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Violence is A Public Health Issue

Some months ago we presented a report to the Board of Supervisors (Health Indicators for Selected Cities and Places in Contra Costa County 2004) describing the health status of residents in our County. The report focused on a number of health issues, including diabetes, births to teens, low birth weight babies, AIDS and much more. We are addressing many of these disparities.

One shocking statistic in the report was that more than half of the homicides in the County occur among African-American men. The homicide rate for African-American men is nearly 25 times that of the rest of the county. More than half of the African-American victims of homicides related to firearms were under 25 years of age. (Read more about this at cchealth.org by clicking on Health Data.)

Although the impact on young African-American men is extraordinary, no community in our County escapes the impact of violence. Homicide is the third leading cause of death among those under age 25 throughout the county.

A complex problem

While homicide and violence are often discussed as law enforcement issues, it is clear to me that the problem is much more complex. For starters, although prisons may hold the perpetrators of these crimes, we know that our trauma centers, emergency rooms, hospitals and mortuaries see the victims. And it goes beyond those direct victims to our own communities: our patients, clients and employees who live with the threat of violence or deal with its aftermath.

If we look at causes of any death – whether it is violence, infectious disease or chronic disease – we have to go upstream to look at the causes. In the case of homicide, we can't ignore the social and health implications by describing it simply as a law enforcement problem. This is clearly a compelling public health issue. Violence impacts the health of

all our communities, the quality of life for people who live in our county. Any effective solution will involve creating an environment that gives young people a sense of hope and addresses education, employment, drugs and more. Because we are an integrated health department, violence in our communities involves nearly every one of our Divisions. It will take a concentrated effort by all of us in health – as well as law enforcement, schools, courts, the community and others – to turn around this deplorable situation.



— Dr. Walker

Beginning the process

Supervisor John Gioia, who represents most of West Contra Costa, is the new chair of the Board of Supervisors. At his Board reorganization luncheon last month, he made it clear that violence in both Richmond and across the County will be one of the main focuses of the Board during the next year. As a first step, he is creating a Board subcommittee with Supervisor Federal Glover to coordinate county efforts and bring in outside agencies. Health Services will be a major player in that coordinated effort. I hope we can make a significant contribution to address this devastating problem.

I've already met with the Employment and Human Services and Probation directors to discuss how we will work together because we are all affected by this problem. In addition, I've convened two meetings with Divisions in our department that will have a role in

Continued next page

DID YOU KNOW

Our Emergency Department
had **43,600** visits last year.

Supervisor Gioia's anti-violence initiative. Mental Health has school-based, family and early childhood programs that can contribute to solutions. Alcohol and Other Drugs has programs for youth with substance abuse issues.

Public Health's Outreach Education and Collaboration (PHOEC) Unit is conducting an assessment of our existing prevention efforts and promising strategies and programs. I hope we can capitalize on PHOEC's ongoing, community-based efforts to build on the strengths of the community and to be responsive to the critical issues the community identifies. (Read more about this on the Reducing Health Disparities page.)

From these conversations among our division staff, we've realized that we need to know more about victims, perpetrators and the communities they live in. Sadly they often live in the same or similar neighborhoods and are affected by the same conditions. We also need to be creative about interventions, examine family structures and strengthen community supports. For example, we know that keeping students in school is an excellent anti-violence strategy, as is ensuring that there are activities for them during the hours after school and during summers. We have youth related programs in the schools. The question is how we strengthen and link what we are doing with other programs and with the communities affected by violence.

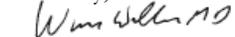
We are not alone in this effort. In Richmond, Mayor Irma Anderson has already convened a summit to explore strategies. Reverend Andre Shumake has also convened a summit of faith leaders and continues to be a strong advocate for a coordinated effort to curb violence. The Richmond City Council has approved an anti-violence coordinator to develop programs.

