

News from Maternal and Child Health Access



WOMEN AND CHILDREN ARE PROTECTED FOR NOW AT KING DREW MEDICAL CENTER— BUT HOSPITAL REMAINS IN GRAVE DANGER

We have seen the "two Americas" become apparent through Hurricane Katrina, but those of us who work with low-income people here know there are at least "two cities of Los Angeles" as well. Maternal and Child Health Access has made access to and provision of county health care a top priority since our inception. When drastic cuts to women's and children's health services at King Drew Medical Center (KDMC) were announced this summer, MCHA prepared fact sheets, gathered statistics on the services provided by KDMC, got statements from patients and providers at the hospital, testified in August at the Board of Supervisors, sent letters detailing our concerns and encouraged MCH professionals and others to do the same. We worked with the Coalition for Health and Justice on a letter detailing concerns about the proposed cuts and the need for overall planning and community involvement. MCHA brought its expertise in women's and children's health to the Coalition and their Campaign to Transform King Drew (www.transformkingdrew.org) to help wage the fight for continued access to quality health care services in the area, especially for women and children.

Our awareness of the deep disparities in health that exist in south LA, and the promise of what could be, compel our involvement. We cannot and should not accept that residents of South LA have to travel longer distances and wait longer for services than residents in other parts of the county. We cannot and should not accept the loss of the trauma center — one that used to train MASH army units — for ALL county residents and visitors traveling on the 105, 405, 605 or within reach of a stray bullet. We cannot and should not accept the loss of LAC/DHS's newest Neonatal Intensive Care Unit in the area of LA with the highest rate of poor birth outcomes, nor the loss of the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit where youth violence is endemic, nor the loss of the teaching hospital that trains more than one-third of LA County's minority physicians.

To work in maternal services and not work to save services where the infant mortality and morbidity rate is highest, is a contradiction in terms. Yes, KDMC sees almost 70% Latinos, but it also has the highest concentration of African American deliveries in the county, with the poorest birth outcomes. KDMC is facing both federal and state accreditation inspections.

Theories abound about what will happen if the hospital does not pass inspection: the hospital services could be contracted out, the hospital could close, the hospital could be reduced to a "Multi-service Ambulatory Care Center" or MACC. We are concerned that county leadership is not focused on preparing to pass inspection. The premature threat to close maternal and child health services, which was later withdrawn, wasted precious time that should have been spent improving quality care at the hospital. It is difficult not to feel as though LAC/DHS has not only given up on KDMC, but is actively seeking its demise. Add to this the animosity by some of the Board of Supervisors toward involvement by community groups and representatives and the picture is very disturbing, indeed.

We must resist the temptation to shrink from participation in something that may seem confusing or chaotic, or with such intractable problems. MCHA challenges you to learn otherwise. Visit King Drew and see what a thriving, bustling center it is, a far cry from the picture that is painted of its services. Get active in the Campaign to Transform King Drew at www.transformkingdrew.org and see the 9/30 "Response to the Board" about cuts, or request MCHA's fact sheet specifically about maternal and child health services. Read the KDMC Transition Report prepared by the National Health Foundation at www.lahealthaction.org or the Final Report of the Steering Committee on the Future of King/Drew Medical Center at The California Endowment's site, www.calendow.org. Read of the progress that has been made and how King Drew's services rank nationally in a July 28 update to the Board from the Director of Health Services: http://lacounty.info/omd/q3_2005/cms1_031981.pdf#xml=http://search2.co.la.ca.us/omd/xmlread.asp?%2DocKey=http://lacounty.info/omd/q3_2005/cms1_031981.pdf@CMD&QueryText=

Health care services overall are neglected in South LA — the county has closed clinics that once were "feeder" clinics to King Drew, there is a tremendous shortage of community providers and health care clinics, and transportation is inadequate. Show the Board of Supervisors that you are watching and you do care about providing high quality health care services to the poorest residents of the county and for everyone — rich and poor alike — who needs emergency and trauma care services.

MCHA Moms Take Leadership Roles to the Streets

Under the banner of the Say Yes to Children Network, 30 mothers and 45 children from Maternal and Child Health Access (MCHA) health education and case management programs joined hundreds of adults and children on April 19, 2005 to march through the streets of Los Angeles to promote putting children before politics – a response to Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's budget cuts and the effects these cuts would have on children. The march, led by children, began at the Hall of Administration in downtown Los Angeles and continued to City Hall where speakers, including now Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, addressed issues pertinent to children's education and health. Wearing bright orange T-shirts with the slogan "Don't balance the budget on our backs" MCHA mothers and children were highly visible as moms took the bull horns and led chants in Spanish throughout most of the march. At the rally, Villaraigosa delivered a speech in English, but returned to the stage and addressed the crowd in Spanish after several MCHA moms asked him to do so.

When asked why it was important to her that Villaraigosa address Spanish-speaking parents, Margarita Velasquez stated, "We are here not only for our children, but all children and if our presence is not acknowledged, our effort is diminished. At MCHA we have learned that we count; we cannot afford to be invisible."

On May 3, 2005, 15 MCHA moms and 20 children again took to the streets in their orange T-shirts and attended the annual March in Recognition of World Asthma Day in an effort to actively encourage solutions to crucial issues that affect

children's health. Currently, an estimated 7.9% of children ages 0 - 17 in L.A. County have asthma, and for ethnic minorities the rates are higher, with a 16% prevalence among African American children. As in the march against Schwarzenegger's budget cuts, women and children carried signs they had made themselves to highlight issues important to the well being of children and families, such as the need for clean air.



