

MINNEAPOLIS

HEALTHY CITY THRIVING FAMILIES



A Quarterly Update from the City of Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support

January - March 2005



Office workers wandering to vending machines in the mid-afternoon find a surprising selection of healthy snacks. Lunchtime walking groups form in the dead of winter and arm themselves with skyway maps. Fourth graders come home from the Minneapolis Public Schools with awards for physical activity. These are some of the environmental “climate changes” that the Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support (MDHFS) successfully proposed to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for a five-year grant called “Steps to a Healthier U.S.”

MDHFS was selected along with the Minnesota Department of Health and the cities of Saint Paul, Rochester, and Willmar to receive this funding, which started in December 2004. The Steps initiative aims to help Americans live healthier, longer lives by reducing the burdens of diabetes, excess weight, obesity, and asthma by addressing three related risk factors – physical inactivity, poor nutrition and tobacco

use. More than 100 applicants from across the nation submitted proposals, and 11 were chosen to receive grants in this highly competitive process.

Through the Steps grant, MDHFS and the other grantees will work to:

- Increase residents’ awareness of healthy lifestyle choices - physical activity, nutrition and tobacco use reduction - and encourage making healthy choices.
- Help schools and communities promote physical activity and healthy nutrition and support the prevention of chronic disease.
- Make healthy lifestyle choices easier among adults - through worksite and business environmental change - to reduce the impacts of diabetes and obesity.

Some of the activities that MDHFS plans through the Steps grant include sponsoring a walking program, encouraging obesity screening at community clinics, raising awareness about healthy food portion sizes, and community education about the dangers of secondhand smoke for children. MDHFS will also work with the Minneapolis Public Schools on several interventions including nutrition education, expanding vegetable and fruit choices in school cafeterias, improving nutrition and

physical activity opportunities for students, and exploring potential strategies to decrease diabetes and asthma.

MDHFS will develop a community consortium to implement these and other healthy living initiatives. The consortium will include representatives from the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, the Downtown Council, the Neighborhood Health Care Network, the Mayor’s Office, the Minneapolis Public Schools, and community-based organizations serving Minneapolis’ diverse communities.

For more information about the Steps grant, please contact Ellie Zuehlke at 612/673-5438.

INSIDE HCTF

TALK, READ AND WRITE WITH YOUR CHILD EVERY DAY
PAGE TWO

IMPROVING ACCESS TO CITY SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH LIMITED ENGLISH
PAGE THREE

URBAN HEALTH AGENDA: PREVENTING LEAD POSIONING IN CHILDREN
PAGE THREE

HEALTHY CITY UPDATES
PAGE FOUR

Talk, read and write with your child every day!

An evaluation study of this two-year project bringing free books and early literacy messages to young children in low-income and minority families has just been completed. MDHFS and the Minneapolis Public Library partnered with Reach Out and Read, Reading Rx, Friends of the Library, and 10 community clinics on this early literacy project funded by the Youth Coordinating Board. Two key messages were delivered by health care providers to parents:

Talk, read and write with your child

Visit the library with your child

For only about \$2 per child, the project gave 13,898 families with children up to five years old a new, age-appropriate children's book and a few minutes of one-on-one early literacy teaching from a medical provider during a clinic visit in 2004.

Studies show that sharing books with babies positively impacts brain development: "Reading aloud provides visual and sound stimulation, fosters vocabulary and abstract thinking skills, a longer attention span, listening skills and better social development. And, of course, reading skills are critical to children's success in school," states Dr. Hilary Stecklein, Founder, Reading Rx. Parents exposed to clinic-based programs are more likely to read to their young children, read more often, and provide more

books at home. These types of programs enhance language development, and research clearly shows a link between literacy skills and lifelong health and achievement.

Feedback from clients and partners shows that families and clinic staff find this intervention meaningful. One clinic nurse said, "Our nurse practitioners love spending time with the families teaching them to appreciate books and reading."

This inexpensive and effective model is a major stepping-stone for future collaborations to expand Minneapolis clinic-based early literacy efforts. Ongoing efforts to secure funding and institutionalize the program continue. For more information, contact Megan Ellingson at 612/673-3817.