In San Francisco, the Board of Supervisors created a special committee to examine a 21% increase in homicides in that city. At a recent hearing, police officials said there were more guns out in the community now than ever before, with the shooters never having known anything but the influence of gangs and drugs

A young man speaks

The impact of growing up in a community riddled with violence came through loud and clear to me at Supervisor Gioia's luncheon. A young Richmond resident, Nathanael Boyd, read a rap he wrote (see below) based on his experience growing up in Richmond amidst gang violence. He described the struggle to avoid being drawn into the violence and how much support is needed to survive. It struck me that here was a young person, speaking from his heart who had survived and is gainfully employed and trying to help others. He poignantly allowed us to feel the pain and frustration of growing up in that situation. He also showed us that there is hope and optimism and that it is possible to survive. As we go forward with this initiative, we must concentrate on creating positive outcomes. Even though we are headed for difficult budget challenges again this year, I think we can have an impact. We have a history of pioneering efforts around violence, including control of gun dealers in impacted communities, creating a Violence Prevention Coalition and bringing in many partners to develop violence prevention plans. It is an enormous challenge we face, along with other urban health departments, but our job is to save lives and we must succeed in our efforts.

Sincerely,


William Walker, MD

Excerpts from "A Boy to a Man Living in Richmond"

I live in Richmond, where people kill each other all for nothing searching for something

A glance or stare without saying anything on occasion ends in death

Where people live desensitized with ignorance as their choice drug to get high

Living with a blindfold over their minds...

I'll achieve my purpose on this planet because I can do anything.

And that's coming from a boy now a man who grew up and still lives in the depths of Richmond.

Read more of this poem on the CCHS Intranet (type cchs in your browser address).

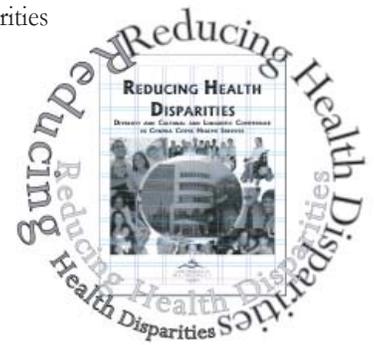
Budget Information

This year, the budget process is going to be much accelerated. If all goes according to plan, we may have an approved county budget by May 5. That will eliminate a lot of the anxiety that we've experienced in the past few years as the process dragged on for months and the description of the Countywide deficit changed often. To get an accurate estimate of how much of a deficit there is this year, a "budget cabinet" including our Chief Operating Office and Chief Financial Officer Pat Godley has been working with the County Auditor to develop an equitable formula for reducing department expenditures. County departments were given targets and our Division Directors were given their reduction goals. At a Board meeting in February, Supervisors agreed that expenditures and revenues must balance; there will be no use of County reserve funds this year. Layoffs will occur. Our budget proposal will be submitted to the County Administrator on March 3. – WW

This page brings news of how the implementation of the CCHS Plan for Reducing Health Disparities is progressing. Our divisions have been working on three key areas: improving linguistic access, implementing educational activities on diversity and cultural and linguistic competence, and developing an organizational climate that values patient, customer and employee diversity.



Left to right: PHOEC Program Manager Mary Anne Morgan, HNP Program Manager Roxanne Carrillo, CHAPE Planner/Evaluator Jennifer Lifshay and PHOEC Health Educator Tiombe Mashama.



Homicide: A Health Disparity for African-American Men in County

This month we take a look at a shocking health disparity: Young African-American men are 25 times more likely to die from homicide than any other population group living in Contra Costa County. This disturbing statistic was revealed after we did an analysis on race and health outcomes data from 2000-2002. (See the Director's Message for more details.)

This finding has helped to bring the issue into the spotlight, a major step in addressing homicide and community violence as a public health issue. Bringing attention to the problem is an important role for CCHS, as well as providing support to help strengthen communities so that they feel they have allies and resources to address violence, said Public Health Director Wendel Brunner, MD.

