



Press Release

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Mary's Center Expands into Prince George's County to Meet Critical Health Care Needs

\$1.5 Million CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield Grant to Provide Primary Care and Family Services for 6,000 People

Washington, D.C. – Mary's Center, a community health center that serves 24,000 residents in the D.C. metropolitan area, will expand services to Prince George's County, MD in early 2012. At a groundbreaking ceremony to be held today at its future site at 8908 Riggs Road in Adelphi, Mary's Center officials will announce a \$1.5 million grant from CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield (CareFirst) and other significant contributions that will allow the Center to deliver primary care and other family services to 6,000 County residents.

“We want to be where the community needs us to be, and Prince George's County is clearly an area with great health disparities that need to be addressed,” says Maria Gomez, President and CEO of Mary's Center. “Seventy percent of our participants currently coming for services to our site in Montgomery County are residents of Prince George's County, and that was one of the most powerful drivers for us to open a site here.”

Demographics have shifted in Prince George's County in recent years, and health disparities for African Americans and Latinos are increasing. The following health risk factors have increased concurrently:

- 20 percent of adults and 15 percent of children in Prince George's County are uninsured.
- Three-quarters of Prince George's County children do not receive annual dental care.
- 31 percent of Prince George's County adults are obese, compared to 26 percent of adults across Maryland, yet the County's adults receive diabetic screening five percent less often than the state's population.
- The percentage of women without access to prenatal care has grown from 28.9 percent in 2005 to 34.3 percent in 2009, and low birth weight babies currently make up over 10 percent of the births in Prince George's County.

“This grant signifies our commitment to reducing health disparities in the communities we serve,” says Chet Burrell, CareFirst President and CEO. “Mary's Center will be focused on providing its Prince George's County clients a complete health perspective. This means not only treating illnesses as they arise, but identifying and addressing risk factors that often lead to more serious health concerns. By doing so, they can provide comprehensive support services that will lead to better health and life outcomes.”

The new Mary's Center health center in Adelphi will target populations that lack access to prenatal care to reduce the rate of babies born with low birth weights. It will also provide a full range of adult and pediatric primary care services, all made possible by CareFirst grant's \$1.5 million grant. Additional funding was provided by Providence Hospital, March of Dimes and the George Preston Fund.

In addition to providing health care services, Mary's Center will partner with the Prince George's County Public Schools, the Judy Hoyer Family Learning Center, and the Prince George's Child Resource Center to implement its three-pronged social change model of service delivery: the provision of health care, education and social services.

"A healthy child is a happy child. A happy child can focus on their schoolwork," says Dr. William R. Hite Jr., Superintendent of Prince George's County Public Schools. "With the arrival of Mary's Center in Prince George's County, our parents have a convenient location for medical care. On behalf of the Prince George's County Public Schools community, we are excited to welcome Mary's Center and will eagerly work with the Center in serving our children and families."

The strategic co-location within agencies that serve the same targeted population will optimize resources and broaden the scope of services offered to Prince George's County families.

"The Prince George's Child Resource Center serves over 300 families a year at the Judy Center, many with no access to health care," says its Executive Director Marti Worshtil. "Having Mary Center located on-site is a wonderful resource for our community families and our staff already started providing supportive social services to families."

The services at Mary's Center's new location will be provided by a family practitioner, two Advanced Nurse Practitioners, one pediatrician, one midwife and six medical assistants.

"We project to see over 6,000 patients in 2012, representing 12% of the current underserved low-income population in this service area," says David Tatro, Chief Operations Officer for Mary's Center and leader of this project.

In addition, the Mary's Center mobile unit, the Mama & Baby Bus, will provide outreach services throughout Prince George's County as a first point of entry for medical care.

Construction work on the new health center begins November 1st and Mary's Center expects that the new Prince George's County clinic will open in early February 2012.

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Mary's Center is a Federally Qualified Healthcare Center founded in 1988, that provides comprehensive and integrated services to more than 24,000 individuals and families whose needs too often go unmet by the public and private systems. The mission of Mary's Center is to build better futures through delivery of health care, education and social services. Mary's Center saves lives and creates stronger communities, one family at a time. www.maryscenter.org.

CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield

In its 74th year of service, CareFirst, an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, is a not-for-profit health care company which, through its affiliates and subsidiaries, offers a comprehensive portfolio of health insurance products and administrative services to nearly 3.4 million individuals and groups in Maryland, the District of Columbia and portions of Northern Virginia. In 2010, CareFirst contributed \$56 million to [community](#) programs designed to increase the accessibility, affordability, safety and quality of health care throughout its market areas. To learn more about CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield, visit our Web site at www.carefirst.com or follow us on Twitter: http://twitter.com/CareFirst_News