The Minneapolis
Department of
Health and
Family Support
(MDHFS) works

to ensure that all families are healthy and fully share in the social and economic opportunities of the City of Minneapolis. The MDHFS reaches residents by working in partnership with community organizations, other units of government, schools, and health and human service agencies.



Ken Dahl, Interim Director

**Council Member
Natalie Johnson Lee, Chair
Health & Human Services Committee**

612/673-2301

www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/dhfs

If you need this document in an alternative format, please call 612/ 673-2301 or TTY 612/673-2157 (General City Information). Please allow a reasonable amount of time for special needs accommodation.



Michelle Bowles and her daughter Dominique enjoy a holiday party sponsored by Twin Cities Healthy Start. Over 50 families participated in this December event with over 200 gifts distributed. Healthy Start works with American Indian and African American families to improve infant health and reduce infant death. In 2004, Healthy Start connected with over 340 families. For more information, call 612/673-3448.

Multicultural Services: Improving access to City services for people with limited English

Imagine your first experience with a Minnesota winter. You are watching the news and something called a Snow Emergency has been declared. You don't understand very much English, but you manage to make out that parking rules are important. Luckily, you hear about a hotline in your language; you make the call and find out that you have to move your car.

People no longer need to imagine this level of service, and such hotlines are not at the mercy of luck. In October of 2004, the Minneapolis City Council approved the City's language access, or Limited English Proficiency (LEP) plan brought forward by Multicultural

Services. A Limited English Proficiency Plan is required by law under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act to provide meaningful access to services for people with limited English. But it's not just a federal mandate; it's also good business since 20 percent of Minneapolis residents speak a language other than English at home. They also pay taxes, operate businesses and contribute to the vitality of our city.

Launched in 2001 by MDHFS, Minneapolis Multicultural Services was created to help City departments become more user-friendly for people with limited English. In 2005,

Multicultural Services will work with City departments to implement language service strategies outlined in the LEP plan. This means posting better signs, expanding the use of interpreters, and translating vital documents into some of the more commonly spoken languages. The ultimate goal is to make City of Minneapolis services accessible in any language. For more information, contact Kristin Keller at 612/673-3737. For language access needs, call the following Multicultural Services hotlines: Spanish 612/673-2700, Hmong 612/673-2800, or Somali 612/673-3500. (See related article on page 4.)

Urban Health Agenda: Preventing lead poisoning in children

Lead poisoning can harm almost all systems in the body, causing serious, irreversible health and learning problems in children. It is an important issue for Minneapolis, since so much of the city's housing is aging and tainted with lead paint. MDHFS has collaborated with community partners on this issue over the past five years, and has recently subcontracted with the Sustainable Resources Center (SRC) for a federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grant to reach Minneapolis families with young children at risk for lead poisoning. A major goal of this effort is to move the City to a model focused on prevention, in order to address lead in housing and educate families before children become poisoned.

Other partners in the effort to reduce childhood lead poisoning include the City's Regulatory Services Department, Minnesota Department of

Health, Congregations Advocating Their Children's Health (CATCH), UCare, Neighborhood Health Care Network, Hennepin County Human Services and Public Health, and Hennepin County Housing, Community Works and Transit.

In July 2004, MDHFS began calling families with children who had elevated blood lead levels that were still below the state-mandated intervention levels. During the phone calls, MDHFS staff encouraged families to get a follow-up blood test within three months of their first test (as recommended by the MN Department of Health) to insure that lead levels are decreasing. Staff also asked families if they would like to learn more about keeping their homes and families safe from lead. The HUD grant helps to address lead hazards in these children's homes. From July to December 2004, 87 families in

Minneapolis were referred to the SRC (out of a total of 291 contacts) for further education and home visits.

Because lead poisoning can cause permanent brain damage, developmental delays, and behavior problems, families were also given information about Early Childhood Screening and 348-TOTS. If these early screenings detect any problems in three-to-four-year olds, the children can get extra help to be ready for kindergarten.

