
Children and Family Health Services

Maternal and Child Health Report

Focus on Hamilton County Women and Children

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EVALUATING CFHS PROGRAMS IN HAMILTON COUNTY

This month's Maternal and Child Health Report describes new efforts to evaluate the Child and Family Health Services (CFHS) program in Hamilton County. As health care funders become increasingly cost conscious, increased emphasis is placed on *accountability*. In the private sector, accountability often means return-on-investment. In other words, does the money we spend on health care result in health improvements that are large enough to justify the expenditure. In the public sector, accountability means *program evaluation* in which an assessment is made as to whether the tax dollars that are spent to improve health result in a justifiable reduction in sickness.

The Hamilton County CFHS Consortium has launched a significant effort in program evaluation. This evaluation will assess health outcomes of individuals who are eligible for CFHS support and the delivery of those services covered by CFHS funding. CFHS funding, provided by the State of Ohio, is targeted to improve the health of the "working poor", namely, those individuals and families without sufficient health insurance whose incomes exceed the cutoffs for Medicaid eligibility. CFHS funding has been targeted to address specific health needs: prenatal care, family planning and child care.

Selected agencies participating in the Hamilton County CFHS Consortium (see list below) receive a little more than one million dollars annually to evaluate the

health of CFHS-eligible families and to provide the specific services targeted by the CFHS program. Under the leadership of the Hamilton County Family and Children First Initiative, representatives of Consortium agencies meet monthly to plan for the delivery and evaluation of these services.

It is generally agreed that CFHS program funding meets only a small portion of the needs of the working poor in Hamilton County. Evaluation of the Hamilton County CFHS program has two components. The first component is to assess the health needs of CFHS-eligible individuals, namely residents of Hamilton County whose jobs do not provide basic health insurance benefits and whose income is above the Medicaid-eligibility cutoffs.

After evaluating the need for prenatal care, family planning and child health care for this segment of the population, the Consortium can compare the services that they currently provide to the need for those services in the community. Although it is anticipated that there is a large unmet need, identifying the magnitude and location of that need will help future health planning. For example, if there are specific unmet needs for prenatal care, the Consortium can seek additional funding to meet those needs. Likewise, if specific Hamilton County neighborhoods are identified with disproportionate unmet needs, then the Consortium can plan for ways to increase service availability in those

neighborhoods. The November MCH Report will focus on the concept of neighborhood health analysis.

The second component of the CFHS Consortium program evaluation is the evaluation of individual Consortium agencies. A contract has been developed with the UC Institute for Health Policy and Health Services Research to perform these evaluations. This process is proceeding as a partnership between Institute evaluators and the agencies themselves. Agencies are asked to identify their missions and objectives as they relate to CFHS targets and to work with the Institute to identify cost-effective ways to measure whether those objectives are being met.

In contrast to the traditional program evaluation performed by funding agencies, for example, this evaluation will be directed at specific agency objectives that are selected by the agency. Because service providers best use their skills by providing direct services to clients, it is hoped that more efficient methods of evaluation performed by evaluation experts will produce a faster rate of continuous quality improvement. It is the responsibility of the Institute to design and conduct a rigorous and valid evaluation that can be used by the agency to improve services and improve the effective use of CFHS funds.

CFHS Consortium agencies have embraced the program evaluation concept and are meeting with Institute staff to design the evaluations, develop cost effective measurement tools and prepare mutually agreed upon time lines for completion of program evaluation activities.

CFHS (Child and Family Health Services) Consortium agencies participating in program evaluation:

Babies Milk Fund
CHMC - Adolescent Medicine
Cincinnati Health Network
Healthy Moms and Babies
Lincoln Heights Health Care Center
Planned Parenthood
U.C. Perinatal Center

Program Evaluation team:

Robert Ludke, Ph.D., Institute for Health Policy and Health Services Research

Victoria Wells, Ph.D., Institute for Health Policy and Health Services Research

Edward F. Donovan, M.D., Dir. Women's and Children's Health Outcomes Program

Beth Sanders, Ph.D., Women's and Children's Health Outcomes Program

For more information on the CFHS program evaluation feel free to contact Women's and Children's Health Outcomes staff as listed below.

This report is produced by the CFHS Women's and Children's Health Outcomes Program.

Edward F. Donovan, M.D., Director

Beth A. Sanders, Ph.D., Project Analyst

P.O. Box 670541, Cincinnati, OH 45267

Ph. 513-558-0381 Fax: 558-7770

E-Mail: donovaef@email.uc.edu