Several of our programs are working on violence prevention, community building and other issues that may directly or indirectly help to reduce this grim health disparity for African-American men. Mary Anne Morgan and the Public Health Outreach Education and Collaboration (PHOEC) unit staff are compiling a report defining violence from a public health perspective, with a focus on what needs to be done to prevent street violence. PHOEC plans to host a meeting to share its findings with Public Health Division leadership in March and then present the report to Supervisor John Gioia's office.

PHOEC's Healthy Neighborhoods Project and our Alcohol and Other Drugs Services also are working with residents and Supervisor Gioia's office to conduct community education and advocacy for policy change to reduce access to alcohol and other drugs. The Mental Health Division provides counseling, support groups and drug treatment services. Our Homeless Program does outreach to homeless and runaway youth – who may be at risk of becoming victims of violence – by providing housing and support.

Family, Maternal and Child Health (FMCH) programs is working even further upstream through its TeenAge Program (TAP), which is providing health services, education and youth development opportunities to middle school and high school students in West County. Also involved in the effort is our RHDI African-American Health Initiative planning group, which was formed to address health disparity issues, including homicide, in the African-American community.



For information about our Violence Prevention efforts, call Mary Anne Morgan at 925-313-6715.

Send feedback about the RHDI page or story suggestions to Kate Fowle via e-mail kfowle@hsd.cccounty.us or by calling 925-313-6832.

Bilingual Staff Receive Interpreter Training

Recently 18 bilingual CCHS staff members received an intensive three-day training to increase their skills in serving as interpreters for clients at their divisions. The staff, all Spanish speakers, work mostly in clerical positions in our CCRMC/HCs, Contra Costa Health Plan and Mental Health divisions. The training included information on standard protocols, techniques and ethical principals for effective health care interpreting, as well as medical vocabulary.



For more information about the interpreter training, contact our RHDI Leader José Martín at jmartin@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-957-5426.

GOING THE EXTRA MILE FOR SERVICE EXCELLENCE

Honor Roll

Carmen Nagatani

*Account Clerk
Finance*

For creating a spreadsheet on her own initiative that cut data entry almost in half for the daily registry invoice billing process.

—Nominated by Sue Hilburn

Michele Simes

*Clerical Staff of the East County Mental
Health Clinic*

For taking the initiative to establish a code of conduct for treating each client with true dignity and respect and for working tirelessly to improve the physical work environment.

—Nominated by Debbie Card and Dr. Cheryl Bryan

Dr. Cynthia Carmichael

*Center for Health
North Richmond*

For her professionalism, interpersonal skills, caring and sensitivity to each and every one of her patients. She goes above and beyond the call of duty.

—Nominated by Glenn Tipton

Dr. Kenneth Saffier

Concord Health Center

For being a very good, compassionate and dedicated doctor, interested in patients' well-being.

—Nominated by Ida Mae Dougherty

Deborah Hooper-Britton

*Medical Records Technician
West County*

For stepping in to fill some big M.R.T. shoes for mental health. She goes above and beyond the call of duty and is fun to work with.

—Nominated by Glenn Tipton

Emergency Department 4 West Nursing and Medical staff

CCRMC

For the excellent care I received during my stay and for their genuine concern for my well-being.

—Nominated by a patient

Louise McGuire

*Mental Health Clinical Specialist
Mental Health*

For her professionalism and dedication to youth in foster care and for being proactive with a family of siblings with challenging mental health problems. On her own initiative she came to evaluate and assist these children in transition.

—Nominated by Lynn Grassano, RN

Martha Garza

*Senior Level Clerk
Central Appointments*

For being an outstanding instructor in teaching the "hyperspace" system, being extremely patient and giving complete and clear answers to questions.

—Nominated by Laura Garcia

Do you know someone who's going the extra mile?

