Promoting communication and collaboration to improve the health of urban children and families

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CityLights

Annual Urban MCH Leadership Conference Highlights

Baltimore '99: HEALTHY CITIES: Safe Harbors for Children and Families

This issue features highlights of the first ever joint meeting of some 350 community leaders and officials whose work is dedicated to healthy children, youth and families in America's cities. The Annual Conference took place September 15-18, 1999, at the Inner Harbor in Baltimore, Maryland. Joining the CityMatCH "Urban MCH Leadership" and National League of Cities "Your City's Families" Conferences enabled mayors, council members, school officials, community leaders, youth, and urban public health leaders to learn together and from one another. Funding from HRSA/MCHB, CDC, the National March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation, and the University of Nebraska Medical Center made this new twist to the Annual Urban MCH Leadership Conference a reality.

Healthy Beginnings: It Takes More than Projects

"...Welcome to "What Works?" on WFWB, Family Well Being, created by a merger of WMCH and WNLC....Your best in commercial-free public radio with a focus on the well-being of America's families.

And so began one of the 1999 Conference plenaries, framed in a radio interview format. "So, just how are 'they' doing it?" asked "radio host" Dr. Peter Morris, Medical Director/Policy Director for Wake County, NC, Human Services.

Featured speaker, Lisbeth B. Schorr, renowned expert on what works to meet the needs of children and youth, shared her observations, and provided an eloquent summary of the challenge and the opportunity facing government and community leaders as they work together to create healthy cities.

Schorr has held leadership positions in many major national efforts on behalf of children and youth, including the National Center for Children in Poverty and the National Academy of Science's Board on Children and Families. She is currently a lecturer in social medicine at Harvard University and director of the Harvard University Project on Effective Interventions.

Schorr's 1988 book, Within Our Reach: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage, analyzed social programs that have succeeded in improving the life prospects of disadvantaged children. In her most recent book, Common Purpose: Strengthening Families and Neighborhoods to Rebuild America, Schorr tells the stories of pioneers who have been able to sustain and expand small successes in strengthening families and neighborhoods by taming bureaucracies and focusing on results. Here are selected highlights of the "What Works?" show:

Peter Morris: Your first book documented the success of programs serving children and youth. How did that come about?

Lisbeth Schorr: I had chaired a congressional panel on child health, and we issued a report after President Reagan's election that called for a larger government role in these issues. And nobody listened. The response was always that nothing works. But as the first public member of the American Board of Pediatrics, I was getting to see a lot of programs that did work. So I decided to put those types of examples together in a book.

Peter Morris: What about your second book? Why the move from specific programs to strategies?

Lisbeth Schorr: The first book was about programs with documented success—things like WIC, community health clinics, home visiting programs. The sad part is that five years later, half of these programs had disappeared. The ones that hadn't were diluted. They weren't being built on, weren't being spread, weren't being sustained. And so the origin of the second book was the question: what do we have to do to sustain what works?

What we are learning is that it takes more than projects. It takes more than individual programs to really change outcomes. We can't focus just on kids,

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Conference Highlights

Our Sincere Thanks to.....

1999 Conference Partner

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National Institute on Out of School Time
National School Boards Association
National Youth Employment Coalition
U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM)
Washington Business Group on Health

1999 Hot Health Department:

Baltimore City Health Department

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"It Takes More Than Projects"

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we have to focus on families. And we can't focus on families in isolation; we have to focus on neighborhoods, and we have to recognize how neighborhoods determine what families can do for their children.

Unfortunately, that gets into systems. It is such a boring word, but how things are funded, how they are regulated, how they are held accountable—these things are critically important. The problem is that the people who know how to make it work at the front lines don't have their hands on the levers that can change the system. So these frontline people end up swimming upstream. To achieve anything, they have to break and bend the rules. So you have to ask if maybe we should change those rules.

Peter Morris: There has been a lot of talk in recent years about “community” – what it means and how to harness it. What does community mean to you?

Lisbeth Schorr: One of the ways I try to cut to the chase in how I think about these issues is I don't stop to think about definitions as long as my colleagues would. Community can be defined by a place, or it can be defined by like-minded people. I am much more concerned about how you create a sense of community among people who have a shared purpose, whether it is to strengthen their neighborhood, protect their kids, or establish the social and other bonds that make a place work.