Related to air pollution, on July 28, 2005, about 10 MCHA moms with their children supported the Bus Riders Union in their effort to convince the MTA to purchase an additional 660 buses in accordance with the consent decree they signed. MCHA clients and staff participated in the lively rally outside of the MTA headquarters then attended the MTA board meeting chaired by Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, where Bus

Riders Union organizers, community members and others testified on the need for more buses without a fare increase. MCHA's Health Policy & Education Coordinator, Luz Chacon, testified on the need to reduce bus overcrowding and create a more accessible public transportation system that can in turn benefit public health by reducing pollution levels in L.A. County.

MCHA sees organizing as a critical and effective component of advocacy and, as our clients so accurately stated, "We cannot afford to be invisible". We join with our clients, as our own children suffer from asthma, as we long for workable transportation systems and as we fight budget and other cuts that reduce safety net services and diminish the capacity of the health care system countywide.

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MCH ACCESS AND PARTNERS HONORED WITH AWARD

Maternal and Child Health Access and its partners in health coverage and services trainings for public health nurses, the Health Consumer Center of Los Angeles and Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, were recently honored by the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services Nursing Administration as recipients of the 2005 James G. Houghton Award. Dr. Houghton was Medical Director of Public Health, Emeritus, in the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services where he championed many successes that have been directed to the enhancement of Public Health Nursing practice in Los Angeles County.

The award is presented to an individual or group within public health or a community partner who has significantly supported Public Health Nursing efforts for the enhancement of public health nursing practice toward meeting their mission of, "Healthy People in Healthy Communities."

Said LAC/DHS Interim Nursing Director Nancy Bendana, "Maternal and Child Health Access staff has consistently exemplified excellence in the delivery of educational sessions to our staff in the Public Health Nursing Orientation. These sessions have provided our staff with the tools to meet the challenging needs of the population that they serve."





Maternal and Child Health Access: Extends Its Partnership with Neighborhood Legal Services with Two New Projects

MCHA has partnered with the Neighborhood Legal Services (NLS) of Los Angeles since our inception. MCHA helped NLS develop the signature, "We've Got You Covered" comprehensive training on health care programs and services for low-income people. Hundreds of agencies working with low-income people have taken the training and continue to send new staff through it. We share materials, conduct trainings, consult on health care problems presented by our clients and work on policy issues together.

Given the strong MCHA-NLS relationship, we were delighted to be asked to be part of two new ventures:

"Ventanilla de Salud" is a collaborative project that has been funded by The California Endowment. "Ventanilla de Salud" or "The Window of Health" offers healthcare-related legal advice, enrollment into health plans, health education, and referrals to the thousands of Latinos who visit the Los Angeles Mexican Consulate Offices. MCHA was asked to join the collaborative this spring, to focus on health program enrollments for those who visit the Los Angeles Mexican Consulate. Though a partnership with the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services and MCHA, Consular visitors also receive health education sessions on topics of particular importance to Latinos. NLS has seen the project's success spread to Mexican Consulates in other large cities: ultimately the vision includes implementing the program in Central American consulates in Los Angeles and other cities. Our outreach workers DeeDee Davila and Otilia Gudino have been able to assist hundreds of Consul visitors already. One such visitor needed to find a mental health provider closer to her home for her daughter's mental health needs. The private

health plan balked, saying that 11 miles away was close enough. But traveling by bus made it a much longer trip with a couple transfers. With Ms. Davila's assistance, the family was able to change to a closer provider, one who agreed to see not only the daughter as the insured, but the entire family.

Our second joint venture is the Health Outreach and Program Education Project, or the HOPE Project. NLS was one of eight legal services or disability organizations statewide that was awarded a contract under the state Office of Patient Advocate's "HMO Enrollee Regional Education Center Initiative." The Office of the Patient Advocate (OPA) is an independent office in state government charged with informing and educating consumers about their rights and responsibilities as HMO enrollees. It seems very natural that NLS and MCHA should work together as an arm of OPA in the community: explaining the mission and services of the Office of Patient Advocate, distributing materials at community events, conducting educational presentations and providing individual advocacy and assistance to consumers with HMO issues. Said Barbara Siegal, Managing Attorney at the Health Consumer Center of NLS, "HCC is delighted to bring MCHA's insight and expertise to both the Ventanilla and HOPE projects. MCHA specialists in managed care and health coverage are a perfect compliment to the health advocacy work done at HCC."

For further information about the Ventanilla de Salud, contact Celia Valdez at (213) 749-4261 ext. 112. For more information about the HOPE Project, or a presentation about the Office of Patient Advocate, contact Liz Ramirez, at (213) 749-4261 ext. 113. The Neighborhood Legal Services website is www.nls-la.org.

WITH PUBLIC NURSING AWARD



Maternal and Child Health Access has trained public health nurses new to LA County DHS on health benefits topics since the inception of the Public Health Nursing Orientations in 2001. This year we have undertaken to train existing Public Health Nurses, in larger numbers, as well. By mid-2006, we will have trained all District Public Health Nurses in Los Angeles County's Department of Health Services! This is indeed an honor.

We welcome the opportunity not only to train, but to learn from the nurses what they are experiencing in the field with health coverage and health service needs. MCH Access staff Liz Ramirez, Director of Training, Donald Nollar, Trainer and Lynn Kersey, Executive Director, were treated to a wonderful luncheon at Almanson Court in Alhambra and given a beautiful plaque which hangs proudly in our Patricia Phillips Community Room.

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.
- Holiday entertainment for children - face painting, clown, music
- Free venue for large holiday party
- A night's receipts at a restaurant, a book-signing or a movie premiere!
- 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
- Grocery, department store or other gift certificates
- New walking shoes for our walking club
- Household items - kitchen items such as pots and pans, dishware, silverware, and plastic storage ware with lids.
- 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

For our offices...

- Small round office tables
- Digital camera
- 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.

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