers to health care coverage for pregnant women and their children. This project uniquely combined the contributions of both PHFE WIC and MCH Access.

MCH Access and our colleagues had found that there were a large number of infants in our program and who were coming into WIC sites who should have been covered by Medi-Cal but weren’t. MCH Access helped develop and pass legislation that allowed for hospitals, clinics, WIC sites and others to use a simple “Newborn Referral Form” (NRF) to inform the Department of Public Social Services offices of the birth of an infant (see related article, p. 3) without making it necessary for the



Members of DPSS, WIC, MCHA and The California Endowment, funders of the WIC Newborn Enrollment Project.

mother to go to the welfare office. WIC piloted a health insurance screening program (still in effect) for the children of women who come to their clinics. If the children are less than one year old, were born to a mother on Medi-Cal and yet are not enrolled, a Newborn Referral Form is filled out. The forms are then batched and sent regularly to DPSS, who have embraced this program and are quickly getting newborns the coverage they need.

Under the WIC pilot program, referrals to DPSS of newborns needing coverage have increased from just a few a month to 1,000 monthly. MCH Access is working to have other groups and hospitals more fully utilize this program. Meanwhile we continue working for eligible newborns to be automatically provided Medi-Cal. Congratulations, and thank you WIC, MCH Access and DPSS!

### Board of Directors Maternal and Child Health Access

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Executive Director

\*Organizations listed for  
identification purposes only.

## MCH Access’ arts collective, Mujeres en Movimiento has holiday gift items

Stop by any time for a look at  
handcrafted baby items, crocheted  
and knitted hats and scarves, aprons  
in fanciful kitchen prints, holiday  
ornaments and much more.

*Case Study in Advocacy:*

# Medi-Cal Coverage for Newborns

If there is any single policy issue for which MCH Access is known, it is our work to ensure quality health care coverage for newborns. We have worked on this issue since our inception, knowing that: 1) health care is critical in an infant's vulnerable first year, especially for low-income infants; 2) new moms have a very tough time getting through the various systems to activate insurance coverage for their babies, especially in Medi-Cal; and 3) we are constantly faced with this issue in our work with individual pregnant women as well as with our training and technical assistance to other agencies.

Under the leadership of MCH Access, California has a new law to improve the ability of pregnant women and their newborns to get the health coverage to which they are entitled. In addition, we have led a process through which the state, counties, managed care organizations, hospitals and consumer advocates have worked together to vastly improved the way newborns are enrolled in Medi-Cal, resulting in a significant increase in access to health coverage for low-income newborns.

*The Problems in Getting Coverage:*

The Medi-Cal program covers pregnant women from 0 – 200% of poverty (roughly \$36,800 annually for a family of four) regardless of citizenship status, as long as the woman is a California resident. Federal law says that an infant born to a woman on Medi-Cal is "deemed" eligible for a full year of coverage after birth. California allows infants to receive care under the mother's Medi-Cal card for the month of birth and the month after, but then ends the infant's coverage if the mother does not take certain steps. Due to telephone access, computer, and other problems at the Medi-Cal offices, many of these infants end up with no coverage at all. There may be similar problems with coverage for infants whose mothers are covered by the Access for Infants and Mothers (AIM) program, which covers pregnant women of slightly higher income than Medi-Cal, as new regulations changing enrollment for infants are implemented next year.

*MCH Access Takes Action:*

MCH Access conducted a national survey of newborn enrollment methods used in other states and discovered that many had adopted a simple, "newborn referral form" and process to facilitate enrollments. The work was done for us by a fantastic intern, Rena Koul, a Masters in Public Health student trained through UCLA's Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities. From there, MCH Access supported legislation to allow hospitals and others to use a simple form whenever they encountered an uncovered infant under one year of age whose mother had had Medi-Cal for the delivery. The language succeeded as part of the State Budget bill in 1998.