We never had to do this before because we had much more natural communities in this country. There wasn't so much mobility; people generally stayed where they were. But now, we have to construct community in a way we never had to before.

Peter Morris: What is the secret to successful outcomes for youth?

Lisbeth Schorr: In my book, I talk about being comprehensive, flexible and responsive. But it also has to do with starting early. There are no rotten outcomes in adolescence that start contemporaneously with being an adolescent. Now that government agencies are actually making mothers leave their babies as early as 12 weeks, we have to make sure those babies aren't condemned to lousy outcomes because of poor child care and the rest.

The key is for programs to have a clear sense of mission. Too often collaboration becomes an end in itself. But the truth is collaborations are most successful when all the partners are pursuing their own missions; they see the collaboration as a way to achieve something they want, something they might not be able to achieve on their own. That's what drives the collaboration and makes it work.

1. Editor’s note: For more information about “Common Purpose,” (Lisbeth Schorr’s book about successful efforts to turn around high rates of school failure, child abuse, youth violence, teen parenting and persistent poverty) visit the website at <http://www.common-purpose.org>
The 1999 conference got off to a rousing start with an 'Oprah-style' talk show, "Healthy Cities," led by Columbia University Clinical Professor Judith E. Jones. Summing up the objectives of the four-day event, Jones posed a series of questions: "What do we mean when we say we want to create healthy cities? Who are the key actors in making this happen? What are the challenges they face? And where do young people fit in?"

Panelists agreed that creating a healthy city involves much more than providing people with medical attention and quality health care. "It's about early education, affordable housing, clean communities—a state of mind as well as a state of body," said Chicago Alderman Patrick J. O'Connor, chair of the city's Education Committee and a member of NLC's Council on Youth, Education and Family. "Once you start dealing with quality-of-life issues, you are heading down the path to a healthy city."

Other panelists touched on issues from public safety to civic involvement as key factors in a city's health. The challenge is to get citizens to define for themselves what it means to create a healthy city, and then to involve the entire community in efforts to address issues that can affect individual, family, and community health.

"More and more often, we're seeing that the role of government and community leaders is to engage communities and bring them together and get them to identify problems and be a part of the solution," said Dr. Stephanie B.C. Bailey, Director of Health for Nashville-Davidson County, TN, and President-Elect of the National Association of County and City Health Officials. "It gets to the issue of competencies so communities can own these issues and solve them independently."

Diane Bell, President and CEO of the Empower Baltimore Management Corporation agreed. "This is about being respectful of the needs of specific communities, and mindful of the fact that different communities have different needs," she said. "We can't come in as the expert thinking we have all the answers. Rather, we have to be sensitive to cultural differences and the needs and concerns of specific groups. And we have to get their input into the specific issues in their community."

Ronaldo Rauseo-Ricupero, NLC Council on Youth, Education and Family noted the valuable contributions youth can make and reminded participants to "Look to the resources your city's youth can provide, and make use of them."

"Health is too important to be left to the medical people and the specialists. It is everybody's business," concluded Dr. Bernard J. Turnock of the School of Public Health at the University of Illinois at Chicago.
Conference Workshops Address Community Concerns

This year’s Conference offered a variety of workshops, which touched upon important issues such as increasing community involvement in issues affecting urban families and children.

It is a challenge when attempts are made to get people and groups in the community involved in promoting safe harbors for children and families. Workshops demonstrated that it takes specific skills and understanding to mobilize the public and build effective community-wide collaborations.

In workshops on the mechanics of creating healthy cities, participants learned more about some of the strategies they can use to get their communities focused and engaged.

In one workshop, Improving Community Leaders’ Communications Skills, participants put themselves in the position of the lead staff of the Mayor’s Office of Children, Youth, and Families in a city that had just been ranked dead last in a report on the worst cities in the nation to raise children.

Another workshop, Skills for Creating and Maintaining Community Teams, looked at the essential characteristics of effective teams. Reflecting the conference’s theme that solutions cannot be imposed from outside, workshop leader Bruce Swinehart of Boulder, Colorado, observed, "The impetus needs to come from people with a personal commitment and a passion for their community.”

In Involving Youth, Families and Consumers, workshop leader Dana Nelson of Youth on Board guided participants through her organization’s 14-point plan to successfully involving youth in decision-making.