To recognize a CCHS employee, vendor or volunteer for outstanding Service Excellence performance, submit the "Going the Extra Mile" commendation form, available from every CCHS Division Director, or email your commendation to ServicEX@hsd.co.contra-costa.ca.us or fax it to 925-313-6219. The form can also be downloaded from the Internet (About Us page) or Intranet.

The Director's Report is published monthly. Deadline for the April edition is March 10. Publicize your upcoming events and successes by sending information to Julie Freestone at 597 Center Avenue, Suite 255, Martinez 94553, fax 925-313-6219, email: jfreestone@hsd.co.contra-costa.ca.us. The Director's Report is available online at cchealth.org and on the Intranet at cchs.

GOING THE EXTRA MILE FOR SERVICE EXCELLENCE

Honor Roll

Jackie Vargas

*Community Health Worker
Public Health Clinic Services*

For being a great resource and a wonderful human and for her genuine caring and making families feel comfortable.

—Nominated by Sheilah Zarate

Lavonna Martin

*Assistant Director
Homeless Program*

For her tireless effort and determination – despite bureaucratic obstacles – in coordinating, writing and submitting a grant for respite shelter beds and supportive services to medically vulnerable homeless.

—Nominated by Cynthia Belon

Patricia Schader

Financial Counselor

For her courtesies, knowledge, professionalism, and willingness to help in any way possible when I am trying to schedule services for our pregnant women.

—Nominated by Linda Wise

Anita Green

Financial Counselor

For her invaluable assistance in helping a young patient, who was pregnant and due within a month, to navigate the confusing process of switching from Blue Cross/Medi-Cal to CCHP Medi-Cal.

—Nominated by Linda Wise

Heidi Winig and Lashonda Williams

TeenAge Program (TAP)

The direction our students' lives take depends on choices they make now. Your training gives them valuable information so that they can make the right choice.

—Nominated by Buzz Sherwood, Richmond High School teacher

Tina Van Wolbeck, PHN and

Heather Cedarmaz, FNP

Concord Health Center

For their caring and knowledgeable team approach with a difficult pediatric patient. Their standards of patient care are consistently high.

—Nominated by Leigh Pierson-Brown

Edna "Lou" Gutierrez

Environmental Services

Brentwood Health Center

For her hard work and commitment, doing her best and always working hard at keeping our health center noticeably clean. Her dedication to her job is obvious to us each and everyday.

—Nominated by Lucy Rosa, Esther Luna and Lupe Gutierrez

Lucy Bermudez

Medical Record Technician

Pittsburg Health Center

For being a competent employee by assisting with incomplete paper work in a timely manner.

—A Patient caretaker

Employee Milestones

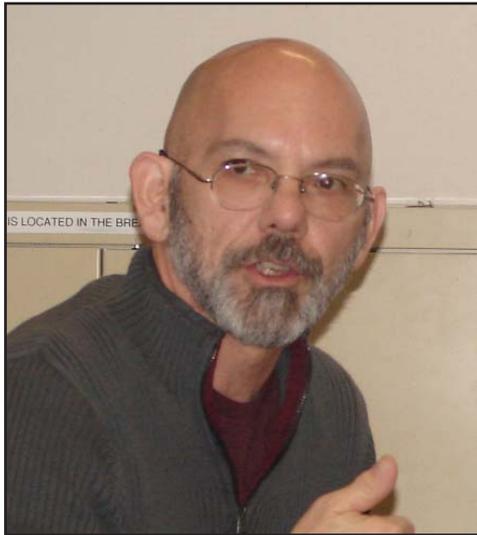
Congratulations to these employees who have given us long years of service: Elizabeth A. Rivera, Lorene Lowry, Cindy W. Zai, Joy T. Gamble, Phyllis Howard, Christopher M. Fiso, Martin F. Lynch (10 years); Robyn D. Draper-Praetz, Michael Greene, Patricia J. Halter, Virginia Ruiz, Casanita Posner, Raquel L. Lochhead, Darrell L. Pierce (15 years); Penny L. Taylor, Jo-Ann L. Lamar, Suda Paul, Dennis E. Dillon (20 years); Jolene L. Garrison, Susan C. Nairn (25 years); and Patricia Geary (40 years). *(We know there are lots of other dedicated employees with long years of service. Because of space limitations, we are only reporting those with 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35 and 40 years.)*



