



BCBSMA FOUNDATION 2008 AWARDS

Closing the Gap on Health Care Disparities – Grant Summaries

The *Closing the Gap on Health Care Disparities* grant area provides one year of planning support to eleven coalitions statewide seeking to reduce health disparities on the basis of race, ethnicity, immigration status, age, mental illness, and sexual orientation. These organizations demonstrate strong models to strengthen community-voice in the planning process and to conceive models that both shift clinical practice and effectiveness and increase public awareness about disparities and the social determinants of health. The planning year grants range from \$68-\$70,000 (*awards total \$768,387*). These eleven grantees will have the ability to apply for a two year implementation grant in 2009.

The Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation is designed to support innovative programs for groups with poorer health outcomes and/or reduced access to quality health care. The Foundation believes these inequities in care delivery are adaptive problems and require that community members and providers collaborate to change health care delivery and create programs that will help eliminate the barriers to care. We see this as a chance to bring new voices to the table and to raise public awareness about achieving health equity.

An innovative component of this grant area will be the creation of a statewide “learning community” to build relationships, share best practices, and create solutions among those who work in reducing health care disparities in the state.

The following organizations have been awarded grants in the Closing the Gap on Health Care Disparities grant program area:

AIDS Action Committee (AAC)

Collaborators: Mass General Hospital

Boston

Funding supports the AAC run Healing our Community Collaboratively (HOCC), a group of women infected and affected by HIV. AAC will facilitate a planning group of 20 women of color affected by HIV/AIDS and two clinical HIV/AIDS doctors at Massachusetts General Hospital. Together, the group will define barriers to care and develop proposed system changes, including training modules for providers, to eliminate disparities in the delivery of health care to women of color with AIDS.

Cambridge Cares About AIDS (CCAA)

Collaborators: Justice Resource Institute, Institute for Community Health

Boston

Funding supports efforts to address the disparities in health care for HIV positive men of color who have sex with men. Late entry to medical care contributes to the higher mortality rate experienced by HIV positive men of color who have sex with men. This project will consist of a Community Advisory Group, a community-based participatory research project grounded in theater techniques, creation of a strategic plan, infrastructure development and the design of an evidence-based community level intervention to reduce the number of individuals who delay accessing care.

Casa Latina

Collaborators: Cooley Dickenson Hospital, Northampton Area Pediatrics, Hilltown Community Health Center, ServiceNet, Valley Medical Group

Florence

Funding supports work to enhance access to health care for Latinos in Hampshire County. The project will document reasons for underutilization of available healthcare resources and structural barriers to care. Casa Latina will partner with five Hampshire County health agencies as well as members of the county's Latino population to define a focus area and develop an action plan to reduce disparities in health care access among Latinos in Hampshire County.

Central Massachusetts Area Health Education Center

Collaborators: MetroWest Mental Health and Substance Abuse Task Force, Advocates, South Middlesex Opportunity Council, Wayside Youth and Family Support Network, Health Awareness Services

Framingham

Funding supports research to study the reasons why Brazilians and Latinos in Framingham experience disparities in accessing mental health and substance abuse services and an intervention plan to reduce those disparities. Central Massachusetts Area Health Education Center will partner with the MetroWest Mental Health and Substance Abuse Task Force and other partners to establish the Framingham Mental Health and Substance Abuse Health Disparities Project to document the issues and to craft an intervention project.

Community Health Center of Cape Cod

Collaborators: Cape Cod Immigrant Center; Vineyard Health Care Access Program; Falmouth, Mashpee, Bourne and Barnstable Public Schools; Barnstable County Human Rights Commission

Cape Cod

Funding supports a planning project regarding the higher rates of diabetes among African, Asian, Latino, and Brazilian immigrants on Cape Cod. The center will partner with the other four community health centers on the Cape and Martha's Vineyard to run a project called "Healthy Immigrant Families" and build on the existing Cape and Island Diabetes Coalition. They will collect data, analyze findings, and develop appropriate interventions, in partnership with immigrant community members and groups.

Lowell Community Health Center

Collaborators: Greater Lowell Health Alliance, Mental Health Association of Greater Lowell, AfriCare, Massachusetts Alliance of Portuguese Speakers and the Latin American Health Institute.

Lowell

Funding supports the the *Gateways to Care (GTC) Program* at Lowell Community Health Center, an effort to improve the overall well being of immigrants suffering from depression. The GTC Program will identify and address gaps in access to mental health services for Cambodian, African, Brazilian, and Latino immigrants in the greater Lowell area through better coordination and integration of services among local agencies, and increased community education about depression and the availability of services and treatment.

Mt. Auburn Hospital

Collaborators: Power Program, WATCH and the Joseph M. Smith Community Health Center

Waltham

Funding supports *Listen and Learn*, a comprehensive community and provider assessment and outreach initiative to reduce Type 2 and gestational diabetes.

The group will work with community partners to address the higher rates of diabetes experienced by Latinos in the Waltham Community. The assessment phase includes focus groups and a photo voice project to identify areas for the proposed intervention to reduce diabetes amongst Latinos in Waltham.

Partners for a Healthier Community

Collaborators: Food Bank of Western Mass, MLK Community Center, HCFA Disparities Action Network, Health New England, Bay State Health, Springfield Partners for Community Action and others

Springfield

Funding supports *Live Well Springfield: Eat Smart. Stay Fit*, a project designed to address the higher rates of diabetes experienced by Latinos and African Americans in Springfield and Western Massachusetts. The community based planning process will focus on engagement, leadership development, behavior change, health systems and partnerships. They plan to increase community self-care tools for diabetes and improve the health care infrastructure for equity and community based self management.

ServiceNet, Inc.

Collaborators: NAMI Western Mass, United ARC of Franklin and Hampshire Counties, Valley Medical Group of Massachusetts, FIT Together

Northampton and surrounding areas

Funding supports a coalition to address the health and wellness needs of the chronically mentally ill and developmentally disabled adults in Northampton and Western Massachusetts. ServiceNet will conduct a thorough needs assessment and ecological survey of health wellness resources and plan interventions to reduce disparities in care and shortened lifespan for the developmentally disabled and chronically mentally ill, supporting system changes such as linkages between mental health and physical health providers, as well as community awareness and individual commitments to exercise.

Tapestry Health

Collaborators: Youth Empowerment Adolescent Health (YEAH) Network

Northampton and Western Massachusetts

Funding supports a community process to address the high rates of teen pregnancy among Latina teens in Northampton and Western Massachusetts. The group will identify health practices and beliefs, inequities and potential solutions, and implement interventions. They will develop a task force to address the disparities that result in high rates of pregnancy among Latina teens and will

support teen involvement on the task force. The goal is to increase access to reproductive health services for Latinas and to improve those services.

The YWCA of Central Massachusetts

Collaborators: Family Health Center of Worcester, Great Brook Valley Health Center, UMass Medical School, Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, Community Build

Worcester

Funding supports *Worcester Healthy Weight Now, Worcester Peso Sano Ahora*”, a project to address disparities in obesity among Latinos in Worcester through a partnership with two community health centers. The YWCA will build a community coalition and enlist the support and participation of businesses, educators, and health care providers to study and develop interventions to address disparities in care among Latinos. Interventions will address practitioner and individual changes to promote culturally competent communication and regular physical activity and nutrition education among Latino Families