Participants learned that in addition to specific skills and proven strategies to create healthy cities, one also must have an understanding of policy developments at the state and federal levels which can affect the success of community-level campaigns. Consultant Kay Johnson and Jacqueline Patterson of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities used their workshop to advise participants on how best to leverage federal and state resources to improve maternal and child health.

Mayor Anthony Gives Message of Hope

Sometimes, an unexpected change of plans can be a blessing in disguise. Earlier in the conference, South Bay, Florida Mayor and NLC President, Mayor Clarence Anthony had to cancel his speaking engagement due to Hurricane Floyd. Fortunately, better weather later in the week combined with the tenacity of Conference organizers enabled Mayor Anthony to present the Closing Plenary Saturday morning. He was well worth the wait.

Mayor Anthony had a powerful story to tell about “Home Runs for Healthy Youth.” His own life story is moving testimony to the potential that exists in every child, if given a chance: Clarence Anthony was born into a poor migrant family in the Florida Everglades. He was twelve when his father left and Anthony himself became a father at 17. Six years later, in 1984, Clarence Anthony became Mayor of South Bay, a town of about 4,000 nestled between Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades. The town’s predominantly poor, minority residents are dependent on sugar cane and vegetable harvests, and South Bay consistently chalks up high jobless rates. Among his many accomplishments, Anthony persuaded the state to build a 1,300 bed prison there, which brought in 300 permanent jobs, and a local branch of the library.

Along the way, Anthony got married, obtained a master’s degree in public administration, and was named Florida Jaycees Mayor of the Year in 1989. In 1998, Mayor Anthony became the first black president of the NLC. Yet, he never forgets his roots, nor does he forget that he spent his childhood moving up and down the eastern seaboard, following the harvests of celery, beans and corn. His family lived in housing projects and other migrant barracks.

As Mayor Anthony shared his testimony to conference participants and youth present, he gave a message of hope and possibility for today’s youth, and applauded their commitment to enhancing the health and well-being of children and families in all of America’s cities.

"Welcome to Bawlmer, Hon!"

As they say, “When in Rome...” Apparently, when visiting Baltimore, it is imperative to participate in a crab feast, and to leave the good clothes at home (eating crab can be quite messy). Conference participants did just that on Friday, September 17th.

Penny Borenstein, a Baltimore local, choreographed the “Friends of CityMatCH Dinner” as an evening of fun with a purpose: to show concern and support for local public health in action.

Our Daily Bread, the site and beneficiary of the dinner, is the most active soup kitchen in Maryland. The evening’s proceeds were earmarked for children’s books, holiday gifts and diapers for those in need.

Evening hosts were Together Teens, who waited on tables and provided exuberance, spirit and entertainment as they served. Formal entertainment came in the guise of the Safe and Sound Performance Troupe, whose dance steps, smiles, and enthusiasm were an inspiration to all.

Taking Part in “Our Daily Bread” Fundraiser
I've been taking a look at the data I run into every day and asking, "Do I really care about what these numbers say about health?" -- Dr. Lynne "Rooney" Wilcox, Director, Division of Reproductive Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

On Thursday, September 16, Conference participants gathered to hear more about the CityMatCH/CDC Data Use Institute (DUI) at the Urban MCH Second Annual DUI Symposium, cosponsored by the March of Dimes.

The discussion of team projects, successes, failures, and lessons learned, took on a new twist. Dr. Bill "Wallace" Sappenfield, CDC Epidemiologist assigned to CityMatCH, hosted a 'television' news show aptly titled, "59.9 Minutes: Can Data Really Make a Difference in the Health of Women, Children and Families in America's Cities?"

Complete with countdown to air time and commercial breaks, Sappenfield began the show by talking about the key issue - how to use data more effectively to make a measurable difference in the health of children and families in urban communities.

Len "Bradley" Foster, Orange County, CA, interviewed DUI team members to get a political and community perspective. One member shared a story about a candidate for office in her community who stood before thousands and said, "These are the facts, be they wrong or right." This statement really underscores the need for good data.

Betty "Walters" Thompson, Nashville, TN, led a lively panel discussion featuring MCH leaders from Phoenix, AZ. They shared their insights and experiences in trying to create positive change for children and families. Presented as keys to success were the need for community support prior to implementation, the fact that this does not necessarily happen with ease; the tendency to overcommit; and the necessity of taking adequate time for planning. Members tried to learn from others who tackled similar issues, and noted that these conditions can be enhanced by the effective use of data.

