



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 24, 2012

Contact:

Dana Lawrence, Communications Manager

dlawrence@mpca.net

517.381.9440 office

517.719.7677 cell

Community Health Centers: A Prescription for Improving Child Health

The 2011 Kids Count in Michigan Data Book released today shows that growing poverty in Michigan threatens the health of children across our state. One symptom of poverty is difficulty accessing healthcare.

“Low-income families often delay or don’t seek healthcare for their children due to lack of health insurance, inability to pay for services, and transportation, language, and cultural barriers. Fortunately there is a resource in communities across the state that overcomes these barriers. That resource is called a Community Health Center,” said Kim Sibilsky, Executive Director, Michigan Primary Care Association.

A Community Health Center, also known as a Federally Qualified Health Center, is a local, non-profit, community-owned provider of quality primary and preventive healthcare. There are over 190 Community Health Center sites in urban and rural Michigan communities, and their doors are open to everyone regardless of insurance status or socioeconomic indicators. Today 92.2 percent of Michigan Health Center patients are low-income and 69 percent have family income levels at or below poverty. Of the nearly 600,000 Michigan residents who rely on a Community Health Center as their healthcare home and family physician, over one-third (nearly 205,000) are children.

Community Health Centers help improve child health through a coordinated, comprehensive, culturally-appropriate approach. Teams of healthcare providers focus on the whole child to maintain physical, dental, and behavioral health and to manage chronic conditions prevalent in childhood, such as asthma, obesity, and dental decay. They provide maternal support services to help pregnant women deliver healthy babies, which has been linked to improvements in the use of prenatal care and reductions in the incidence of low birthweight. They offer discounted medications and health education. They provide transportation and translation assistance to mitigate geographic and language barriers. They collaborate with other health and human services organizations within the community to ensure children and families have the support they need.

MORE

Community Health Centers: A Prescription for Improving Child Health

Page 2

The care provided by Community Health Centers is high quality and often exceeds national standards. Childhood immunizations offer one such example. In 2011, 77 percent of 2-year-old children served by the state's Community Health Centers received all of the immunizations recommended for their age group. That's 7 percent higher than the national average.

Through partnerships with schools, many Community Health Centers also operate Health Center sites located within schools to increase access to healthcare, especially for children who are uninsured, underserved, and have nowhere else to get care. The convenience of children not having to leave school to visit the doctor helps keep students healthy and in the classroom.

Health Centers also improve child health by assisting families in enrolling children in the state's free or low-cost health insurance programs, MIChild and Healthy Kids. Currently 143,000 Michigan Community Health Center patients under the age of 19 rely on these public health programs for their insurance coverage. Just this past fall, a coalition of Michigan Community Health Centers, hospitals, and urban school districts directly enrolled nearly 1,600 uninsured children through the Enroll Michigan campaign and increased applications statewide by 20 percent through outreach and public awareness.

Community Health Centers are on the front lines every day, increasing access to quality, affordable healthcare for children and families. To locate a Community Health Center near you, visit www.mpca.net.

Health Matters was released by the Kids Count in Michigan project. It is a collaboration between the Michigan League for Human Services, which researches and writes the report, and Michigan's Children, which works with advocates statewide to disseminate the findings. Both organizations are nonpartisan, nonprofit advocacy groups concerned with the well-being of children and their families. It can be found online at www.milhs.org.

About Michigan Primary Care Association

Michigan Primary Care Association has been the voice for Community Health Centers and other community-based providers in Michigan since 1980. It is a leader in building a healthy society in which all residents have convenient and affordable access to quality health care. MPCA's mission is to promote, support, and develop comprehensive, accessible, and affordable quality community-based primary care services to everyone in Michigan. For more information, please visit www.mpca.net or call 517.381.8000.

###