Jacqueline Pigg

Health Department Recognized for Small Business Efforts

The Board of Supervisors recently commended Health Services and some other county agencies for their efforts reaching out to small businesses and helping them become contractors for county work. The County launched its Small Business Enterprise program five years ago to encourage women-owned, minority-owned and other small businesses to bid on work for the County. Accepting the award for us, Jacqueline Pigg, our Contracts and Grants Administrator, said it had taken the hard work of many employees to achieve success.



Mark Miyashiro

I-Site Is Coming

Our Information Systems staff is previewing I-Site – a new phase of the Intranet – for staff designated as each Division’s Intranet Content Managers. I-Site includes some wonderful new features that allow for publishing reports and documents throughout the department or to selected individuals. Groups or teams can be established to share documents and a great new search feature will help find resources across Health Services programs. I-Site was developed by the IS “I Team”: Mike Dickson, Mike Shubat, Marc Miyashiro, Dave Woodhouse and Shahrzad Klingner. It will be available for use this month.



For information about the training, contact Shahrzad Klingner at 925-313-6961.

Flu Issues Highlighted in New TV Programs

Our Community Education and Information Unit has produced two television shows aimed at informing the community about Avian and seasonal flu. Get Ready, Get Healthy and Vida Sana En Vivo are both 30-minute programs that air on Contra Costa Television. They feature Communicable Disease Program Chief Francie Wise, Health Emergency Coordinator Kim Cox, Disease Intervention Technician Sergio Martín, Public Health Nurses Susan Farley and Yodeille Baybayan and *Contra Costa Times* animal and wildlife columnist Gary Bogue. Many other Public Health Division employees, who participated in a mass flu clinic drill in 2004, appear briefly.



For air times and other information, visit cchealth.org or call Vicky Balladares at 925-313-6817.

March is National Social Work Month

Did you know that professionally trained social workers are employed in every one of our Divisions? Not only that but our new County Administrator, John Cullen, is a social worker? Social workers are administrators, clinicians, discharge planners, program planners, community advocates, trainers and teachers as well as children protective services workers, counselors and patient advocates. “We are a profession of broad thinkers, problem solvers, advocates, and community builders,” says Julie Kelley, our Medical Social Services Director. She explains that social workers do not work under protocol but many are licensed. “We take up cases that are hopeless and hopeful,” says Julie, adding that most of the work is about getting what is needed to be done for the best possible outcome -- be it help after a toxic spill, counseling to patients and their families, or capturing funding for a new program. “Social Workers are hidden jewels in our large organization. Most of the time you don’t know who they are -- because their work titles don’t often reflect their professional training -- but they’re out there, working for everybody.”



Mary Foran, CCHS Associate Director, and Lloyd Madden with County Employment and Human Services participate in the launch of this year's Earn It! Keep It! Save It! Campaign. Thanks to generous donations from Viacom and Great Big Color secured by our graphic designer Andi Bivens, bus shelters in Martinez and other locations in the county are publicizing the toll-free phone number to give low-income individuals and families information about where to get free help in filing their taxes and obtaining tax refunds.



Public Health, CCRMC Tackle Autism on Several Fronts

Public Health Division and CCRMC staff are working on several fronts with families of children with autism, a condition with unknown causes that is on the rise in the United States. CCRMC's Child Development Clinic provides diagnosis and case coordination services for autism. Dr. Gwen Johnson, a CCRMC pediatrician who is our Medical Director for California Children Services, said the clinic is fortunate to have Dr. Patrick Maher on its staff. Dr. Maher is a developmental pediatrician who helped prepare the State Department of Developmental Services Best Practice Guidelines for Diagnosis of Autism and is working on the state's best practice guidelines for interventions. Meanwhile, Public Health Nursing has collaborated with CCRMC pediatricians and clinics to administer the M-CHAT (Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers) screening tool for autism to all 18- or 24-month-old children. This is actually a broader collaboration that includes Regional Center of the East Bay, the agency responsible for receiving and serving referrals such as a positive screening for autism. The CARE Parent Network and Public Health's Developmental Disabilities Council are also very active with the East Bay Autism Campaign, a regional collaborative.



