



Testimony of
Children's National Medical Center
Pre-School Immunization Program

Before the
District of Columbia Committee on Health

Community Health Administration Budget Oversight Hearing

FY 2008 Budget Support Act of 2007

March 5, 2008

Presented by:

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Introduction

Good morning Chairman Catania and members of the Committee on Health. I am Ruth Fisher, Director, Advocacy and Community Affairs at Children's National Medical Center (Children's National). I am pleased to be here to speak on behalf of the Strengthening Immunization Compliance grant project. We commend you and the City Council for your leadership and commitment to strengthening immunization compliance among pre-school and school age children in the District of Columbia. We also commend our partner, the Department of Health, and thank them for their diligence in ensuring the success of this grant project.

Opening Statement

To increase immunization compliance among the pre-school population , the Pre-School Immunization Program at Children's National along with the District of Columbia

(DC) Department of Health (DOH) Immunization Program identified several strategies, including: 1) direct services via a fully equipped and staffed mobile unit called Dr. Bear's Express; (2) information technology to access the Immunization Registry with real-time access on the mobile unit and in District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) nursing suites; and (3) education and outreach through learning partnerships with parent/guardians, service providers, and the community.

Since the inception of the program, Dr. Bear's Express has assessed 1,364 children (438 in FY06, 677 in FY07 and 249 FY08 YTD) and immunized 776 (181 in FY06, 450 in FY07 and 145 in FY08 YTD). To date there have been twenty-four (24) learning partnerships reaching one-hundred forty-nine (149) participants.

The collaborative effort has resulted in substantial progress. In addition to the support from the DC DOH, Children's National continues to maintain its institutional investment in this project as a corporate strategic three year goal to increase the percentage of students in the District of Columbia immunized by age five. I am pleased to share some of highlights in FY 2008.

Program YTD Major Outcomes Accomplishments

- Deployed Dr. Bear's Express mobile unit to 101 sites in the District of Columbia, including licensed child development centers, Head Start Programs, elementary schools, and major community health fairs.
- Increased documented pre-school immunization rate by a combined total of 11.27% from the baseline May 2006 data—Licensed Childhood Development Centers (LCDCs) 69.68% and Head Start 74.78%. At year end 2007, immunization compliance rate was 74.27% for LCDCs and 81.42% for Head Start.

- Assessed 1,364 individual records and immunized 776 children.
- Successfully launched the *It's Wise to Immunize* Hotline, which allowed parents and/or guardians to speak with qualified nurses regarding the status of their child's immunization compliance, obtain an official immunization record, and linked them to a primary care provider to obtain a medical home. The Hotline received 111 calls, of which 61 were assessed and 53 (48%) were found to be compliant.
- Conducted twenty-four learning partnerships at community sites promoting the use of the primary care provider as the medical home and distributed more than 1,500 *Dr. Bear®'s Guide to a Healthy Child* in English and Spanish.

FY 2008 YTD Accomplishments and Initiatives: October 1, 2007–February 29, 2008

- Continued utilization of the formalized feedback and referral system with the Medical Assistance Administration (MAA) Office of Managed Care to capture and verify public health insurance (Medicaid/DC Healthy Families and DC Healthcare Alliance), facilitating the effort of the Office of Managed Care to recoup funds from Medicaid Managed Care Organizations on a per child, per vaccination administrative fee.
- Sustained implementation, monitoring, and follow up of programmatic feedback and referral system with the DC Department of Health Medical Assistance Administration (MAA), which includes identification, verification, and follow up with every child and referrals to DC Healthy Families insurance and other health related resources.

- Developed an intra-institutional partnership with Diana L. and Stephen A. Goldberg Center for Community Pediatric Health (Goldberg Center) in January 2008 to identify and implement best practice initiatives to improve pre-school and school-age immunization rates. In January, 734 individual records were assessed during sick and well child visits and 2,141 vaccines were identified as due or overdue (among the 734 records reviewed).
- Expanded education and outreach through an extensive range of educational resources, including but not limited to, Immunizations/Primary Care, Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), Infant Care, and Baby Sitting classes by merging learning partnerships with our Community Education Program. Classes are taught by a certified Community Health Educator or other certified health professions. Classes are available to parents, guardians, and service providers. Some classes are taught in English and Spanish.
- Identified policy, operational, or administrative barriers to collect and report timely immunization data to the DC Immunization Registry. Improvement measures including technical assistance (TA) have been extended to sites to assess their immunization records, facilitate updates to the registry, and provide education regarding documents that must be submitted to the registry by sites.
- Continued health promotions plan to raise awareness and response to events and activities, including identification of major events to promote use of primary care providers for immunizations and well-child visits.

- Strengthened our partnership with the Head Start Program by extending Dr. Bear's Express services to their cluster sites every Wednesday to ensure immunization compliance.

Upcoming Initiatives

- Expand the intra-institutional partnership with the Goldberg Center to implement a targeted educational intervention that will address access barriers to primary care providers as the medical home for the families with pre-school age children.
- Develop and implement, in collaboration with DOH, peer provider education/outreach for medical doctors, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants in the District of Columbia that provide immunizations to children 0 to 18 years of age, with special emphasis on children 0 to 4 years of age.
- Develop strategy to prioritize identification of targeted pediatric providers for peer educational outreach.
- Expand Dr. Bear's Express to other preventive services, such as oral health, vision, and nutrition screenings that will connect children and their families to the primary care provider as a medical home.
- Develop and implement a plan to ensure that the new immunization requirements for school year 2008-2009 are communicated to parents and guardians, and to provide quality and timely clinical resources to vaccinate the appropriate children.

Sustainability – FY 2009

As we approach the peak of success for this initiative through formalized partnerships with several DOH administrations and build trust with pre-school educators and parents, it is imperative that this momentum be maintained. Therefore, based on the

demonstrated success of this initiative and the past success of the concentrated efforts by Children's School Services to increase the school-age immunization rate, we recommend sustainability of this program for the next year to fully achieve the expected outcomes of the DC City Council, the Department of Health, and Children's National, that is, to increase and sustain the immunization compliance rate of pre-school age children so that they are fully immunized by age 5—the mandatory age in the District of Columbia to start kindergarten. Additionally, this time will allow us to continue to provide direct services while identifying barriers within processes and implement effective strategies to increase and sustain the immunization compliance rate. Further, it is well documented that immunization compliance contributes to the overall improvement in health status for children, families, and the community.

As we indicated in testimony last year, we believe that funding in the amount of \$300,000.00 for the final project year will allow us to meet and sustain the ultimate goals:

- 1) Improved immunization rates; and
- 2) Development on this approach to utilize the mobile unit to address other critical yet preventive health threats to the pediatric population, such as oral health and obesity prevention. Specifically in FY 2009, with sustainable funding for the mobile unit effort, we will:

- Immunize an additional 500 children, facilitate access to public health insurance, and link families to the primary care provider as the medical home.
- Continue collaborative partnerships with the Goldberg Center Children's Health Centers and other primary care providers to bring immunization records up-to-date with the Immunization Registry, and implement strategies to avoid missed

opportunities by providing due and overdue vaccines to children at sick and well child visits.

- Seek and secure additional funding and create partnerships with like institutions to provide additional services, such as dental, hearing, and vision screenings.

Conclusion

Children's National is committed to this most important initiative and we appreciate the opportunity to work in partnership with the Department of Health to increase the immunization compliance rate of pre-school age children. We are confident that this preventive approach will contribute to the ongoing successful efforts to prepare all children to enter DCPS fully immunized. Again, we thank you for your leadership in spearheading this effort and for inviting Children's National to participate in this hearing. I welcome your questions.