

Georgia Program Receives \$250,000 To Create Medical Home For Homeless Children

The Institute for the Study of Disadvantage and Disability (ISDD) was recently awarded a five-year, \$250,000 Healthy Tomorrows grant by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau of HRSA and the American Academy of Pediatrics. This is the first Healthy Tomorrows grant awarded to Georgia in 17 years. ISDD, a private not-for-profit institute dedicated to *Break the Cycle of Disadvantage and Disability* for vulnerable children, will establish *Healthcare Without Walls: A Medical Home for Homeless Children*, a collaborative and comprehensive community-based program to address the health care needs of this group of vulnerable children. ISDD will work in collaboration with Mary Hall Freedom House, a successful and growing behavioral health program for homeless women, the Department of Pediatrics at the Morehouse School of Medicine, an historically black university, dedicated to providing healthcare to children in the community, and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, the largest provider of healthcare for children in Georgia.

Children who are homeless are at high risk for adverse health, developmental, educational, and social outcomes. They are likely to have been exposed to stresses before, during and after birth along with multiple physical, emotional, and social hazards. Maternal stress often associated with substance abuse, low maternal health literacy, poverty and circumstances surrounding their homeless status, precludes access to appropriate health resources in the community. As a result, the children do not receive the necessary health care to assure their optimal health, growth and development.

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Healthcare Without Walls will employ the American Academy of Pediatrics *Medical Home* practices and *Bright Futures* guidelines to develop a health care delivery system for children. This system will include an innovative health literacy program for their mothers and outreach and training activities for pediatric community practitioners. The goal is to help ensure that this group of vulnerable children will receive health care that is consistent, continuous, coordinated, comprehensive, community-based, family-centered and culturally sensitive.

A *Medical Home* is a program that coordinates the necessary health care services that are critical to a child's optimal health and wellbeing. The *Medical Home* model is especially important for children who have special health needs, move frequently, are homeless, or are otherwise at risk for "falling through the cracks" in the health care system.

"Many of the children in our program do not have a pediatrician or receive regular healthcare," notes Lucy Hall, CEO of the Mary Hall Freedom House. "As a result, they end up going to the local emergency room even for relatively minor health prob-

lems. *Healthcare Without Walls* will change that by increasing access to appropriate health care while decreasing emergency room visits for non-emergencies."

Healthcare Without Walls is the newest of several ISDD programs dedicated to helping families break free of intergenerational cycles of disadvantage and disability by facilitating increased access to health care, education, and other critical services and by helping to create and develop the necessary resources in the community. "By providing coordinated, appropriate health care to these vulnerable children today, we help ensure that they will thrive and reach their full potential and become full participating and contributing members of society tomorrow," said Leslie Rubin MD, President and Founder of ISDD.

Healthcare Without Walls officially began on March 1, 2010.

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