Maryland Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities Overview

Statutory Charge, Mission, and Vision

Background: The Maryland Department of Health (MDH), Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities (MHHD) was established in 2004 by statute, under the Maryland Health General Article, Section § 20-1001 to § 20-1007, to address minority health disparities in Maryland.

Mission: To address the social determinants of health and eliminate health disparities by leveraging the Department's resources, providing health equity consultation, impacting external communications, guiding policy decisions and influencing strategic direction on behalf of the Secretary of Health.

Vision: To achieve health equity where all individuals and communities have the opportunity and access to achieve and maintain good health.

Minority Outreach and Technical Assistance (MOTA)

- MOTA Program began in FY01 and was established to implement the Cigarette Restitution Fund Act's provision requiring outreach and technical assistance to minority communities to ensure their participation in the tobacco and cancer community health coalitions.
- In 2010, MDH announced the expansion of MOTA to address additional key health disparities including cardiovascular disease, infant mortality, diabetes, obesity, cancers, and asthma.
- For FY19, MHHD funded 18 organizations to develop and implement MOTA programs in Anne Arundel, Baltimore County, Caroline, Charles, Dorchester, Frederick, Harford, Montgomery, Prince George's, St. Mary's, Somerset and Wicomico, Worcester, and Baltimore City.
- Read about the MOTA programs at https://health.maryland.gov/mhhd/MOTA/Pages/Index.aspx.

Educating Minorities of Benefits Received After Consumer Enrollment (EMBRACE)

- In August 2015, MHHD was awarded a five-year State Partnership Grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health to implement the EMBRACE project.
- The goal of EMBRACE is to increase rates of health insurance, increase use of primary care services, and reduce rates of emergency department visits and hospital readmissions.
- EMBRACE addresses the Healthy People 2020 topic area "Access to Health Service" and the objectives of 1) Increase proportion of persons with medical insurance and 2) Increase the proportion of persons with a usual primary care provider.
- Activities are focused in six identified zip that lie in the western corner of Prince George's County and the bordering region of Montgomery County: 20712, 20737, 20781, 20782, 20783, and 20903. MHHD has partnered with:
  o Mary's Center a community-based organization, to assist in improving the health insurance literacy of newly insured individuals and direct them to appropriate primary care services.
  o Morgan State University conducts qualitative evaluations for the EMBRACE project.

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August 2018

St. Mary's Asthma Initiative

- During FY 17- 19, MHHD is partnering with the St. Mary's County Health Department by providing funding and technical assistance to implement an asthma control program (ACP) in the Lexington Park and Great Mills communities to address barriers that will lead to improved health outcomes, decreased emergency department utilization, and decreased costs to the healthcare system related to asthma.
- Community health workers and community health nurses outreach and educate children and their families through home based, multi-trigger, multicomponent interventions with an environmental focus. Adolescents (2-18 years old) diagnosed with asthma and living in the county are eligible for the program. Referrals are received through collaboration with community partners such as churches and schools. The goal is to maintain at least a 70% minority enrollment into the program.

Health Disparities Data

- The MHHD Data program seeks to optimize and standardize the collection, analysis and reporting of health data by racial, ethnic and language groups.
- Such data are necessary for three important functions: identifying, locating and quantifying health disparities; understanding the root causes to plan interventions; and tracking progress.
- Minority health disparities exist in death rates, disease frequency, risk factor prevalence, and social determinants of health.
- View MHHD data documents at https://health.maryland.gov/mhhd/Pages/Health-Equity-Data.aspx.

Awareness, Outreach, and Workforce Development

Health Equity Website, Newsletter, and Facebook

- MHHD maintains an outreach database of health equity contacts that include diverse representation of constituents and publishes a monthly newsletter containing current health equity news and announcements. MHHD also uses Facebook (www.facebook.com/MarylandMHHD) and its website (https://health.maryland.gov/mhhd) to stay connected with our partners.

Annual Statewide Health Disparities Conference

- Starting in 2004, MHHD has hosted annual statewide health disparities conferences to provide individuals from around the State an opportunity to come together to share strategies, best practices, successes, and barriers to addressing and reducing minority health disparities in Maryland.

MHHD Health Equity Internship Program

- MHHD welcomes interns, volunteers, fellows, those seeking job shadowing experience, and other interested individuals to participate in an internship opportunity. Internships support workforce development and training through building the capacity of the public health workforce to effectively advance health equity. https://health.maryland.gov/mhhd/Pages/Internship-Program.aspx.

Cultural Competency, Health Literacy, and Health Equity Awareness

- MHHD has been committed to providing technical assistance on information, data, and resources pertaining to cultural and linguistic competency, health equity, health literacy, and workforce diversity. https://health.maryland.gov/mhhd/Pages/Cultural-And-Linguistic-Competency.
- The Office has developed toolkits which outline specific strategies for adoption of the National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) Standards. The Toolkits can be found at https://health.maryland.gov/mhhd/Pages/CLAS-Standards-Toolkits.

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