

Winter 2009

CCHERS Mission

The mission of CCHERS is to promote the development of “academic community health centers” that integrate service, education, and research to influence and change health professions education, improve health care delivery, and promote health systems change, to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in health.

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Critical MASS Joins National Partnership for Action to Eliminate Health Disparities

As a member of the National Partnership for Action, Critical MASS was invited to exhibit at the Third National Leadership Summit on Eliminating Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities of the Office of Minority Health (OMH), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, on February 25–27, 2009. The 2009 Leadership Summit continued the conversations, collaborations, and commitment to actions that were initiated at the 2006 Summit. It also sought to build on the core objectives of the National Partnership for Action to End Health Disparities (NPA) (2006 Summit), by incorporating the following five core objectives as the 2009 Summit's objectives and tracks:

- ❖ Increased awareness of health disparities;
- ❖ Strengthened leadership at all levels;
- ❖ Improved patient-provider communication;
- ❖ Improved cultural and linguistic competency; and
- ❖ Improved coordination and utilization of research and evaluation outcomes.

The National Partnership for Action to Eliminate Health Disparities (NPA) was created to address the call expressed by summit leaders and participants to address racial and ethnic Health Disparities Regionally. The NPA held regional conversations across the country providing opportunities for the voices of community members, leaders, and organizations to be heard as a collective group. The 2009 Summit continued the development of the national strategy and helped summit leaders and participants to move towards a common language, from health disparities to health equity. To attain this objective, the Summit strived to: (1) build a renewed sense of leadership and partnerships across communities, (2) share success stories and methods, (3) demonstrate how model

programs can be replicated or tailored for greater impact, and (4) create methods, tactics, and ideas that support more effective and efficient action.

As part of NPA, Critical MASS had the opportunity to be a part of the exhibition at this year's Summit. The exhibit highlighted the work that Critical MASS has accomplished in the state of Massachusetts including our Toolkit: Taking Community Action on Health Disparities. In alignment with OMH's five core tracks, Critical MASS is and will continue to develop and strengthen the leadership at all levels to take action on racial and ethnic health disparities and move towards health equity. In addition to community action, Critical MASS continues its partnership with Health Care for all and the Disparities Action Network to address health disparities through legislation and policy initiatives. Both of these tactics have enabled Critical MASS to have a broad range of influences in eliminating health disparities in Massachusetts.



Dr. Beverly Russell, CCHERS, Inc., Dr. Garth Graham, Deputy Assistant Secretary of OMH, Kerone Anderson, Critical MASS/CCHERS, Inc

Executive Director's Corner

Critical MASS

Since its conception in 2001 at the New England Regional Minority Health Conference, Critical MASS has made strides in its efforts as a coalition to address racial and ethnic health disparities from the perspective of community members. In its quest to mobilize community members through grassroots efforts, the Critical MASS steering committee co-authored and published a Toolkit: Taking Community ACTION on Health Disparities. The Toolkit is a catalyst in the hands of anyone who seeks to address racial and ethnic health disparities in their respective communities. We believe the Toolkit is an asset with critical resources and information that can be utilized by individuals as well as groups to be change agents and advocates in their communities around health disparities.

Critical MASS continues its efforts to bring awareness to racial and ethnic health disparities through statewide partnerships and collaborations. Moreover, we continue to explore the methodologies in addition to the Toolkit that will reduce and bring equity to health disparities. At this time, we are seeking to bring forth compelling issues in health disparities as well as best practices to the forefront. We believe that there's much work ahead of us, even though we have made progressive movements towards equity in health insurance for all in the State of Massachusetts. As we move forward in this movement, let's continue to seek opportunities to collaborate, share resources, and work together. Together we can achieve equity in racial and ethnic health disparities.

THE TOOLKIT

The Toolkit: Taking Community Action on Health Disparities helps individuals and organizations at the community level mobilize towards the elimination of health disparities and the creation of health equity within their communities. The toolkit is designed for people with little or no experience with health disparities, community organizing, or public health. The toolkit does not focus on specific diseases or conditions but rather takes a more general approach to understanding and addressing health disparities, which makes it applicable in differing community settings. Each chapter in this toolkit provides you with key information on a particular topic, including practical step-by-step instructions.



For more information on Critical MASS or to order a Toolkit, please visit our website at enddisparities.org or contact Kerone Anderson, Critical MASS Coordinator, at 617-373-8579 | ke.anderson@neu.edu.