In 2001, MCH Access launched the Newborn Enrollment Project. Funded by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Project has allowed MCH Access to more fully explore comprehensive solutions to newborn health care coverage, investigate and design strategies to ensure that health coverage for newborns starts as soon as they are born, and to work with a wide range of stakeholders, including insurers, counties, legislators and consumers. Vast improvements in the newborn referral process at the county level have occurred as a result, with infant Medi-Cal enrollments steadily increasing where MCH Access has had the active collaboration of other community-based organizations and county partners. Some of these key achievements have been:

- ➔ MCH Access helped re-write the state's first Newborn Referral Form into a simpler, more legible format and encouraged its translation into Spanish.
- ➔ After much back and forth and input from MCH Access on draft language, in October 2003, the State released a comprehensive set of instructions for simplifying and strengthening the infant enrollment procedures, which should result in further increases in enrollment.
- ➔ MCHA served as an expert witness in a successful lawsuit against the state of California to make sure that "deemed eligible" infants keep their Medi-Cal until age when they apply through California's new "CHDP Gateway" program.

*(continued on page 7)*

## MCH Access Honors Board Member: *Patricia Phillips*



Executive Director Lynn Kersey (left) with Board Member honoree Patricia Phillips (right).

MCH Access was honored last fall to name our community room for our longtime supporter and member of our Board of Directors, Patricia Phillips. Pat is Senior of Counsel to the firm of Morrison and Foerster, where she specializes in Family Law and Mediation. A native Californian, Pat has been a pioneer in advancing the rights of women in Los Angeles and statewide. She was the first woman to be elected President of the Los Angeles County

of handcrafted items made by *Mujeres en Movimiento* (Women in Action), our women's art collective.

The Patricia Phillips Community Room at MCH Access is the heart of our work with women and families. It is where the community meets to strategize around improving access to health care. Our health education classes, literacy classes and child care take place there as well: the room divides! In the spirit of our work, we are pleased to have the opportunity to connect Pat's name with this room and the work accomplished there.

Bar Association and of the Chancery Club, an honorary association of attorneys from the Los Angeles legal community and was a founding member of California Women Lawyers. She is a frequent writer and lecturer on family law and has been honored as one of Los Angeles' fifty most powerful women lawyers. Pat has been a friend and mentor to many women and men in law and is widely known for her philanthropic efforts.

Guests were able to tour our new offices, meet and greet familiar and new faces, honor Pat and support MCH Access' work. The event featured a sale



Patricia Phillips Community Room in action!

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## MCH Access' Policy Work:

To address a more permanent solution to problems we see among our clients and community, we bring our clients' daily struggles with health and other needed services to a policy level. Some of the policy areas we work on are:

- Defending hard-won gains in health care for children and pregnant women against local, state and federal budget cuts;
- Ensuring that pregnancy-related care is comprehensive;
- Ensuring safe and quality care within the hospital setting, particularly for "maternity services;"
- Improving the continuity of care and insurance coverage for low-income newborns;
- Expanding eligibility and improving retention for all public and publicly-funded health care programs, but especially Medi-Cal, Healthy Families and Access for Infants and Mothers (AIM);
- Ensuring that steps taken to increase comprehensiveness of health care coverage for all populations protect gains made for women and children thus far;
- Increasing access to and quality of dental services for pregnant women;
- Advocating for better access to, adequacy of and quality of services in managed health care programs;
- Ensuring that health care is accessible to children when there is court referral for medical care coverage due to an absent parent; reforming the medical support system;
- Increasing the possibility that women in our case management program and all over Los Angeles are educated about and afforded the opportunity to breastfeed;
- Addressing toxins in our environment, so that children have the opportunity to grow up healthy and safe.

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*Feature Program:*

# Perinatal Outreach & Education Program

*“We would’ve starved or become homeless”*



Our first in-depth look at programs offered by MCH Access focuses on our Perinatal Outreach and Education program. This is the comprehensive program on which MCH Access was founded in 1996. The program provides outreach, case management, health education, stress reduction classes, breastfeeding support group meetings, and individual support to pregnant and parenting women in the greater downtown Los Angeles area. Our team of case managers and health educators continues to develop solutions to barriers in access to prenatal and reproductive health care delivery in LA County, at both direct service and systemic levels.

Through outreach in the community, we meet and assist women and their families with short-term issues and referrals to services, including into our case management program. Case management offers an opportunity to develop a longer relationship with the client, and to work with each woman individually to develop and carry out a plan that addresses the spectrum of her health and other needs throughout her pregnancy and postpartum. Pregnant women and those with infants under one year of age are eligible for case management services, including visits where clients live. We provide additional food, limited short-term housing, transportation coupons, counseling and support, clothing, a newborn

*“I went from clinic to clinic and from hospital to hospital. My seven-month-old baby couldn’t urinate if I didn’t help him. I felt powerless. All of the doctors I saw told me that they couldn’t correct my baby’s problem because he didn’t have Medi-Cal coverage, and nobody told me how to obtain it.”*

welcome basket and other needed supplies. Our greatest work, however, may be the support we provide each woman and the advocacy for her and her family’s rights to health care and other social services. Our clients’ experiences provide the foundation and the inspiration for our policy work to achieve improvements in prenatal care under Medi-Cal and other programs.

