

# News from Maternal and Child Health Access



## COLECTIVA MUJERES EN MOVIMIENTO

Throughout MCHA's history we have been surprised and sometimes amazed by what our clients make and sell for the few extra dollars that completes the rent, buys shoes, or pays for the light bill that already has a shut-off notice. From delicious regional foods to beautifully crafted art, these items have helped families to survive and remain intact.

Early on we became very familiar with our clients' ability to make art, as they often gave us small handcrafted gifts as gestures of appreciation for the services that we provide. Many of the women that we work with are creative, artistic, and know much about traditional arts from their native lands. As part of our dialogue with clients, we began to ask them questions about their art: Who taught you? How do you feel about your art? How do you feel when you are making art? Do you think people would buy your art? Why? Why not? Can you afford to purchase supplies?

Our clients' answers to these questions and the clear benefits they derived from making art helped create Colectiva Mujeres en Movimiento (Women in Movement Collective). The women chose this name because, as we can attest, they are in a constant whirlwind of movement as they care for their families, themselves, and volunteer in their communities. The Colectiva provides members with a safe meeting place, the opportunity to design, create, and preserve traditional folk arts of their native lands, and free childcare so that the women can pay full attention to their work. Our weekly two-hour meetings are also a forum for charlas (informal talks) on issues such as domestic violence, parenting, prenatal care, mental illness, and child abuse, and workshops led by local artists.

Two years ago, Jose Ramirez, a prominent Los Angeles based painter, led several workshops during which women learned drawing, design and painting skills in preparation for painting a beautiful mural that communicates a re-visioning of their communities.

The colectiva's success can be measured by the events that in which the women participate in and the amount of art that they sell, but perhaps even more important is the difference that it has made in their lives. One woman who had been separated from her abusive husband considered taking him back until he told her



that he did not want her to continue her participation in the colectiva: "I finally realized that this man is not good for me or our children because he saw that the colectiva helped me to gain self-confidence and come out of my shell and he wanted to take that from me. My children see what I make and they want to make art also. They are proud of me. I see that I

have value when people see what I make and they tell me it's beautiful and I am proud of myself too." Another member tells us that in the evening instead of watching television, her husband and children now spend quality time making art together: "My children want to imitate what I make and this has helped them learn to give flight to their imagination and to concentrate on what they are doing. When we all sit at the table making art we also talk, tell stories, and laugh a lot. It helps us feel that we are a family and that we are special." Several women have told us that making art helps to lift them out of depression.

Clearly, the solidarity and sense of community found in the colectiva empowers women to make small but significant changes to improve not only their own lives, but also the lives of their family members. In the long run, the fabric of our community is strengthened as well.

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### THE COLECTIVA'S ART

will be featured  
December 5th

at

SELF HELP GRAPHICS & ART'S

**"Holiday Print and Craft" Sale**

12-5 PM

3802 Cesar E. Chavez Ave, Los Angeles CA 90063

(323) 881-6444

or see [www.selfhelpgraphics.com](http://www.selfhelpgraphics.com).

After Dec. 5, stop by our offices or call for times and dates of other sales: (213) 749-4261.

## *Nurse-in:* Protest at Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) Headquarters



Despite a 1997 law giving women the right to breastfeed in public (Section 43.3 of the California Civil Code), MCH Access has found that many of our clients are harassed by other passengers while breastfeeding on the bus. This prompted us to provide our clients with cards with the pertinent civil code language (an idea borrowed from the Public Health Foundation Enterprises WIC Program). After receiving this card in a class, one of our clients was actually told by two different bus drivers to stop breastfeeding. After the first incident, MCHA wrote to the MTA, asking them to correct this violation and were told that all drivers were informed through a bulletin that breastfeeding is permissible on all MTA buses and rails. However, the second incident then occurred. After writing to the MTA again, letting them know that the action taken was insufficient and not hearing back from them, MCHA organized the 8/31/04 nurse-in/protest with assistance from the Breastfeeding Task Force of Greater Los Angeles and the Bus Riders Union.

At least 100 adults marched, chanted, and carried signs along with their children; some even breastfed their babies! We succeeded in getting extensive media coverage, including an article in the Los Angeles Times the next day, Sept. 1, and the MTA ultimately agreed to meet one of our requests.

We asked the MTA to train all current and future bus drivers about the importance of breastfeeding and the California law that protects breastfeeding in public. We have received correspondence about initial and ongoing training that now takes place for existing and newly hired drivers. We asked them to post the National Breastfeeding Awareness Campaign materials in all buses. Sponsored by the US Department of Health and Human Services Office on Women's Health (OWH) and The Advertising Council, the Campaign has developed "Babies were Born to be Breastfed" public service announcements (PSAs) to promote breastfeeding among first-time parents. The overall goal of the campaign is to increase the proportion of mothers who breastfeed their babies in the early postpartum period to 75% and those within 6 months postpartum to 50% by the year 2010. More information about the campaign is available at: <http://www.4woman.gov/breastfeeding/bf.cfm?page=Campaign>. This request has NOT been met.

