

Weaving a community fabric against violence

Boston's inner-city violence epidemic is all too familiar to **Jacqueline Rue**, case manager for Boston Healthy Start Initiative at Martha Eliot Health Center (MEHC). For the past six years, Rue has helped struggling mothers overcome the complex challenges involved with physical and mental violence, as well as with housing, hunger and substance abuse.

"Many of these mothers have had chaos in their lives," she says of the dozens of Boston women enrolled in the program. "Violence is everywhere."

Rue can also personally relate to their experiences. On August 17 of last year, the Rue family became victims of violence. Rue's 25-year-old son, Sean, was sprayed by bullets while visiting childhood friends at Bromley Heath, a public housing development adjacent to MEHC. In an instant, Rue found herself in need of support for a violent event. Fortunately, Sean pulled through after several surgeries, and has made a remarkable recovery.

Now, Rue plans to share the lessons she learned during the ordeal with others affected by violence as a member of MEHC's new Trauma Response Team. By communicating with the Boston Police Department and closely monitoring news reports, the team will seek out victims, their families, neighbors, loved ones and witnesses after a violent act occurs to give them prompt emotional and psychological support. The team is community-wide and involves representatives from MEHC, Children's Hospital Boston and more than dozen other organizations



Jacqueline Rue and her son Sean

serving the Jamaica Plain neighborhood, including faith-based organizations, schools, housing developments and teen support programs.

"When the idea of forming this response team came up, I cleared my schedule and jumped at the opportunity to be a part of it," Rue says. Like all members of the Trauma Response Team, she enrolled in a certification program to learn

best-practice techniques on post-traumatic stress management taught by Robert Macy, PhD, founder and executive director of the Center for Trauma Psychology.

"Our goal is to provide those affected by violence with culturally sensitive, emotional support and deal with the demands that arise when violence occurs," says **Jean Wilkinson, PhD**,

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Major reform for children's mental health care system

Children's Hospital Boston has been a leader and key partner in the success of the Children's Mental Health Campaign (CMHC), a statewide coalition with more than 125 members, which worked to pass legislation to reform the mental health care system for children in Massachusetts.

"Massachusetts has been a leader in expanding health insurance for all of its citizens and now we are focused on meeting the needs of every child," says Governor Deval Patrick. "This law continues our commitment to providing every child with access to mental health care with the same certainty and dedication that we provide medical care."

With unanimous passage of the legislation, CMHC has taken a major step on the path to fixing the children's mental health care system. Key elements of the law include:

- encouraging early identification of mental illness in children;
- providing schools and early education settings with tools to better help their students;
- reducing the number of children unnecessarily stuck in restrictive settings;
- improving insurance protections; and
- streamlining state systems by breaking down communication and coordination silos between agencies.

Booster seats now required

Children's has also worked in partnership with the American Automobile Association of Southern New England, advocacy groups and public health leaders to get a law passed in Massachusetts requiring the use of booster seats for children up to the age of eight, or 4' 9" in height. In April 2008, the legislation was signed into law by Governor Patrick and went into effect in July 2008. Children's has worked with the Boston Public Health Commission to increase awareness of the new law as well as educate and provide low-income families with booster seats.

For more information on both laws, visit childrenshospital.org/advocacy



Surrounded by families, advocates and mental health care providers, Governor Deval Patrick ceremoniously signed An Act Relative to Children's Mental Health into law on September 24, 2008.

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MEHC held *A Future Without Violence Day* as an outlet for employees to discuss the impact of violence on the local community. During the event, employees, families and community residents wove pieces of fabric, which were used to construct a large, multicolored quilt to hang in the health center.

director of Human Services at MEHC. "We hope to draw from the experience of those such as Jacqueline, who have been personally affected by violence." Rue remembers the terrible feeling of helplessness, especially during the first 24 hours after her son was shot, while her family waited to see if he'd live. As a result, she's suggesting that the team give hospitalized victims' families a bag filled with essential items, such as a note pad, pen, bottled water, prepaid cell phone, and gift cards for food, or clothes and parking vouchers.

Community leaders are also offering assistance to the program; Mildred Hailey, executive director of the Bromley-Heath Tenant Management Corporation, and Bob Francis, co-chair of the Academy/Bromley/Egleston Safety Task Force and retired Chief of the Boston Municipal Police, have met with MEHC administrators every week for the past six months.

"As a health center, we need to do something like this," Rue says of MEHC's decision to take action. "We have 1,000 families living right next door who need our help. We serve as a lifeline for health and mental health services for our community and we will to do whatever we can to break the cycle."

The power of partnerships: ensuring health coverage for all New England children

Children's Hospital Boston and Community Catalyst, a national advocacy organization to reform the U.S. health system, believe that Massachusetts and the entire New England region can achieve what no other state has done before—provide health care coverage for all its children.

Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont lead the nation in providing access to health care for children, but more can be done to ensure that every child has the care they need to grow and learn.

In 2006, Children's and Community Catalyst, joined together to launch a New England-based campaign to expand children's access to high-quality, affordable health care. Nearly 800,000 children in the region rely on public healthcare coverage, and the six New England states receive close to \$500 million in federal State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP).

"We had an ambitious goal to preserve and expand SCHIP and protect Medicaid coverage for children," says **Joshua Greenberg**, Children's director of government relations. "To achieve this goal, we realized that it would be important to harness and leverage the resources of our partners from across New England."

Within two short years, the campaign has blossomed into the New England Alliance for Children's Health (NEACH), which today numbers more than 300 active partner organizations and individuals, including health care providers, community hospitals, academic medical centers, child and family advocates, insurers, business leaders and interfaith organizations.

"Children's is to credit for launching this campaign and recognizing the value of partnering with other states on this issue," say **Amy Rosenthal**, senior policy analyst at Community Catalyst and the program director for the New England Alliance for Children's Health. "NEACH has gained national attention for its effective-

ness in working across state lines and can now serve as a model for other states that want to extend their coalitions beyond their own borders."

NEACH galvanized the New England Congressional delegation into the driving force behind advancing children's health care. In the fall of 2007, 33 of the 34 members voted in favor of a strong SCHIP bill that would expand funding for this program by \$35 billion over 5 years. The bill passed through Congress but was vetoed by the President and fell 13 votes short for a veto override. As a result, SCHIP is still being debated by Congress.

NEACH is also expanding its reach to include new partners. Working with the New England Council, the region's leading business organization, NEACH is holding focus groups and meetings with business leaders across the region to forge a common agenda and determine how to engage business leadership in support of children's health.

Children's also has worked with NEACH in its effort to expand its agenda to include issues of quality and cost. "We want to establish national standards of pediatric care comparable to those instituted in adult medicine by promoting prevention and improved management of chronic diseases," says Greenberg. "Our hope is that we can show how this will reduce long-term health care costs to business, consumers and government."

To receive alerts and information from NEACH, visit www.childrenshealthne.org or contact **Maia Fedyszyn**, program associate for NEACH, at 617-275-2871.

"We had an ambitious goal to preserve and expand the federal State Children's Health Insurance Program and protect Medicaid coverage for children."

- **Josh Greenberg**, Children's director of government relations

COMMUNITY BENEFITS WEB SITE GOES LIVE

Children's Hospital Boston's Office of Child Advocacy is pleased to announce our new Community Benefits web site. Visit childrenshospital.org/communitybenefits to learn more about our community mission which includes:

- serving as the community's **safety net hospital**;
- focusing on some of the most pressing **community health** needs for Boston families;
- speaking out as a voice for children through public policy **advocacy**; and
- supporting essential community **partners** to improve children's health.



Summer jobs for youth at Children's

For the second summer in a row, high school students joined the Children's Hospital Boston team as part of the COACH (Career Opportunity Advancement Children's Hospital) program. In COACH, the hospital partners with four community-based organizations—Action for Boston Community Development, Inc., the Private Industry Council, Bromley Heath Tenant Task Force and Hyde Square Task Force—to identify, select and place students as interns in a variety of departments across the hospital. Children's does not create busy work positions for the students, but instead requires that managers who seek summer interns from the program be able to demonstrate that the experience will be meaningful for both the hospital and the student.

John Riordan, director of community partnerships in the Office of Child Advocacy (OCA), eagerly took advantage of this opportunity to mentor a COACH intern and was matched with **Tatiana Cortes**, a sophomore from Mission Hill. Her work in OCA varied from week to week, as staff asked for her assistance on projects throughout the office. "I learned how a bill passes through legislation to become law, how to evaluate community programs based on surveys and improved my communication and networking skills," Cortes says.

The COACH program is designed to give youth from urban areas of Boston the opportunity to explore health care careers while having a safe and meaningful summer. COACH includes workshops that teach students job skills, including effective communication and professionalism, and offers them financial advice. This year, the program partnered up with the Colleges of the Fenway for campus tours as a way to provide information about higher education opportunities, which Cortes found especially useful. "The best part of the

COACH program was visiting the Fenway colleges," she says. "I enjoyed the experience of touring colleges I never knew much about and learning what they have to offer."

Now that the summer has ended, Riordan sees the long-term benefits of COACH in his work with Cortes. "Tatiana gained valuable work experience through this program and I'm confident that she will be able to use her new skills and knowledge to excel in both her educational pursuits and any future working opportunities," he says.

For more information about COACH, contact **Florence Chan**, staffing operations manager for Human Resources, at 617-218-3072.



Tatiana Cortes and John Riordan

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