LEAVING A LEGACY

Holland retires from Boston Public Schools after 30 years' service

By Meaghan Casey from the Boston Educator

During his distinguished 30-year career in Boston Public Schools, Albert Holland has guided generations of students in South Boston, Dorchester and the Fenway. Throughout it all, he has never lost an ounce of passion. "My life has been blessed to have worked in Boston Public Schools," said Holland. "It's been one of the greatest experiences I could have imagined."

Holland retired from the BPS in August as headmaster and executive director of Health Careers Academy (HCA). Though he no longer holds an official title, he will forever remain an educator, dedicated to the advancement of Boston's youth. "I understand how important public education is, and how critical it is to the health of our city and our community," said Holland. "I understand the urgency that exists right now to make sure our schools are performing at their full potential so that our students can reach their full potential."

"Al Holland is an educator of the highest caliber," said Superintendent Dr. Carol R. Johnson. "His service to students and families is immeasurable; we are all in his debt." Born and raised in Boston, Holland graduated from the James P. Timilty Middle School in Roxbury and the former Jamaica Plain High School.

Holland spent seven years at South Boston High, leaving as assistant headmaster. From there, he served as headmaster at the Jeremiah E. Burke High School from 1982-93. "Those were some of my most challenging and most rewarding years," Holland said. At the Burke, Holland worked to improve academic standards, prevent gang violence and create a safer learning environment. He also sought out new partnerships and resources with community organizations and businesses. After more than a decade at the Burke, Holland went on to become an assistant superintendent in charge of high schools. He also worked with the Boston Police Department to install violence-prevention programs and initiate dialogue between students and authorities. He later helped launch the Boston Pilot Schools Network.

In 2001, Holland returned to the high school environment, accepting the position at HCA. Located on the campus of Northeastern University, HCA is a Horace Mann Charter School founded in 1995. The school provides a supportive learning environment and strong academic curriculum for students exploring careers in the health professions and related fields. "The school is meeting its mission," said Holland. "We're sending more kids to college and we're paving the opportunity for students to go into the medical field. MCAS scores have risen every year, with more and more students scoring in advanced and proficient. Since 2006, the graduation rate has been between 95 and 100 percent." Students also have the opportunity to participate in diverse job shadowing, internship and summer work experiences in health care.

Caren Walker who now serves as headmaster of HCA, served as co-headmaster with Holland during the 2006-07 school year. He now serves on the HCA board of directors, and is still active within the BPS. "It's important for me to continue to support HCA," said Holland. "It's what we want all of our schools to become – a school that provides our youngsters a safe place to learn, and a school that challenges them intellectually and to give back to others." Partners include Brigham & Women's Hospital, Children's Hospital, Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, Harvard University School of Public Health, Massachusetts General Hospital and TJX Companies, in addition to Northeastern – Holland's alma mater.



Al Holland with students from HCA

Health Disparities among Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

- Leo V. Sarkissian, Executive Director,
The Arc of Massachusetts



The Arc of Massachusetts received a grant from The Boston Foundation to study health care received by individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). The Arc's health care research and goals are reflected in the CCHERS' Mission. The Arc firmly believes that all individuals have the right to easily accessible, culturally competent, and high-quality health care in the community. During 2007 and 2008, The Arc of Massachusetts reached out to and met with a diverse group of participants, including individuals from various racial and ethnic backgrounds, to gather their health care experiences of adults with I/DD. Over 150 participants throughout the state took part in a focus group, interview, or on-line survey. The respondents were adults with I/DD and their parents/guardians, community support and health care professionals, state legislators, and health insurance providers. The Arc's Health Care Project Team diligently worked on compiling the data gathered from the respondents and publication of the report, which was recently released on February 2, 2009.

Report Findings

Respondents identified major themes: knowledge, communication, quality, access, insurance, and care coordination. Most of the key barriers or themes seem to connect and revert back to lack of knowledge as a fundamental factor. Misunderstanding and lack of information of this patient population closely intertwine with and contribute to the current health care system's shortfalls. In addition, the lack of care coordination was identified as a major barrier due to the inability of some adults to effectively recognize, advocate, communicate, and understand their health care needs.

Lack of Knowledge

The most salient theme reported across all respondent groups (except state legislators and insurance providers) was health care professionals' lack of training about and exposure to patients with I/DD. Many respondents reported health care professionals who lack training are not prepared to deal with the medical needs of patients with I/DD, nor are they "sensitized" to this population. For example, respondents reported health care professionals who were not capable of completing physical examinations while others reported that their sons/daughters received misdiagnoses or inappropriate labeling.

