



2013 E. Monument Street
Baltimore, MD 21205
410-502-6155
www.jhsph.edu/urbanhealth

2009 Recipients of UHI Small Grants for Research, Program Development, and Education

STUDENT-COMMUNITY GRANTS

Precious Ann Ventura Fortes, Undergraduate, Department of Anthropology
Gina Baez, “Mi Espacio”, Baltimore City Health Department

Self-made Families: Gangs and Latino Youth in East Baltimore

Background: In recent years, the National Institutes of Health have prioritized research on gang-identified youth. Baltimore’s Latino youth prefer the term ‘self-made family’ rather than the term gang. Involvement in the “self-made family,” captures the reality of care and survival in Latino populations in Baltimore. This exploratory study addresses a critical need for this understudied and underserved community. Using the lens of Latino youth’s participation in these “self-made families”, this study will aim to: 1) to assess psychosocial risk factors for gang-related involvement; 2) qualitatively assess the kinship relations of Latino youth who do and do not belong to gangs; 3) map local, community, religious, and state resources for Latino immigrant families with regards to health care. Methods: In collaboration with “Mi Espacio,” a tutoring program in East Baltimore for Latino adolescents with school difficulties, we will recruit 30 youth to be interviewed by Johns Hopkins University undergraduates using structured interviews to assess mental health status. Approximately 50% will have known gang-related activity. An ethnographic study will be done with the youth and their families to map out the kinship relations as well as the cultural, political and economic resources for the Latino community in relation to health care in Baltimore. Results: The participatory approach will prepare us to carry out future assessments and intervention in this underserved population.

Janet Glover-Kerkvliet, Graduate Student, School of Education
Cheryl J. Harris, Circuit Court for Baltimore County

The Family Employment and Support Program (FESP) Men's Group

A partnership with the Family Employment and Support Program (FESP) at the Circuit Court for Baltimore County, the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE), and GenesisJobs/Goodwill is proposed to supplement services to unemployed noncustodial fathers who experience serious life stressors. These stressors--which translate into barriers to employment, low esteem, and hopelessness--include criminal history, health problems, poverty, substance abuse, unstable housing, and transportation problems. Other barriers include identity issues and impaired interpersonal relationships (particularly with co-parent). Research shows that noncustodial fathers experience powerlessness and alienation, have higher rates of suicide than custodial parents, want shared custody of children, need help in managing feelings of loss, desire improved relationships with co-parents, and want to acquire competencies in parenting and work skills (Johnson and Doolittle, 1998; Seltzer, 1998; Payne, 2006). The FESP Men’s Group will provide a much-

needed addition to a court oversight program for Baltimore city resident fathers whose child support cases are in Baltimore County. The 12 weekly sessions will cover three areas of concern: 1) social justice education and personal accountability in society, 2) successful parenting as a noncustodial father, and 3) overcoming barriers to employment. We believe that empowerment of noncustodial fathers in these areas, along with services provided by FESP, will increase self esteem, acquisition and duration of employment, and enhance parent and other interpersonal relationships.

Chandra L Jackson, PhD Student, Cardiovascular Disease Epidemiology
Shawn McIntosh, Associate Director, American Diabetes Association

Reverse the Trend™: Healthy Trendsetters Movement

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention projects that 1 in 3 young adults born after the year 2000 will develop type 2 diabetes (T2D) in their lifetime. For African-Americans, 1 in 2 will develop the disease. In response to this alarming trend and disparity, the American Diabetes Association Maryland affiliate has partnered with community leaders in Baltimore to create the Reverse the Trend: Healthy Trendsetters Movement. With advisement from Kids on the Hill youth, this program aims to reduce obesity and T2D among school-aged children through a mass media and targeted community approach. The Healthy Trendsetters team will enhance general health knowledge and the practical attainment of individualized physical activity and nutrition goals. Registrants providing health pledges will receive periodic reminders through a variety of innovative mechanisms (i.e. telephone text messages, e-mail, MySpace, and/or Facebook). We also plan to connect participants to current resources in their community, as-well as to healthy food recipes and tips on eating well. While addressing the Healthy People 2010 goals of increasing years of healthy life and eliminating racial/ethnic health disparities, this program has the potential to be replicated throughout the US and will undoubtedly have a positive impact on participating youth in Baltimore.

