

MINORITY HEALTH INITIATIVES Families USA

Background

Racial and ethnic groups in the United States continue to experience major differences in health access, treatment, and outcomes compared to whites. The forces that contribute to health disparities are complex, ranging from broader societal issues such as poverty, racism, and hazardous environments, to health system factors such as provider bias, lack of workforce diversity, and inaccessible or nonexistent health care facilities. However, lack of health insurance coverage is by far the largest contributor, and people of color continue to be disproportionately uninsured. While racial and ethnic minorities make up about one-third of the U.S. population, they comprise over half of the 45.8 million uninsured.

To address this issue and serve as a source of reliable and accurate information on minority health issues, Families USA launched a new program area in 2004. The *Minority Health Initiatives* program area has three core objectives:

- To stay abreast of, and raise awareness about, minority health policy issues and racial and ethnic health disparities.
- To build and maintain the capacity of community leaders to become engaged in and address the health policies that affect their communities, and to train leaders to be a resource on minority health.
- To analyze the impact of health policies and proposals on racial and ethnic minorities' access to quality, affordable health care.

Activities and Products

National Health Policy Training Alliance for Communities of Color: In partnership with the National Medical Association, the Health Policy Institute at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, and the National Association for Latino Elected and Appointed Officials, Families USA will sponsor trainings on the role health policy plays in reducing racial and ethnic health disparities. These trainings will be geared toward community leaders, policymakers, and the media.

Action Kit for Community Leaders: Families USA has produced an action kit designed to provide community leaders with the information, tools, and resources necessary to engage in health advocacy and improve the health and well-being of their communities. This kit is available online at www.familiesusa.org/minorityhealth.

Online Resource Center: The Minority Health section of the Families USA Web site includes numerous resources, such as quick facts on health disparities and minority health, issue briefs, and links to relevant organizations and resources. Look for more to come in 2006, including a “Tell Us Your Story” feature, as well as stories of how communities are taking action to address health disparities.

Ongoing Technical Assistance and Support: As a resource for advocates, policymakers, and the media, Families USA staff is available for questions and support on issues related to racial and ethnic health disparities. Send an e-mail to minorityhealth@familiesusa.org or call us at 202-628-3030.

The Wellstone Fellowship for Social Justice: To help foster the next generation of social justice leaders from communities of color, Families USA selects and hosts one talented and motivated individual to work in the *Minority Health Initiatives* program area for a 12-month fellowship.

We want to hear from you!

Is your organization working directly on issues related to racial and ethnic health disparities? Are you interested in getting involved with Families USA’s work on this topic? As we continue to shape our work in this area, we’d love to hear your comments and suggestions and learn about what you’re doing to address health disparities in your community.

For more information on Families USA’s minority health initiatives, please contact:

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