In response, many parents/guardians became educators of and liaisons to their sons'/daughters' health care professionals. Parents/guardians reported they provided strategies and interventions; in particular, they assisted with medical procedures and taught health care professionals how to effectively communicate with their sons/daughters. In order to train the doctor, one parent reported taking photographs to her son's health care appointments.

Lack of Care Coordination

Another major theme and need revealed by the study was care coordination, which is not a standard practice of care for all individuals with I/DD. Parents/guardians reported that their sons'/daughters' care was almost always coordinated in the pediatric world, but this valuable resource had disappeared in adult health care system. Since a fragmented system was found in the adult world, many of the parents/guardians stepped in to assume the difficult – sometimes overwhelming – role of care coordinator. One mother described juggling seven health care pro-

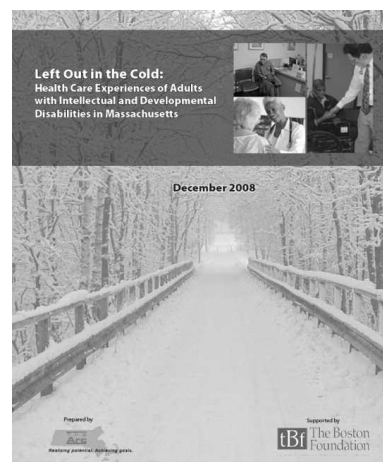
fessionals during the focus group meeting. She recalled that she had left out two other providers. She was managing nine different health care professionals for her adult son.

Others sometimes stepped in to facilitate as informal care coordinators: families, friends, neighbors, and/or service coordinators. Adults with I/DD reported seeking help from others in performing tasks such as paying medical bills and filling prescriptions. Respondents reported that adults with I/DD – those without a care coordinator – would sometimes miss scheduled appointments or arrive at appointments that had to be rescheduled due to lack of communication between providers.

Many of the health care professionals reported they did not have the time to act as the patients' care coordinator. One health care professional described how he assigned a staff member in the office to act as the liaison between the patient and other providers.

Additional Identified Barriers

The additional themes or findings (communication, quality, access, insurance, and respondent recommendations) as well as summaries of the state legislator and health insurance provider interviews are provided in the full report. To access the full or executive summary version of the report, go to www.arcmass.org and click on the following links: Community Services followed by Health and Wellness Resources.



Recommendations

The report's recommendations have been vetted with knowledgeable health care professionals and advocates, in addition to the experiences and recommendations shared by the respondents. Currently, members of The Arc's Health Care Steering Committee and Health Care Project Team are in the policy implementation phase.

The report's findings and recommendations reflect a need for change in the following areas: education and training of health care professionals; reimbursement rates; access and quality of care, including care coordination; and training of individuals with disabilities and their supporters. Also, additional research is suggested, including the examination of best practices of individuals with I/DD from diverse communities and further investigation of the utilization and access to health care specialists. Again, refer to the full report to view the details of each recommendation.

Is Change Possible?

This study found experiences of good quality care as well as positive experiences with access in community health care practices and hospitals, which demonstrates that barriers can be overcome and the improvement of the community health care system can be accomplished and achieved.

A combination of proper education, training, and exposure is the first step in addressing the need. Knowledge is power, but without experience and application of this information, it is not effective.

Critical Mass

Critical MASS Toolkit as a Textbook

In the Fall semester of 2008, Dr. Nina Coppen, Department Chair and Professor of Psychology at UMASS Lowell, utilized the Critical MASS Toolkit as a textbook for her class: Health Promotion and Risk Reduction, which is taught in the Masters Community Social Psychology program. The class had an enrollment of 17 students who expressed interest in learning about health disparities and the work that Critical MASS is doing to eliminate them. On December 2nd, Elmer Freeman, co-chair of the Critical MASS steering committee, lectured on the history of health disparities with students and faculty in the program as well as others from the School of Health and Environment (Nursing, Physical Therapy, Health Education, and Health Policy), student health services, and health providers in the community. We are delighted that members of the community (Lowell Community Health Center, Lowell General Hospital, and Lowell Health Department) joined the students and faculty for this event.



Kerone Anderson, Dr. Nina Coppen, and her students from the Health Promotion and Risk Reduction class @ UMASS Lowell

DISPARITIES ACTION NETWORK

CCHERS continues to partner with the legislative advocacy coalition the Disparities Action Network (DAN), to develop policy proposals that advance health equity in Massachusetts. This fall, Elmer Freeman was re-elected to his second term as Co Chair of the statewide coalition. Working with fellow chair Dr. Michele David of Boston Medical Center, Mr. Freeman led the DAN through the development of new legislative priorities and the defense of health disparities initiatives from state budget cuts.