“My husband was laid off from his job. He occasionally worked as a day laborer and he hardly made money to pay the rent. I tried to work, but nobody hired me, I think because I was pregnant. The extra food was a blessing! Otherwise we would’ve starved or become homeless.”

“I went from clinic to clinic and from hospital to hospital. My seven-month-old baby couldn’t urinate if I didn’t help him. I felt powerless. All of the doctors I saw told me that they couldn’t correct my baby’s problem because he didn’t have Medi-Cal coverage, and nobody told me how to obtain it.” MCHA assisted this client with Medi-Cal and advocated for her infant and finally, Medi-Cal authorized coverage for the procedure and it was performed. The baby is doing great!

One high-risk pregnant client, Suzanne, and her three-year-old daughter were helped with short-term housing. Our case managers called more than 25 places trying to find shelter for them. Her sister wanted to take her in, but the landlord wouldn’t allow it, and, the government-sponsored housing funds that we distribute can only cover 30 days. When there was no alternative, MCH Access dipped into our own reserves rather than put her out on the street. Despite Suzanne’s heart condition, she delivered a healthy infant by c-section. Now that she can work again, she and the children are being transitioned to a family shelter.



In this program, MCH Access provides services through outreach to about 65 women and their families a month and provides case management to another 35 – 50 per month. In the last eight years, we’ve assisted over 7,000 families and individuals. With added capacity, we could provide many more women with case management. Unfortunately, there have been few programs like ours in Los Angeles, even less since state funding for the program was eliminated this fiscal year. MCH Access has kept this program alive through small grants and our reserves, but we need your assistance. It would be the height of irony to lose the program that inspired us to start our organization.

## Wish Lists

- 👉 Holiday gifts for 100 – 150 families: blankets and children's toys
- 👉 New or gently used maternity clothing
- 👉 New or gently used baby/children's clothing
- 👉 New or gently used bedding, towels
- 👉 Household items
- 👉 Educational toys, musical instruments, children's books in Spanish and English, art supplies, school supplies
- 👉 Storage site for donated furniture (near downtown)
- 👉 Beds (our clients sleep on the floor)
- 👉 Childproofing locks, table corners, cabinet closures, plug covers
- 👉 Dress-up clothes
- 👉 Yarn for knitting, craft supplies, fabric (or gift certificates to stores with these items)

## For our offices...

- 👉 A round office table
- 👉 Computers
- 👉 Digital camera
- 👉 Small color printers
- 👉 Storage site for donated furniture (near downtown)
- 👉 Office supplies
- 👉 Professional photography for brochures and newsletters

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## Our Heartfelt Thanks to Our Recent Contributors:

- Arnold and Porter
- Blue Cross of California
- Bosung Corporation
- The California Endowment
- California Pizzo Kitchen
- The California Wellness Foundation
- Coalition for Community Health
- Community Health Councils
- Consultive Equipment Company
- The David and Lucile Packard Foundation
- The Entertainment Industry Foundation
- Emma Lazarus Foundation
- Emergency Food and Shelter Program, United Way
- First Data, Western Union
- First Five LA
- Gaia Capital Management
- Hadsell and Stormer
- Heartfelt Foundation
- Immigrant Funders Collaborative
- Kaiser Permanente Health Plan
- LA Shares
- Laubach Literacy Action
- Liberty Hill Foundation/Rhino Records
- Los Angeles County Department of Health Services
- Los Angeles County Workforce Development Program
- Los Angeles County Women's Foundation
- The March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation, Southern California Chapter
- Mattell, Inc.
- The Morrison and Foerster Foundation
- Neighborhood Legal Services
- Northrup-Grumman Corporation
- Office Depot
- Pico-Union Westlake Cluster, Inc.
- Ralph's Grocery
- Sam's Club
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- Scott Brothers Dairy
- Target
- Thibiant, International
- The Vernon Police Department
- Walt Disney Company
- Women's Sports Foundation

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## MCH Access Program Areas:\*

### Case Study in Advocacy: Medi-Cal Coverage for Newborns

*continued from page 3*

On the managed care front, MCH Access is making significant progress toward a broad-based consensus position with stakeholders for improving access and continuity for infants while they are covered under the mother's number and to ensure continuity when the infant gets a Medi-Cal number of his or her own. We will also present our proposals to the State for ensuring that infants in the AIM program do not experience disruptions in care when they are enrolled into health plans with their own cases. Our next round of meetings will take place in December, and we will update you on our progress.