During commercial breaks, Patrick "Kroft" Simpson, CityMatCH, played "man in the street," gleaning comments on the DUI experience from Carolyn Slack, Columbus OH, and Michelle S. Davis, Washington, DC. Both are DUI team members, and they commented that an important lesson learned from the DUI experience has been to share their stories with others.

"59.9 Minutes: Can Data Really Make a Difference in the Health of Women, Children and Families in America's Cities?"

During the 59.9 Minutes DUI Symposium, participants heard about success stories, new relationships and partnerships, immediate impacts, improved community awareness, working as a team, and in-depth data collection that can be achieved when engaged in the DUI.

Later, Sappenfield led a panel discussion about potential barriers to effective data use, seeking input from members of the 1998-1999 DUI team. Panel members agreed with Torney Smith when he stated that, "input from so many community partners is well worth the effort, but at the same time can be extremely challenging, and time-consuming to facilitate."

Wilcox, closed the Symposium with an Andy Rooney style editorial, concluding that yes, data really does matter, especially when it comes to the lives we are responsible for, and that through effective use of data, changes can be made that positively impact children and families in America's cities.
The Annual CityMatCH Members Meeting on Saturday, September 18 was held in beautiful Camden Yard, overlooking the Baltimore Orioles Baseball Park. Against that backdrop, 1998-1999 CityMatCH Board Chair Len Foster, Interim Director, Orange County California Health Department, presented a theme of transitions and organizational change. In the first transition, he turned over the gavel to Gary Oxman, Health Officer, Multnomah County Health Department, Portland, OR, newly elected Chair of the 1999-2000 CityMatCH Board.

Over the years, members have come to expect entertainment at CityMatCH meetings, where they have found concrete points brought home in unusual ways. This year, the annual members meeting was interspersed with musical moments: familiar songs with "new" lyrics relevant to the issues facing those whose primary concern is the welfare of children and families in America's cities. One such song, set to the tune of Bob Dylan's "The Times They are a Changin," began this way....

"Come gather round cities from near and from far; and admit that your problems overwhelm you; your programs and pilots go only so far; and your efforts are often frustrated. Come on, share your thoughts, and together let's learn. For the times they are a changin'...."

A verse of a song sung to the tune of "Proud Mary," seemed to summarize the 1999 Conference experience for most participants: "Now I know more about best practice; how to use the data...

Three SpotLights awards were given this year to recognize efforts and commitment of urban health departments in the establishment of effective MCH programs.

Kathy Carson, Vice-Chair for Capacity Building at CityMatCH, described the premise behind the new approach, which was developed by the Capacity Building Action Group.

The SpotLights award for "Alchemy," an initiative which took lead and turned it into gold, was presented to the Philadelphia Department of Public Health for "Smoking Cessation as an Avenue Toward Collaborative Partnerships with Managed Care Organizations."

SpotLights recognition for the "Most Replicable" initiative was given to the San Antonio Metropolitan Health District for "Comenzando Bien Prenatal Education Program," a public-private partnership with the South Central Texas Chapter of the March of Dimes, designed to link Latino women and their children to health, family and community services.

The County of Sonoma Department of Health, Santa Rosa, California received the SpotLights award for the "Most Innovative" MCH program. Their project called, "Promoting Positive Images of Breastfeeding," incorporated a successful photo contest of positive breastfeeding images within the categories of 1) family, 2) workplace, and 3) toddlers.

During the Annual Conference in September, the CityMatCH Board of Directors announced its 1999 - 2000 Executive Committee.

Gary Oxman, Health Officer, Multnomah County Health Department, Portland, OR, was named Incoming Chair.

Len Foster, Interim Director, Orange County Health Care Agency/Public Health, moved to immediate Past Chair.

Vice Chair for Infrastructure Development is Vicki Alexander, MCAH Director, Berkeley Public Health Department, Berkeley, CA.

Vice Chair for Capacity Building is Lisa Belanger, Program Manager, Family Health Services, Portland Public Health Division, Portland ME.

Betty Thompson, Director of Community Health Services, Metropolitan Govt of Nashville and Davidson County, Nashville, TN was chosen as Vice Chair for Policy Development.

CityMatCH CEO and Executive Director Magda Peck serves continuous terms.
CityMatCH has become a full service national membership organization with defined expectations of what its members will get and give under the terms of membership.

CityMatCH is organized to generate applied research to inform local, state and national programs and policymakers about urban maternal and child health.