Luigi LaPietra, Undergraduate, Arts & Sciences
Matthew Wernsdorfer, Baltimore Civitas School

Public Education Partnerships

Urban education in Baltimore represents an opportunity for Hopkins students to work with a chronically under supported school system in order to pair the passion and resources available from undergrads, with the needs of Baltimore's youth. PEPCorps is a student-initiated project to build and develop partnerships between Johns Hopkins and the Baltimore City Public Schools. The PEP leadership proposes to gather and synthesize information on national and citywide school mentorship practices in order to develop a contextualized undergraduate civic mentorship training program to be implemented in all Hopkins undergraduates partnering with Civitas. We will do this by following a set procedure to help achieve our aims: first, by planning and collecting information about different training opportunities, second, designing a training program, third, implementing our training program into the PEPCorps teaching assistant branch; and finally evaluating the efficiency of our training program. By developing a cooperative partnership, Johns Hopkins students will gain valuable experience in education and civic engagement, and students will benefit from the guidance of a well trained and motivated staff.

**Lakha Mathewkutty, Graduate Student, School of Public Health
Jack VandenHengel, Shepherd's Clinic**

Joy Wellness Center

The Shepherd's Clinic provides health care to uninsured low-income adults from 13 Baltimore zip codes. Primary and specialty care are available to those who are unable to afford the high cost of private insurance, yet are ineligible for government health care programs. The Clinic hopes to extend these health services beyond primary health care through the creation of the Joy Wellness Center, a holistic approach to health for their clients. Wellness is defined as "the condition of good physical and mental health, especially when maintained by proper diet, exercise, and habits." (American Heritage Dictionary, 2008). Understanding that health is not the mere absence of disease symptoms, but a complex interplay of social, psychological, environmental, physical and biological factors has led to the creation of the Center. The Joy Wellness Center will provide patients mental health services, stress reduction therapies, fitness opportunities, nutrition counseling, and health education. The mission of the Joy Wellness Center is to promote community health and well-being through quality, affordable programs that teach strategies for balancing the physical, emotional, social, and spiritual areas of life.

**Jennifer Mendel, PhD Candidate, Department of Health Policy and Management
Leon Faruq, Safe Streets East**

From Promise to Practice: Keys to Successful Implementation of Street Outreach for Youth Violence Prevention

Gun violence is a leading threat to the health and safety of urban youth nationally and in Baltimore. Increasingly, public health approaches are being adopted to combat this problem. The CeaseFire program uses community organizations to provide street-level outreach, including conflict mediation, for high risk young people. Ceasefire was initially developed and found to reduce shootings in Chicago, Illinois. Other cities are trying to replicate the program and its success. This proposed case study seeks to understand the implementation of the CeaseFire model in Baltimore, examine which program policies and staff practices have been adopted and why—particularly those that staff members believe to be most effective for preventing shootings—and test hypotheses about which factors lead to success. Data will be collected primarily through in-depth interviews with staff. Interview transcripts will be analyzed using a qualitative approach of coding the data then systematically identifying and synthesizing themes that emerge from the text. Situational characteristics and staff actions that lead to positive outcomes—and those that do not—will be identified, described and disseminated. Findings from this study will inform efforts to expand the program in Baltimore and other cities by providing practice-based evidence for how the model is best implemented

**Anne Sawyer, PhD Candidate, Department of Mental Health
Deborah Agus, JD, Executive Director, Mental Health Policy Institute for Leadership and
Training**

**Trajectories of Mental Health Treatment among African American Men in Impoverished
Areas of Baltimore City**

The effects of race on persistence of mental disorders remain after controlling for SES, particularly for African Americans, who are less likely than Whites to receive adequate mental health treatment and more likely to drop out of treatment. There are disparities in diagnosis and treatment, especially for African American men. Existing mental health service utilization research is focused on separate aspects of how individuals cope with chronic conditions, but rarely examines the process of entering, exiting, and re-entering mental health treatment. This study uses qualitative research methods, which are especially useful when little is known about a phenomenon of interest or about that phenomenon in a particular population. The study population will consist of 30 African American male clients of Project Connections, a pilot program delivering mental health services in community settings in Baltimore, who have previously received mental health treatment. All participants will complete one semi-structured interview about mental health treatment experiences (sector, setting, modality, circumstances of entering and exiting, whether treatment was appropriate and guidance-concordant, and client adherence). Half of the participants will complete two additional interviews in which two life history methods, photo elicitation and lifeline drawings are used.