**SB 24 (Figueroa)** – MCH Access first-ever sponsored legislation, was signed into law this year. This innovative statute provides for a Newborn Hospital Gateway, so that "deemed eligible" infants can be enrolled directly into Medi-Cal for the year through a simple electronic referral process before even leaving the hospital. SB 24 also includes a Prenatal Gateway for pregnant women to enroll in Medi-Cal directly from the prenatal care provider's office and to keep their coverage until final eligibility has been determined by the county. This new electronic process would replace the former two-step process of a "Presumptive Eligibility" application from

the providers office, and then a second application to the Medi-Cal office. Women often got lost in-between the two applications and are left without health coverage while pregnant. Seventy-five percent of the costs of SB 24 are covered by the Federal Government. MCH Access is now focused on finding non-State partners to help cover the administrative start-up costs for both Gateways.

Our newborn enrollment work is a perfect example of MCH Access' successful use of a variety of strategies and partnerships to achieve better health outcomes for babies. We have worked locally with individual women and community-based organizations and local government to improve access to coverage. We also turned to the legislature when we saw the need for broader systemic change. And lastly, we partnered to bring violations of the law to the courts in order to find justice for the women and babies for whom we began this work in the first place.

For more information or to be on a list-serve for updates on the Newborn Enrollment Project, contact Lucy Quacinella ([luq@sbcglobal.net](mailto:luq@sbcglobal.net)) or Lynn Kersey ([lynnk@mchaccess.org](mailto:lynnk@mchaccess.org)).

- Outreach, education, and case management for women who need health care coverage for reproductive and perinatal care.
- Health education, both one-on-one and group classes, breastfeeding support and stress reduction groups.\*
- Literacy classes for Spanish speakers.
- *Cooperativa Mujeres en Movimiento* Arts Collective for women to make and market handicrafts.
- Community outreach about eligibility for health programs, referrals to health services and assistance in trouble-shooting problems accessing health insurance and health care services.
- Presentations, trainings and materials about health coverage options and health services for low-income people.
- Policy work on access to health care and coverage issues for pregnant women, children and all low-income people

\* We provide childcare during all groups.

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**mch** Advocate

## Governor Attempts to Slash Health and Welfare Services

At press time, we had just learned of Governor Schwarzenegger's proposal to cut state services by \$16 – 18 billion and then only allow additional spending for population growth and cost of living. There would be no ability to restore the initial cuts, which include:

- A 5% cut of CalWORKS grants, pushing back grant levels to 1985 levels. Children are the biggest CalWORKS group.
- "Freezing" enrollment in Healthy Families, part of California Children's Services (serves children with specific illnesses and disabilities), Regional Centers, rehabilitation programs, the AIDS Drug Assistance Program; Medi-Cal for undocumented and legal immigrant pregnant women, the Cash Assistance Program for

Immigrants (CAPI) and many other programs. Waiting lists, such as those that exist in Florida for 69,000 children currently for that state's children's health program, would be established and as "attrition" occurred, new enrollment could take place.

- Slashing provider payments for Medi-Cal by 15% (5% already in process as a part of Davis' 03 – 04 budget; this would add an additional 10%).
- Slashing payments in public health caseload programs, such as Child Health and Disability Prevention, California Children's Services, the Genetically Handicapped Persons program.
- Eliminating all "non-medical" therapy provided by regional centers.

While a great deal of uncertainty exists about the Governor succeeding in this initial salvo, he has shown his hand and it is frightening. He is willing to cut health and welfare services for the most vulnerable, including pregnant women and people with disabilities, rather than capture the funds this wealthy state has so that we can ensure a healthy citizenry. Certainly his campaign messages emphasized the importance of health care for children.

MCH Access will join other groups in defending hard-won gains in access to health care and other services, services that have helped the state save money in the long run.

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