Special thanks go to Sarah Dixon, MDHFS intern, who developed this calling system. This successful effort will continue, as it provides critical connections and information to Minneapolis families and helps further develop MDHFS' efforts to prevent lead poisoning. For more information, please contact Megan Ellingson at 612/673-3817.

Healthy City Updates

Funding Award Updates

The **New Families Center**, a partnership of the MDHFS and Minneapolis Public Schools, received \$50,640 from the Children's Defense Fund, the first installment of a \$130,000 grant continuing through June 30, 2005. The New Families Center assists recent immigrant families with applications for health insurance, immunizations, access to health insurance, and referrals to medical and other community services. For more information, call Gretchen Musicant at 612/673-3955.

The Senior Ombudsman's Office

received a \$23,058 grant from the Minnesota Department of Revenue to bring its tax preparation program additional computers and printers and also to provide training, supplies and parking funds. This is the second grant targeted to the tax assistance program. Volunteer tax preparers provide year-around assistance, and from mid-January through mid-April, they are available every business day from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. These volunteers helped complete more than 6,000 individual

returns in 2004. For more information, contact Ruth Kildow at 612-673-3567.

MDHFS has awarded 7 agencies **Maternal and Child Health grants** for 2005-06. This was a highly competitive process with \$220,000 available, and \$950,000 in requests. Grants were awarded to the Bridge for Runaway Youth, Centro, CLUES and West Side Community Health Services/La Clinica en Lake, Fremont Community Health Services, Native American Community Clinic, Plymouth Christian Youth Center, and Southeast Asian Community Council. For more information, contact Janet Howard at 612/673-3735.

MDHFS was recently awarded \$267,500 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for the second year of a five-year project **to improve reproductive health and reduce sexually transmitted infections among young African American men in Minneapolis**. The *Seen on da Streets* health educators and youth advocates are based at Fremont Clinic in north Minneapolis and at Teen Age Medical Service (TAMS) in south Minneapolis. In the first year of the project, almost 4,000 young men received information, 1,868 had individual risk

assessments, and 747 young men were tested for sexually transmitted infections. MDHFS is evaluating *Seen on da Streets'* innovative outreach with disenfranchised youths to determine the best ways to encourage young men to use health services. For more information, contact Pat Harrison at 612/673-3883.

Minneapolis Multicultural Services

In December 2004, Multicultural Services welcomed two new bilingual program aides: Stephanie Yang (aide in Hmong) and Roman Gonzalez (aide in Spanish). Stephanie and Roman join Vicenta Valero (bilingual program aide-Spanish), Dekka Yusuf (bilingual program aide-Somali) and Kristin Keller, coordinator.

Multicultural Services now has a new home with the Minneapolis Civil Rights Department. They have moved to room 237 in City Hall, and all phone numbers and e-mail addresses remain the same.

Staff on the Move

Bill Carter, American Indian Community Advocate, has moved from MDHFS to the Civil Rights Department. Bill is at the same phone number: 612/673-3028.

Jennifer Markworth, social worker, joined the School Based Clinics this fall. Jennifer has diverse experience working with adolescents, including teaching at a high school in the Czech Republic, and has a master's degree in Counseling. She can be reached at 612/673-3816.

Nancy Omondi, Research intern, is a graduate student in Health Services Research & Policy at the University of Minnesota's School of Public Health. Nancy has a special interest in reproductive health. Her phone number is 612/673-3717.

Sarah Dixon served as an intern from June through December 2004. While at MDHFS, Sarah made significant contributions to the New Families Center explaining the health care system for limited English speaking residents, and working with children at risk for lead poisoning (see page 3). Sarah is completing her Community Studies degree at the University of California at Santa Cruz.



The Minneapolis Advisory Committee on People with Disabilities celebrated its 30th Anniversary on October 20, 2004, in the City Hall rotunda. The committee serves the City of Minneapolis to help improve the quality of life for individuals with disabilities by ensuring greater access to employment, education, housing, retail, entertainment and recreational opportunities. Festivities included performances by Theater Mu's Taiko drums and an aria by vocalist Lucy Sirianni, who is blind. The speaker is John Schatzlein (far left), original 1974 Committee member, highlighting the past 30 years' accomplishments.