

Community Voices

HEALTHCARE FOR THE UNDERSERVED



Who We Are

Community Voices: Healthcare for the Underserved is a dynamic advocate for change in pursuit of one simple goal - a healthier America. While programs and activities are diverse, the core focus remains sharp: we are building stronger communities by strengthening the health of families. Our mission is to listen to voices in the community that often go unheard and take an active leadership role in improving health for all.

We do three things:

Educate – teach best practices for health care in underserved communities and inform national leaders on the impact of access to care

Advocate – fight through word and deed to improve economic and cultural conditions that are part of the social determinants of health

Elevate – lift families, communities and the nation through better health and health care

Community Voices works to facilitate care, plans and conducts research, seeks funding, provides technical assistance and secures commitments for progress. We recruit champions to bring energy and talent into the struggle for health. We empower individuals, families and communities to seek their own improvement. Our efforts are explained on the following panels and are focused in five key areas:

- **Health and Prison**
- **Mental and Behavioral Health**
- **Men's Health**
- **Adult and Childhood Obesity**
- **Health and Social Policy**



Health and Prison

Health in prison and health upon release from prison are big factors in the success of people and families struggling with the consequences of incarceration – an area that disproportionately impacts minority communities. Better health care behind bars translates into better chances for success upon release. Strong, comprehensive re-entry programs that address access to health care and even further, address overall wellness through access to jobs, housing and education will build chances for success and strengthen foundations for families.

Specific Community Voices efforts include:

- Developing model re-entry programs
- Improving access to Medicaid and Food Stamp/SNAP enrollment programs for those living in poverty
- Coordinating housing programs
- Arranging career counseling and job placement for those with felony convictions
- Coordinating mental health and substance use disorder programs
- Developing programs to connect children with incarcerated parents
- Educating on the importance of Medicaid to stability after incarceration
- Supporting a weekly "Lifeline" radio broadcast to increase health literacy

Mental and Behavioral Health

At-risk youths and people returning from prison with a diagnosed mental health or substance use disorder are under a great deal of pressure. The revolving door of incarceration among offenders with mental or substance use disorders is well documented. Community Voices strives to break that pattern or prevent it from starting for young people at risk. Research shows culturally appropriate care translates into better outcomes. Better outcomes lead to stronger families and communities. Community Voices is creating programs and improving access to care for those facing many challenges and barriers.

Specific Community Voices efforts include:

- Conducting research, publishing and presenting on depression, stress, substance abuse and access to care among African-Americans and adolescents
- Sponsoring forums, lectures and symposiums on mental health disparities, cultural depression differences and connections between mental health and prison
- Developing curriculum, conducting outreach and workshops on promoting mental health wellness among African-American women, preventing teen substance abuse, managing stress and mental health issues among ethnically diverse communities
- Creating student mentor programs and piloting other models of best practices
- Leading efforts to improve access to care among people returning from prison
- Ending health insurance discrimination against mental health treatment





Men's Health

African-American men have the highest mortality and lowest life-expectancy of any racial or ethnic group in the United States. They, along with African-American women, have the highest rate of high blood pressure in the world. African-American men have the highest rate of prostate cancer in the world. While obesity is a contributing factor in those startling numbers, other major causes frequently overlooked are stress from racial discrimination, low socio-economic status and incarceration. Community Voices works to improve this overwhelming problem through programs, education and advocacy.

Specific Community Voices efforts include:

- Enabling greater access to care in underserved communities by targeting programs for reform, improvement or creation
- Working with advocacy groups to reform health care policy
- Educating national leaders about the role of race-related stressors in health outcomes
- Lobbying for tougher discrimination protections and better economic opportunities, including more funding for startup businesses and forgiving employment background requirements
- Calling for an office of Men's Health within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Adult and Childhood Obesity

Obesity is linked to a great number of health issues in the United States and many of those issues have a bigger impact in minority communities. Throughout its existence, Community Voices has developed a significant expertise in obesity prevention among underserved populations, particularly African-American men, women and children. We have helped many achieve weight loss that lasts and enrollment into a permanent medical home even when the individuals do not have a source of health insurance. Our goals are simple: we want to create, support and expand programs that improve health and nutrition education in this area.

Specific Community Voices efforts include:

- Creating and implementing "Save Our Sons," a national obesity and diabetes prevention study targeted toward men
- Developing and coordinating "I am Woman," an obesity prevention project targeted toward women
- Developing a "Kid's Curriculum" and activity book focused on youth ages 7-12 that includes health messages and healthy snack recipes
- Developing curriculum for programs and studies impacting obesity
- Providing national education policy platforms on the importance of obesity prevention
- Collaborating with groups determined to make lasting change
- Providing knowledge in communicating need for action and implementing change



Health and Social Policy

Leading change at the legislative level has always been a top priority for Community Voices. Addressing the health needs of medically underserved populations takes consistent effort, influential contacts and deep understanding of the issues. Health and social policies at the national, state and local level have dramatic impact that is frequently magnified in underserved communities. Our efforts impacting policy cross into all areas we serve and centers on expanding insurance coverage, improving men's health, re-entry from incarceration pathway development, obesity prevention, ending health insurance discrimination for mental health and substance use disorder issues and improving mental health care for children and youth.

Specific Community Voices efforts include:

- Establishing the issue of the health of poor men of color as a national priority
- Creating re-entry networks that will reduce recidivism while building individual lives
- Addressing the social determinants of health (e.g. access to nutrition via SNAP – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - for all)
- Establishing dental services in underserved areas and generating national action on this issue
- Lobbying for federal recognition of community health workers
- Making the case for national prison health reform
- Stimulating reform in access to mental health and substance-use disorder treatment
- Calling attention to best practices and successes as models for national replication

We change lives everyday.

Rachel is an example of how.

Rachel had challenges of her own when she began a job as an outreach worker for Community Voices. She was a 31-year-old, single mother of two. Rachel was the sole provider, supporting her family as a part-time receptionist at a church.

Rachel became a Patient Navigator and helps people navigate the complicated world of health care.

In this position, she:

- Assists patients in applying for publicly funded care
- Identifies and helps avoid barriers to care
- Helps make appointments and arranges transportation
- Reinforces medical explanations and instructions
- Arranges dental or behavioral health care



In just four years, Rachel has attended and completed a 17-credit-hour community health worker program and received a certificate of completion from a local university, and is now taking pre-requisites to apply for nursing school. Her family has a new economic future. The overall result is that people in the community are getting better health care. It is proof of value in a program that continues to grow and have powerful impact that expands with every generation.

Rachel's story is an example of what Community Voices: Healthcare for the Underserved is trying to do in all its efforts. We helped Rachel gather the tools she needed to change her life. Now she is building a healthier, more productive future for her family and the community around her.

Community Voices is committed to listening, giving all families a voice and making sure those voices make a difference everyday. Our goal is to bring change that allows people in all the areas we serve to become healthy enough in mind, body and spirit to work, contribute, and build the vitality of families, communities and this nation.

Community Voices: Healthcare for the Underserved
A program within The Satcher Health Leadership Institute
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The Satcher Health Leadership Institute

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