**Yetsa Tuakli-Wosornu, Graduate Student, School of Public Health
Valencia Warnock, Carmelo Anthony Youth Development Center**

City Scholars: Self-Discovery Through Adventure: Leadership Training for Baltimore Boys

For black boys in Baltimore, the pursuit of academic success is undermined by a treacherous socio-academic terrain. Threadbare institutional support and unrelenting social pressures create a bona fide crisis of male underachievement, one that catalyzed Baltimore's work with Kenya's Baraka School in 1996. This crisis continues to demand a coordinated response. Local in focus and international in scope, the City Scholars program seeks to improve the lives and life chances of African-American boys in Baltimore city. Hopkins' MPH students' work with Baltimore's *Boys of Baraka* (now young adults) catalyzed this effort and the boys' voices, needs and hopes for their city reverberate throughout the architecture of the program. City Scholars is a partnership between the Living Classrooms Foundation's Carmelo Anthony Youth Center, the Conheads Male Grooming Salon and graduate students at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. A single gender, cohort-based intervention rooted in the insight, imperatives, and infrastructure of the Baraka School, City Scholars starts by sending ten African-American middle school boys on an adventure of self-discovery at the All Earth Eco Tours program in rural Maryland. We believe that the three-tiered partnership between strong African-American men from the Baltimore community, a positive community enrichment center and the organizational leadership of Bloomberg students will positively affect the self-esteem, academic interests and aspirations among boys of color in our City. Through the Summer Leadership Training, authority, trust and solidarity within the CS team will be established. The long-term goal is to prepare middle school boys with the intellectual frameworks and social tools they need to successfully access and thrive in high school. The program targets middle school boys because of their receptive socio-emotional developmental characteristics. The small cohort size reflects the program's pilot status. The decision to focus on a distinct target population allows for a precise, high-quality intervention as well as in-depth analysis and evaluation.

FACULTY COMMUNITY GRANTS

**C. Debra Furr-Holden, Assistant Professor, School of Public Health
Jeanetta Churchill, The Family League of Baltimore City**

Data Driven Urban Health Initiatives

The Urban Health Institute is interested in fostering JHU and community collaborations, specifically in areas that relate to urban health and well being including urban design and violence. In response to this interest we are proposing collaboration with Community Partner, Jeanetta Churchill, Director of the Baltimore City Data Collaborative (BCDC) at The Family League of Baltimore. As the Director of the BCDC, Ms Churchill has extensive working knowledge and access to local data. She also has a Masters in Geospatial Statistics and extensive experience in Geospatial Analysis and Multi-variable analysis. Dr. Furr-Holden, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Mental Health works very closely with local stakeholders on community violence prevention efforts in Baltimore City and developed an objective urban environment assessment method (Furr Holden, et al, 2008). This collaboration will offer a much needed opportunity to integrate the wealth of data available from the BCDC with longitudinal environmental data collected by Dr. Furr-Holden's research team, as well as other data readily available thru an existing collaboration with the Baltimore City Mayor's Office on Information and Technology (MOIT). This project will bridge resources, agencies, and data to further local health promotion initiatives, specifically in the area of children's exposure to violence and create a database that can be used in future urban health promotion initiatives across a broader range of topics.