CityMatCH is a recognized national resource for qualitative and quantitative data and research on urban maternal and child health.

CityMatCH is a recognized national leader in building community and public health capacity to make a measurable difference in urban maternal and child health.

CityMatCH continues to serve effectively as a national information hub on urban maternal and child health practice and policy.

Federal support for CityMatCH has continued to grow and expand.

CityMatCH has expanded its partnerships with national groups whose missions support the improved health of children and families in urban areas.

CityMatCH continues to provide significant catalytic leadership in developing and advancing the National Action Agenda for Building Data Capacity in maternal and child health.

The CityMatCH Board-Staff partnership has never been stronger, solidified by a successful series of meetings in Omaha in May 1999.

CityMatCH has achieved most of its Vision 2000; now is the time to shape our Vision for the next decade.

Magda Peck, ScD, CEO and Executive Director of CityMatCH, reviewed organizational achievements in the context of CityMatCH’s Vision 2000 goals at the Annual Members’ Meeting. As part of her Executive Director’s report, Peck presented the “top ten” accomplishments of the organization, and urged membership to now look beyond 2000 to the coming years.

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Staff Appreciation Award Presented to Liz Zelazek

Patrick Simpson presented a special staff appreciation award to Liz Zelazek, MCH Division Manager/PHN Manager, Milwaukee, WI Health Department, during the members meeting at the Annual Conference. Zelazek will be retiring from the Milwaukee Health Department at years end, and was honored for her many levels of commitment to the vision and future of CityMatCH. Liz’s many roles with CityMatCH have included Board member, Executive Committee member, and Conference Co-Chair.

Stories for Heading Home

During the annual Members’ meeting held at Oriole Park Camden Yard in Baltimore, CityMatCH took stock of recent accomplishments as a national public health organization dedicated to improving the health and well-being of children and families in America’s cities. Honoring a long held conference tradition, CEO and Executive Director Magda Peck offered personal stories of great relevance to all. She talked about believing, and beliefs, in light of changes for CityMatCH looming on the horizon, and inspired membership to promote positive change.

Y2K Conference — Save the Date!

11th Annual CityMatCH Urban MCH Leadership Conference

September 12-16, 2000

Denver, Colorado

Take a Bow

Long-standing MCH Bureau Key Partners, Stuart Swayze and David Heppel, Take a Bow at the CityMatCH Annual Meeting
DUI Launches Alumni Association

The Data Use Institute Alumni Association was launched at the Annual CityMatCH Conference in Baltimore in September. Members of the 1997-1998 and 1998-1999 teams fished out their DUI T-shirts to be recognized as distinguished alumni. This event also welcomed the 1999-2000 Urban MCH DUI Class and acknowledged the graduation of the 1998-99 DUI class.

Alumni Association Leaders Liz Zelazek, Milwaukee, WI, and Gayle Bridges-Harris, Durham, NC, kicked-off the night with a brief introduction and orientation to the Alumni Association. Thirty teams were present to discuss the ongoing need for continuing education activities and to talk about opportunities for DUI alumni. DUI Alumni identified several areas of need, including:

- local control of data
- small-area analysis
- continual review
- socioeconomic MCH indicators
- communication of data
- practice with data analysis concepts and manipulation

The intent is to further strengthen urban health departments’ data use capacity.

A key objective of this initial meeting was the development of the Alumni Association’s mission: “To provide a mechanism to promote continued peer exchange and professional development, using a ‘team,’ rather than an individual focus.”

The alumni also charted what they were willing to give and what they wanted to receive from the Association. Results of that discussion follow:

**Alumni Will Give:**
- Knowledge
- Networking
- Encouragement
- Support
- Advocacy for effective data collection/analysis
- Support/advice to others
- Updates on projects and new learning challenges
- Listserv for questions/updates

**Alumni Want to Receive:**
- Nationwide data networking
- Trends analysis
- Communication skills development;
- Support
- Advice on quality data processes;
- Opportunities for meetings, conferences, and other updates of others
- To develop data use skills

Not surprisingly, there was significant overlap between these two lists.

To learn more about the DUI Alumni Association, please contact the Alumni Association Leaders, Gayle Bridges-Harris at (919) 560-7713 and Liz Zelazek at (414) 286-2912 (until December 3, 1999) or at (414) 744-7047.

**Leadership into Action Through Effective MCH Data Use**