For more information, contact Gina Jennings with the Developmental Disabilities Council at 510-374-3665 or Betsy Katz with the CARE Parent Network at 925-313-0999.

Lab Director Flies to Africa to Work on Bird Flu

Rick Alexander, Director of the Public Health Laboratory, was in Ethiopia for the fourth consecutive year last month. This time, he was helping health officials prepare for a week-long laboratory management training and consulting on setting up the Ethiopian national reference lab for testing for the H5N1 (Avian Flu) virus. While he was there, Nigeria reported its first birds with Avian Flu. Rick was asked to provide technical assistance there and was prepared to go, but had visa problems and instead returned home. He has been visiting Ethiopia as part of an effort by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Association of Public Health Laboratories to help that country develop a public health laboratory infrastructure. Now, he is expecting to visit Thailand later this year or next to help several Southeast Asian countries develop capacity for testing human samples for Avian Flu infection.



Rick Alexander, far left, worked with many colleagues last month in Ethiopia.

Bay Point Community Hears Report on General Chemical

Our Hazardous Materials Programs Division conducted a meeting recently to brief the Bay Point community on the results of a safety audit at the General Chemical plant in their community. Habib Amin, Accidental Release Prevention Programs Engineer, described the findings from our inspectors' review of the plant's compliance with the County Industrial Safety Ordinance and California Accidental Release Prevention Program. Besides our Hazardous Materials and Public Health staff, the event featured welcoming remarks by Supervisor Federal Glover and information from California Department of Toxic Substance Control and County Community Development and Public Works departments. Questions and answers from the event are available on our website (cchealth.org).

Summit on Long-Term Care Integration Attracts Many

The recent Acute Long-Term Care Integration Advisory Body Summit drew 80 consumers and representatives of advisory bodies and commissions. Some of the groups represented included the Area Office on the Aging, Contra Costa Health Plan's Managed Care Commission, the Long-Term Care Advisory Board and the Public Authority. The event, coordinated by the Health Plan, featured updates on legislative efforts and recent planning activities. Participants provided critical input on key areas of the implementation planning such as network development, care coordination and community participation. They also made suggestions about other county agencies and councils that need education on the project. The summit capped 10 years of work in Contra Costa to create an integrated care system with medical, social and support services for seniors and persons with disabilities. A summit report will be released to the advisory bodies and will be reviewed by the county consumer partnerships. Thanks to staffing by Shiela Staska, Employment and Human Services department, and Lynn Morris, Contra Costa Health Plan, for helping make the event a success.



Contact Pat Sussman at 925-335-8824 for more information.

West County Officials, Community Groups to Get StreetWISE

Our Injury Prevention & Physical Activity Promotion Project is teaming with the West Contra Costa Transportation Advisory Committee on a 20-month project. Funding for the project is from a grant from the California Kids' Plate Fund, which comes from the purchase of vanity license plates with a heart, hand, plus sign or star. The project is titled StreetWISE, or Street Walking & Biking Information and Strategy Exchange. The partnership will produce a series of workshops on planning safer streets and sidewalks, produce an in-depth report on the health impacts and best practices involved in the built environment, conduct an Elected Officials Forum, and market the Kids' Plate program. The overall goal of the project is to stimulate dialogue among officials, planning professionals and community groups about how to create communities that are more walkable, bikeable and accessible to people with disabilities.



For more information contact Nancy Baer, project manager, at nbaer@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-6837.