The coalition successfully advocated for the maintenance of an EOHHS Office of Health Equity in the state budget, through an initial set of state reductions. The coalition simultaneously drafted two pieces of legislation for the new session; one bill will codify the EOHHS Office of Health Equity in statute and another will establish a community based state disparities grant program. The two bills provide the state with a stronger infrastructure to lead and coordinate disparities efforts, while supporting local communities to implement programs and best practices.

CCHERS and the DAN are gearing up for a busy spring, preparing for new state budget challenges, legislative hearings, and educational events. Stay tuned for more information and opportunities to get involved!

For more information regarding the DAN, please contact Camille Watson at (617) 275-2936 / cwatson@hcfama.org.

Health Disparities Student Collaborative (HDSC)

Morissa G. Sobelson, a student at Tufts University, founded the Health Disparities Student Collaborative: a group of undergraduate and graduate students of many different backgrounds committed to building partnerships between academic institutions and communities in Boston. Critical MASS “adopted” this student group in January 2008 and provided them with an organizational and stable home. A working partnership was fostered between the Critical MASS Steering Committee and the Student Leadership Committee—as well as the institutions and communities with which both groups are closely connected. HDSC activities included:

- ❖ Set up and coordinate an active email listserv that allows members and supporters to keep each other attuned to important issues and opportunities;
- ❖ Submitting a proposal to the Department of Public Health to collaborate on a series of health disparities awareness and action events, around the Unnatural Causes series, at local colleges during the 2008-2009 academic year.

Under the leadership of Morissa Sobelson and Melissa Lichte, the Health Disparities Student Collaborative (HDSC) worked with Critical MASS and the Department of Public Health to sponsor their first screening of Unnatural Causes in their Fall 2008 Campus Event. In line with their mission, the HDSC was able to (1) raise awareness among students and community members of the root causes of health inequities and (2) empower participants to take action on initiatives to eliminate health disparities. Morissa will be graduating from Tufts in Spring 2009. She has transferred leadership to Larissa Jones of Boston College. Larissa has created a new governing body for HDSC and welcomes college students’ involvement in HDSC’s future activities for Spring 2009.



Elmer Freeman, Executive Director of CCHERS, Inc. & Morissa Sobelson, founder of the HDSC

For more information regarding the HDSC, please contact Larissa Jones at joneslv@bc.edu or Kerone Anderson at (617) 373-8597/ke.anderson@neu.edu.

COMMUNITY VOICES

Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) hosts Community Voices

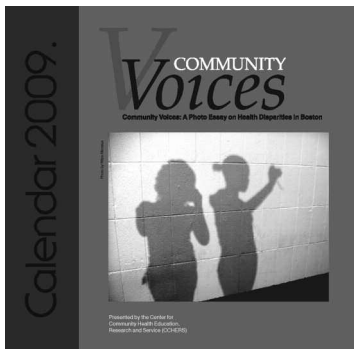
On January 19th, 2009, Community Voices was a featured presentation on this special day and the students were hosted by the MFA's Teen Arts Council. Lou Jones - CV Advisory Committee member and photographer - offered his reflections on the importance of the students' work and the connection between photography, MLK Jr. Day, and eliminating health disparities. Mr. Jones also facilitated a Q & A session with the students and audience of 200 people following the presentation.



CV students Sony Benjamain, Shanasia Bennett, and Rudy White Jr. presented the photo essay at the MFA's Remis Auditorium.

Photo Essay 2009 Calendar Now Available

A 2009 calendar of the Community Voices students' photos, essays, and poems on health disparities is now available for purchase. These calendars are printed in vibrant color on high quality paper and make excellent additions to your office, home, or classroom. Each month focuses on a different disparity impacting our communities including diabetes, nutrition, obesity, cancer, teen pregnancy, maternal and child health, dental health, immigrant health, and environmental health.



Expanding in 2009 to Boston Public Schools

Back by popular demand, CCHERS began piloting Community Voices at 4 Boston Public High Schools in January - Madison Park High School, Health Careers Academy, Boston Adult Technical Academy, and the University High School program of Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD). The spring program has over 60 students enrolled and participants will explore health disparities through the Unnatural Causes film series, guest lectures, internships at Community Health Centers, and a mini-project working with photography, radio broadcasting, or oral histories.

