



**SCHOOL BASED  
HEALTH AND  
WELLNESS CENTERS**  
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**“Using Health Promoters,  
as Part of a  
School-based Health Center  
Health Promotion Program,  
to Gain Access to  
Underserved and Hard-to-  
reach Families”**

Authors:

Mark Hodge, M.S., B.S.N., R.N.

Nurse Manager, Montgomery County SBHCs

Judith Covich, M.A., B.S.N., R.N.

Director, School Health Services

Joan Glick, M.S.N., C.R.N.P.

Nurse Administrator, Montgomery County SBHCs

Jonathan Chin, B.S.

Health Educator, Montgomery County SBHCs

# Demographics

- Total Population of Montgomery County = 932,131
- Between 1990 and 2000, county grew 15%; minority population grew 74%
- Approximately 142 different languages are spoken by residents of Montgomery County
- Montgomery County residents primary language spoken at home – not English = 33%

(Census.gov – 2006)

# Demographics

- Race/Ethnicity Breakdown of Montgomery County
  - 16% African American
  - 14% Latino/Hispanic
  - 13% Asian
- Race/Ethnicity of students in Montgomery County Public Schools
  - 23% African American
  - 21% Latino/Hispanic
  - 15% Asian
- Race/Ethnicity of students in Montgomery County's SBHCs
  - 65% Latino/Hispanic
  - 26% African American/African
  - 5% Asian

# Background Information

- Immigrant populations are often unclear how to navigate the U.S. health care system and are often unwilling to access services provided by “the government”
- Montgomery County currently has 3 Elementary School Based Health Centers (SBHCs) providing services to approximately 1,500 children
- Two of the SBHCs are located at schools in walking communities. A majority of students are bussed to school at the third site.

# Background Information

- Approximately 34% of students enrolled in the SBHCs are uninsured and ineligible for medical assistance (often due to immigration status)
- Montgomery County SBHCs provide primary healthcare to enrolled students during the school day; students can be treated during the day which allows them to stay in school and keeps parents from having to miss work for doctor's visits
- About 10% of the school population at SBHCs are hard-to-reach, despite repeated attempts by school and SBHC staff to get those students enrolled in the SBHC

# Barriers to Healthcare Access in Montgomery County

- Poverty
- Immigration Status
- Lack of Health Insurance
- Low Education Level
- Cultural Isolation
- Linguistic Isolation
- Lack of Understanding about the System
- Transportation
- Fear



# Challenges with Increasing Enrollment

- Overcoming all of the previously mentioned barriers is a challenge we try to address daily at the SBHCs
- Despite efforts to increase enrollment to over 90%, during the 2006-2007 school year, only 88% of all eligible students were enrolled in the SBHCs
- The high mobility rate (36%) of the immigrant population at the SBHC's, is a challenge to increasing enrollment
- Convincing some parents to use SBHCs as a point of access to care for their children, even if their children attend the school, is also a challenge

Montgomery County School Based Health and Wellness Centers

# So How Do We Gain Access to these Hard-to-reach Families?



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# Interventions With Little Effect

- Mass Mailings
- Phone Calls
- PTA Meetings
- Free Flu Vaccines
- Teacher Incentives
- Health Fair Raffles
- Give-Away
- Coffee Hours



\*Bilingual services (English/Spanish) were provided during each intervention

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# So, again, How Do We Gain Access to these Hard-to-reach Families?



TIME TO  
THINK  
OUTSIDE OF  
THE BOX

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## Montgomery County Health Promoters

- 7 Distinct Health Promoter Programs working together since 1998
- Common Mission for Montgomery County's Health Promoter Programs
  - To improve the health of the community by eliminating racial and ethnic health disparities through the training of lay health educators, who share the cultural, linguistic and demographic characteristics of their community. The lay health educators provide health information, referrals and advocacy to help their community members get the services they need

# The School Based Health Center Multicultural Health Promoter Program



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# Multicultural Health Promoters

- Profile:
  - Adult volunteer living in the school community
  - Able to read and write in their language
  - Willingness to help others learn about health issues and resources
- Role in Increasing SBHC Enrollment:
  - Reach out to families not currently enrolled in SBHCs to provide them with information about the services provided (by mail, phone, and/or home visit)
  - Help families feel safe and confident in their decision to access the services provided by the SBHC
  - Help families continue to break down the barriers to healthcare access in Montgomery County

# The Numbers

- Before Health Promoter intervention, the total number of eligible students enrolled in the SBHCs was 74% (October 2006)
  - ONE YEAR LATER
- After Health Promoter intervention, the total number of eligible students enrolled in the SBHCs is 94% (October 2007)
- A 20% increase between October 2006 and October 2007
- An 8% increase between June 2007 and October 2007

AND STILL WORKING!!!

# Lessons Learned

- Education and persistence are the key to getting parents to understand the importance of school based health care and enrolling their child in the program
- When parents are informed by their peers about other benefits (free flu vaccines, raffles, etc) in addition to healthcare in school, they sign up for the SBHC
- The SBHC staff can be nice, helpful, and available at all times, but they cannot get access to some parents the way other community members can
- Parents who have private insurance have difficulty seeing the benefit of school based health care until they are called to leave work and pick up their child for something that could easily be taken care of by the SBHC (if they had enrolled previously)



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Montgomery County  
Department of Health and Human Services  
Public Health Services  
Mark Hodge, Nurse Manager  
[mark.hodge@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:mark.hodge@montgomerycountymd.gov)