

Press Release



For Immediate Release

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Media Contact:

Yesenia Peiker
Director of Advocacy and Communications
Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Care
202-420-7173
ypeiker@maryscenter.org

Mary's Center's Home Visiting Program Receives \$500,000 from DC Council to Enhance Healthy Start Healthy Family program throughout the District

Washington DC—The DC Council has included a \$500,000 appropriation in its Fiscal Year 2009 budget awarded to Mary's Center **Healthy Start Healthy Families (HSHF)** home visiting program. In light of recent high-profile child abuse and neglect cases, the Council has recognized the importance of working with families in the pre-natal through early childhood periods to improve birth and pregnancy outcomes and reduce disparities. It also ensures that families have the support in place to **prevent** abuse and neglect. HSHF served 396 families in 2006, with a total of 6,522 family support worker home visits completed throughout the year. This appropriation will allow Mary's Center to partner with organizations in new areas, such as Southeast DC, and to reach many more families.

"The Healthy Start Healthy Families program really addresses the basic determinants of a child's well-being later in life," stated Mary's Center President and CEO, Maria Gomez. "This appropriation will allow Mary's Center to bring the holistic, prevention-focused program and its proven benefits to many more DC families."

DC Councilmember Tommy Wells, Chair of the Committee on Human Services and supporter of the appropriation echoed Gomez by adding, "I am completely committed to the Healthy Start Healthy Families project that has shown excellent results in the efforts surrounding the prevention of child abuse and neglect. The health outcomes of children and their families have also excelled. I am eager to implement the program throughout the city."

HSHF is a unique program that merges the successful Healthy Families America and Federal Healthy Start programs and that has developed into an effective evidence-based model. An interdisciplinary team of outreach workers, assessment workers, family support workers, a registered nurse, an in-home mental health provider and education specialists ensures participants receive quality, comprehensive medical care and support services along with education and advocacy services—from pregnancy until the child reaches three to five years of age. The evidence that HSHF makes a difference is clear:

- Compared to the DC average of 88% of babies born at a healthy birth weight (greater than 5.5 lbs), 97% of babies born to HSHF families had healthy birth weights.
- 95% of Mary's Center babies are up to date with their immunizations—only 68% of DC babies are.
- 99% of Mary's Center families had no substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect—unfortunately, only 63% of families in DC did not have substantiated cases.

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Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Care is a federally qualified health care center serving the DC Metro area residents. As we celebrate twenty years of service, we hold true to our mission of building better futures through delivery of health care, education and social services. Mary's Center saves lives and strengthens communities, one family at a time. www.maryscenter.org