*We urge you to join our efforts by doing the following:*

- ☛ Report any violations of this law to the MTA by either calling their customer comment line – 213.922.6235 or completing an on-line comment form at [www.mta.net](http://www.mta.net) by following these links: "riding metro", "

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contact information", "Metro customer comment form" or go directly to: <http://mtaweb6.mta.net/cc/cc.asp> It's best if passengers have the bus number and operator's badge number.

- ☛ Let MCHA know of any further or previous violations of this law so we can compile incidents and monitor compliance. Send an e-mail to [customerrelations@metro.net](mailto:customerrelations@metro.net) urging them to remedy this problem. If you send an e-mail, please also cc or forward it to [luz@mchaccess.org](mailto:luz@mchaccess.org) so that we can compile these messages.

Since the media attention to the MTA protest, MCHA has learned of several other complaints about breastfeeding harassment in other places. Please let us know if you/your clients experience harassment while breastfeeding in public. For more information about this issue, contact Luz Chacon, Health Policy and Education Coordinator, (213) 749-4261 ext. 106.

## Advocacy Update:

# Medi-Cal Coverage for Newborns

Our last newsletter introduced the work MCH Access has done to improve the way newborns are enrolled in health insurance, especially Medi-Cal. Under federal law, an infant born to a woman on Medi-Cal is "deemed" eligible for a full year of coverage, starting with the date of birth. In response to efforts by MCH Access and other consumer advocates, a number of communications from the state have clarified implementation of "Deemed Eligibility", fast becoming a household term for advocates and others seeking continuity of coverage and care for newborns as the first step to being insured "right from the start".

In October 2003, the State Department of Health Services (DHS) released a comprehensive set of instructions for simplifying and strengthening the infant enrollment procedures. These instructions were further clarified in February 2004. The overall the list of what has been clarified or improved is impressive:

- Once families of eligible infants notify the County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS), the infant must be approved for Medi-Cal retroactively to the birth month, no matter how late during the infant's first year of life the notification occurs.
- Infants who were born to mothers covered by Medi-Cal under the "Minor Consent" program now also qualify for Deemed Eligibility for Medi-Cal at least until the first birthday.
- Infants whose mother's Medi-Cal has been terminated still qualify for Deemed Eligibility for Medi-Cal at least until the first birthday.
- The infants' year of Deemed Eligibility continues regardless of the outcome of the rest of the family's annual redetermination.
- Infants born to mothers on or applying for CalWORKs must receive Deemed Eligibility without delay once the County is notified of the infant's birth, name, and gender, and regardless of whether the application for cash assistance is still pending (see DSS ACL 1-03-046)



- DHS reminds the counties that they cannot ask for excess documentation, such as birth certificates, Social Security numbers, parents' pay stubs, etc., when enrolling the newborn.
- Deemed Eligibility must be granted regardless of how the county is notified: by mail, phone, in person, fax, or using a "Newborn Referral Form".
- Starting June 1, 2004, the enrollment mechanism known as the "CHDP Gateway" (which stands for Child Health and Disability Prevention) has also implemented "Deemed Eligibility". This means that the infants will receive Medi-Cal cards covering them for the first year of life starting with their very first CHDP visit!

Approximately 6,000 infants monthly statewide have received full Medi-Cal coverage under this new system since June, 2004!

MCH Access continues to work on implementation of Deemed Eligibility and welcomes comments, stories and your participation.

We are also working on two other new "Gateways" mandated by legislation (SB 24-Figueroa) sponsored by MCH Access and passed in 2003:

- The Newborn Hospital Gateway to cover newborns before they leave the hospital, and
- The Prenatal Gateway, to allow pregnant women to not only start coverage as of the first prenatal care visit, but to also continue coverage without interruption until at least 60 days post-partum in a one-step rather than current two-step application process.

More on the progress in these areas in our next newsletter.

MCH Access is grateful for the funding provided by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation for the Newborn Enrollment Project. If you would like to join a listserve for updates about the project, contact Lucy Quacinella, Project Director at [Lucy@Quacinella.com](mailto:Lucy@Quacinella.com) or Lynn Kersey at [lynnk@mchaccess.org](mailto:lynnk@mchaccess.org).

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

- Holiday gifts for 100-150 families, such as 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
- New or gently used slings or other baby carriers
- Household items
- Educational toys, children's books in Spanish and English, art supplies, school supplies
- Beds (our clients sleep on the floor)
- Childproofing items: locks, table corners, cabinet closures, plug covers
- Yarn for knitting, craft supplies, fabric or gift certificates to stores with these items
- Small color printers
- Storage site for donated furniture (near downtown)
- Office supplies: paper, toner, pens, staples, you name it.
- Professional photography for our office, brochures and newsletters.

### For our offices...

- Small round office tables
- Computers
- Digital camera

## Maternal & Child Health Access

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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](mailto:info@mchaccess.org)

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Advocate

### *Our Heartfelt Thanks to* Our Recent Contributors:

- The Aaroe Association Charitable Foundation
- Babystyle Clothing
- Blue Cross of California
- The California Endowment
- California Hospital Medical Center
- The California Wellness Foundation
- The David and Lucile Packard Foundation
- Emergency Food and Shelter Program, United Way
- Entertainment Industry Foundation
- First Five LA/DHS Children's Health Outreach Initiative
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- Kaiser Permanente Health Plan
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