If you or your organization is interested in helping us reach more youth through this important educational program, please contact Alison Lima, Project Coordinator, at 617 373-5588 or a.lima@neu.edu for more information.

NEWS BRIEFS

World AIDS Day Film Screening

On December 1st, CCHERS hosted "Stigma – Our Stories, Our Secrets, Our Burdens: Three short films on HIV/AIDS in communities of color" at Northeastern University's Raytheon Amphitheater. The films, previously screened at the Roxbury Film Festival, included "Hope", "Secrets", and Spike Lee's "Jesus Children of America", two of which were substituted by a "Sharpening Our Oyster Knives: Living with HIV/AIDS today" which was largely filmed here in Boston. The viewing was followed by an expert panel moderated by Georgia Simpson May of the Department Public Health's Office of Health Equity which included Irvienne Goldson of Action for Boston Community Development, Pastor William E. Dickerson II of the Greater Love Tabernacle, Dr. Dora Gutierrez of the Latin American Health Institute, and Dr. Hortensia Amaro of Northeastern University. Students, faculty, staff, and community members attended the event.



Dr. Hortensia Amaro, Pastor William E. Dickerson II, Irvienne Goldson, & Dr. Dora Gutierrez

New Program at CCHERS addresses disparity from a Literacy Angle

As of January 2009, CCHERS has started the Community Health Education and Literacy Program (CHELP) funded by the Tufts Health Plan Foundation. This new project that will utilize a multidisciplinary and multifaceted approach to help African-American and Latino patients understand and navigate the health care system and improve their health literacy. The program aims to decrease health disparities by enhancing self-care management behaviors for patients suffering from diabetes and hypertension and by promoting trusting relationships with providers.

There will be an educational curriculum developed specifically for CHELP to enhance patients' knowledge of their chronic illness that will be taught by the area's health experts and educators. We plan to enroll 48-60 patients in four 8-12 week programs, with classes meeting once a week. One group will focus specifically on elderly African-Americans. Classes will consist of group discussions, demonstrations of healthy lifestyles, with examples of healthy diets, exercise routines, and chronic illness management.

With the first Project Advisory Committee scheduled for mid-March, we plan to have the project underway as of April and completed by March of 2010.

NEWS OF OUR PARTNERS

Northeastern Partners with Community Advocacy Program (CAP) for Annual Toy Drive

This year, the CAP conducted its 4th annual "Holiday Toy and Gift Drive" to assist our clients and their children during the holiday season.

With the help of the Verizon Wireless program Kids In Need, the behavioral health department at Boston Medical Center, Gordon Michaels and friends, the Everyone Loves Families Project, and the Latino/a Student Cultural Center, and colleagues and supporters of our program in the Center for Community Service, Government Affairs, and the President's Office at Northeastern University, we were able to provide toys to over 100 children and gifts to approximately 55 moms.

Bowdoin Street Advocate wins MLK Black Achiever Award

CAP's longest-standing Advocate, Marjorie Mills with a tenure of 11 years in her role as Domestic Violence Advocate, is one of two recipients of the 2009 Martin Luther King, Jr. Black Achiever Award presented by Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (BIDMC).

For more information on the CAP Program, please visit our website at www.cchers.org/cap or contact:

Sue Chandler, Director, at 617-373-5779 / s.chandler@neu.edu, or Keisha Ormond, Community Outreach Coordinator, at 617-373-5140 / k.ormond@neu.edu.

ROAST FOR DR. GARY GOTTLIEB

On Wednesday, April 1, 2009, Whitter Street Health Center will be hosting, "SHRINKing Disparities in Health Care," a benefit honoring Dr. Gary Gottlieb, President of Brigham and Women's Hospital. The benefit will be held at the Boston Park Plaza Hotel at 5:30pm. For more information, please call 617-989-3182 or e-mail events@wshc.org.

ROCK THE BOAT 2009

The Mattapan Community Health Center hosts it's annual benefit, "ROCK THE BOAT 2009," featuring The Community Health Pinnacle Awards. The recipients are Diane L. Patrick, First Lady of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and Dr. Richard Kalish, Boston HealthNet, BMC HealthNet Plan, and BU School of Medicine. The event will be held on Saturday, April 25, 2009 at the Renaissance Boston Waterfront Hotel. For more information regarding tickets, please call 617-898-9049 or e-mail rtb@matchc.org.



Eric Buehrens, Executive Vice President and COO of BIDMC, Marjorie, and Adela Margules, Executive Director at Bowdoin St. Health Center, at awards ceremony 1/13/09



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