**Andrea Gielen, Professor and Director, Center for Injury Research and Policy
Raymond O'Brocki, Deputy Chief Fire Marshall**

Data Driven Capacity Building for the Baltimore City Fire Department

Children in Baltimore city are twice as likely to die in a house fire as compared to children in Maryland and children nationally. A properly functioning smoke alarm has been proven to decrease one's chance of death in a fire. The Baltimore City Fire Department (BCFD) has been conducting free home inspections and smoke alarm installations in Baltimore city since the 1980's. Despite this home visiting program, citizens in Baltimore continue to experience injuries from fire at unacceptable rates. Based on our preliminary assessment of the BCFD home visiting program data and discussions with BCFD, we believe that better use of the home visiting program data may help to more effectively target the program to reduce fire deaths and injuries. Therefore, this proposal aims to work in partnership with the BCFD to: conduct a systematic evaluation of the BCFD's 2007 home visiting data, and, based on the results, modify the data collection and monitoring system to more efficiently plan and track program activities; and to build capacity in the BCFD to enable them to better utilize their home visiting data to increase efficiency and reduce duplication of efforts.

Joel Gittelsohn, Associate Professor, Human Nutrition
Steve Vassor, Associate Director, Baltimore City Recreation Bureau

Improving the Food Environment in Baltimore City Recreation Centers

Approximately 18% of Baltimore African American (AA) youth are overweight. Childhood obesity puts these children at risk for serious chronic health issues as adults.¹ Environmental variables, such as restricted access to healthy foods, play a substantial role in shaping obesity-related behaviors. Our current project, Baltimore Healthy Eating Zones, investigates food consumption behavior among Baltimore AA youth and will intervene in corner stores, takeouts and restaurants in their neighborhoods. In collaboration with the Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks, the proposed substudy will extend our research to the Baltimore City recreation centers, which are used by over 20,000 AA children and teens. We will work in 12 (out of 46 total) Baltimore City recreation centers. We will collect formative data, use the information in collaboration with community partners to design and implement a recreation center staff training to provide them with the tools and support to improve the food environment and nutrition education for children. We will evaluate the impact of the program on recreation center staff psychosocial and behavioral outcomes, and on the recreation center environment itself. The proposed research will serve as a model on how to improve food availability and nutrition education at Baltimore City recreation centers.

Nancy Glass, Associate Professor, School of Nursing
Terri Wurnser, House of Ruth

Evaluation of an Interactive Safety Decision Aid for Victims of Domestic Violence

Violence against women and child exposure to violence are significant public health issues for Baltimore and US families. Women's decisions about safety seeking actions (e.g. seeking a restraining order, going to shelter) to reduce exposure to violence are known to be complex and multifaceted. For example, women consider the custody of their children, severity of violence, access to affordable safe housing and employment with a living wage when making safety decisions. Additionally, women's safety decisions are not linear, but dynamic and typically change over time. Our challenge as researchers, practitioners and advocates is to assist abused women to develop an individualized safety action plan for themselves and their children based on their priorities and level of danger during that time of decision-making. Therefore, the objective of this community-academic partnered study is to further develop and enhance an existing computerized safety decision aid for victims of IPV by incorporating tailored communication strategies, thus individualizing safety action plans. The proposed study will provide foundational data for an intervention trial to test the impact of the computerized safety decision aid on exposure to violence and health outcomes among East Baltimore women and children.

FACULTY-COMMUNITY COURSE DEVELOPMENT

**Philip Leaf, Professor, School of Public Health
Grady Dale, Jr., The American Institute for Urban Psychological Studies, Inc.**

Health and Well-Being in Baltimore: A Public Health Perspective

Request for support for the creation of a new course to be offered by the Undergraduate Major in Public Health in the Winter Term 2010. Although many undergraduate, graduate, and professional students have expressed interest in learning more about Baltimore, few opportunities exist. Much of what students know about Baltimore was gained through the radio, television, or print media. Data used in courses is frequently outdated. When courses involve community participants, selection is based usually on the area of research and contacts of the professor and rarely is diversity of opinion presented. This course will provide an underpinning for addressing public health issues in urban communities and also increase the utility of existing courses by providing a context of the overall health and well-being of City residents and communities. The planning period will allow for the identification of policy and program priorities currently in existence in Baltimore, data related to positive health, assets, illness, and disability, development of procedures for updating data from City agencies and other sources to keep the course current, and the creation of course material including videos.