



FY12 Budget Priorities

Massachusetts Association of Community Health Workers thanks the Legislature for your leadership in recognizing community health workers (CHWs) as part of health reform and the value CHWs provide to underserved communities. In the landmark health care reform law, the Legislature charged the Department of Public Health (DPH) to conduct a study of the use, funding, and impact of CHWs in Massachusetts in Section 110 of Chapter 58 of the Acts of 2006.¹ The Legislature further supported the development of the CHW profession by passing Chapter 322 of the Acts of 2010 to establish a board of certification of CHWs.

We ask for your continued leadership to support the gains of Massachusetts' health reform by funding health promotion and disease prevention efforts. With rising health care costs, policymakers across the country are investing in CHWs “to help individuals navigate a complex health care system, receive primary and preventive care, maintain healthy behaviors, and manage chronic conditions in culturally and linguistically relevant ways.”² **State and federal policymakers are now looking to MA for leadership on integrating disease prevention efforts into health reform.**

Unfortunately, Governor Patrick's fiscal year 2012 budget proposal would eliminate core health promotion and disease prevention efforts that are currently not reimbursable. Elimination of these programs will increase health care costs, increase unemployment, and undo successes we've gained in disease prevention and the elimination of health disparities. To reduce health care costs, payment reform experts are considering ways to integrate these prevention services into health reform. In the meanwhile, **please restore funding to avoid decimating this infrastructure.**

Please consider MACHW's budget priorities:

- Restore Health Promotion and Disease Prevention to retain (4513-1111)
- Restore MassHealth Outreach & Access to Care Grants
- Preserve Family Planning Services (4513-1000)
- Preserve Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program (4513-1002)
- Restore MassHealth Adult Dental Benefits
- Maintain Smoking Prevention and Cessation Programs (4590-0300)
- Maintain HIV/AIDS Prevention, Treatment and Services (4512-0103)

Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (4513-1111) at \$5.95 million

Funding history: Cut 60% since FY09; Governor proposes elimination, which would result in the loss of \$12 million -- \$6 million in state funds and \$6 million in federal matching funds.

These cuts would result in the elimination of numerous initiatives, including: loss of cancer and chronic disease screening and care coordination for 21,000 low income men and women

¹ Massachusetts DPH Community Health Worker Advisory Council, *Community Health Workers in Massachusetts: Improving Health Care and Public Health* (Boston, MA: Massachusetts Department of Public Health, 2010).

² Kristine Goodwin and Laura Tobler, *Community Health Workers: Expanding the Scope of the Health Care Delivery System* (Washington, D.C.: National Conference of State Legislatures, 2008).

provided by 138 CHWs across MA; elimination of state funding for obesity-prevention initiatives, *Mass in Motion*; and elimination of grants to 26 communities to improve community health and promote health equity.

MassHealth Outreach & Access to Care Grants at \$2.5 million

These crucial grants were eliminated in the FY2011 Governor's budget. Grantees assist residents obtain and retain their health insurance each year, saving the state and providers significant costs. CHWs play an important role in this work and also connect community members to cost effective preventive care and wellness programs.

Family Planning Services (4513-1000) at \$4.6 million

This funding was cut by over 20% in the Governor's budget and supports reproductive health services to at risk individuals, including adolescents and the under- and uninsured, services which prevent unintended pregnancies, HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, and late stage cervical and breast cancer. Community health workers trained as family planning counselors and outreach/health educators are a vital part of the medical team that delivers comprehensive family planning services to more than 86,000 clients.

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program (4513-1002) at \$12.4 million

The Governor proposes a \$2.6 million cut to the WIC program, which provides services to pregnant and parenting women and children under 5, including financial support to purchase food, nutrition information and consultations, and referrals for medical and dental care, health insurance, child care, housing and fuel assistance, and other services that can benefit the whole family. CHWs, known as community coordinators within WIC, play a critical role in providing nutrition education in the language of the families served by the program and are able to offer culturally appropriate information for healthy eating. Massachusetts is the only state to utilize CHWs and it is also the most effective WIC program in the country by providing services to over 90% of eligible people, including low income families coping each day with increasing food prices.

MassHealth Adult Dental Benefits

For the second year, the Governor's budget eliminated MassHealth adult dental benefits. Cuts to MassHealth adult dental benefits put vulnerable populations at risk and costs the state more money in the long run. Full restoration of benefits is needed because oral health is a crucial part of overall health.

Smoking Prevention and Cessation Programs (4590-0300) at \$4.5 million

Funding is already down 65% from FY09 for community-based prevention, quit programs, and local compliance checks. A MassHealth study in 2009 showed that free smoking cessation services sharply reduced smoking rates within 2-3 years and reduced inappropriate use of the emergency room and hospitalization rates, saving significant costs.

Maintain HIV/AIDS Prevention, Treatment and Services (4512-0103) at \$33 million

Budget cuts cripple the Commonwealth's ability to prevent new HIV infections, outreach to infected individuals to get them into early treatment, and provide services to the growing number of persons with HIV/AIDS who are living longer.

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