



WINTER 2004

This section focuses on the events and accomplishments that happened within the Department in the months of January, February and March 2004. While the Department begins to consider the budget for the following year during this time, it also continues to serve the community and meet its needs, which are in some cases increased. For example, San Francisco General Hospital and Laguna Honda Hospital tend to experience a seasonal increase in patients in the winter months.

These pages highlight a number of important programs and events from the winter of 2004:

- The needs assessment for Bayview-Hunters Point residents of African descent living with HIV/AIDS to help better organize health and social services offered in this neighborhood;
- The renovation of San Francisco General Hospital's Cardiac Catheter Laboratory to better serve patients;
- The project allowing individuals with food stamps access food at local Farmer's Markets; and more.

Community Needs Assessment for Bayview-Hunters Point

HIV Health Services (HHS) conducted a community needs assessment to implement the Planning Council's directive to allocate funds to address health disparities for persons living with HIV/AIDS and who are of African descent living in Bayview-Hunters Point (BVHP). In January and February, facilitators held two meetings (one with direct service providers and the other with agency administrators) and one consumer focus group. Eighteen providers and community representatives from interested organizations participated in the planning process to identify barriers, successful practices and suggest improvements for services and systems of comprehensive health and social care.

Epidemiological research revealed that in contrast to the profile of HIV/AIDS epidemic in most other San Francisco communities, the BVHP service recipient is more likely to have higher mortality rates; as well as to be female or homeless. Another key difference from the local community is that in the BVHP area, the HIV/AIDS epidemic more often affects family units and children (under 24 years old) rather than single or partnered adults. The written assessment highlighted the unique needs of an inclusive, integrated continuum of HIV/AIDS services targeting individuals of diverse socio-economic status, with multiple medical diagnoses and possible involvement with criminal justice and substance abuse/addiction and mental health systems. This report will be used to guide HHS's efforts to develop an integrated service model that will provide health and social services to residents of the Bayview-Hunters Point and the South East corridor.



Department Deputy Director Barbara Garcia speaks at the press conference.

Raising Awareness while Curbing DUI

The Department joined forces with the San Francisco Police Department to address drinking and driving, a significant part of the high rate of injury crashes in San Francisco. Three press releases and a joint press conference helped to get out the word that San Francisco was a good place to have fun, but not to drink and drive. Police stepped up enforcement around winter holidays and the Department helped to get out the message that our communities will not tolerate driving under the influence.

Improving Patient Flow

In February 2004 the Department initiated a project with a goal to improve the patient flow from San Francisco General Hospital (SFGH) and Laguna Honda Hospital (LHH), significantly reducing staff time spent on transfers and the number of days spent by patients at SFGH awaiting transfer at a “lower level of care.” A group of individuals from SFGH, LHH and central administration representing a variety of disciplines began meeting on a regular basis, both in the large group and in numerous subgroups to work together toward this common goal.

Removing barriers that impede patient flow allows patients to be cared for at the proper level of care, and allows the public health care system to free beds at the acute care hospital thereby reducing crowding in the Emergency Room. This cooperative effort had a real impact. In 2004 (January through May), 78 percent of LHH’s patients were admitted to LHH from SFGH, 13 percent were admitted from other facilities and 9 percent from home. In this same time period in 2003 (January through May), 54 percent of LHH’s admissions came from SFGH, 34 percent from other facilities and 12 percent from home.

Revitalizing Nutrition Education

The San Francisco Women, Infants and Children Supplemental Nutrition Program (WIC) was chosen by the California State WIC program to participate in a special nutrition education project. In March 2004, the WIC staff participated in a two-day training called *Finding the Teacher Within*. The purpose of the training was to improve nutrition education by using “learner-centered” approaches that encourage the WIC participants to actively participate in the learning process. The focus is on providing education that appeals to participants, is relevant to their needs, and engages them in a meaningful way. Using these “learner-centered” principles and practices, the San Francisco WIC program is providing innovative and dynamic methods of nutrition education and obesity prevention.

Renovating SFGH's Cardiac Catheter Laboratory

The Cardiac Catheterization Lab at San Francisco General Hospital (SFGH) was completely remodeled from the concrete up, and in March 2004, the new all-digital imaging suite was licensed for patient care. The project reconfigured the lab from a wet-film darkroom based equipment suite to the General Electric Innova system, which utilizes a flat-plate detector to provide superior diagnostic imaging with radically less x-ray exposure strength than the older vacuum tube detector. The new equipment provides higher resolution images with various options for image processing that enhance the ability of the clinician to handle complex cases. The remodel of the suite also provided for a larger control room, and a dedicated case review workstation area.



Gaining Access to Farmers Markets

Nationwide, the Food Stamp Program replaced paper coupons with Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) technology to reduce both stigma and fraud associated with paper food stamps. Food Stamp recipients now receive benefits on a debit card, which is used much like a bank debit card using point of sale (POS) devices. After San Francisco began its use of EBT in March of 2003, the Department's community food research team (comprising Environmental Health Section and San Francisco Food Systems staff) discovered that the new technology did not allow beneficiaries to use their benefits at local farmer's markets. Farmer's markets had not traditionally utilized POS devices.



An organic foods vendor at the Heart of the City farmer's market.

The Department's Environmental Health Section, SF Food Systems and the Department of Human Services partnered to support model programs at farmer's markets for food stamp recipients. San Francisco became a pilot county for a California Department of Health Services' California Nutrition Network Statewide program called *California Farmers' Market Food Stamp Outreach and EBT Conversion*. The Department and SF Food Systems provided technical assistance to farmer's markets, and developed marketing materials for food stamp recipients to promote use of EBT. As a result of these efforts, EBT is now accepted at the Heart of the City, Ferry Plaza, Fillmore and Kaiser farmer's markets, with programs at additional markets being planned.

Preparing for Air Medical Access

In March 2003, the Health Commission reviewed the findings of the “*San Francisco General Hospital Air Medical Access Needs Assessment and Feasibility Study*” and adopted a resolution directing San Francisco General Hospital to continue planning for air medical access. In March 2004, an Environmental Impact Report contract was negotiated, approved and certified. A community outreach plan was developed and currently in progress. Meanwhile, federal funding has been secured for the design and permitting of the helipad.

New Methadone Van Services

The Department initiated mobile methadone treatment in March 2003 with two large vans (Recreational Vehicle size) each with a private dispensing area, wheelchair access, and facilities for urine testing. The vans provide methadone dosing and counseling services to clients who are enrolled at the San Francisco General Hospital Opiate Treatment Outpatient Program. Crisis counseling can be accommodated on board the van, while scheduled counseling appointments are seen in nearby facilities. At full capacity, the van pilot program will dispense 150 methadone doses daily.

The vans serve clients in two locations each weekday, parking in secure lots in the Mission and Bayview-Hunters Point (BVHP) neighborhoods for two-hour dispensing periods. The expansion of services into BVHP was made possible through a unique partnership with a local church and a community outreach organization to provide facilities for van parking and counseling. Van services have been given positive ratings by clients who view the program as extremely efficient and convenient, with skilled and supportive staff. By bringing treatment closer to clients' homes, compliance, retention and treatment success are expected to improve.

Meeting the Needs of Long Term Care Patients

Laguna Honda Hospital (LHH) continues to meet the challenge of an ever-changing population with new social and medical needs. The following changes occurred at LHH in FY 2003-04.

- Prepared to accept residents whose care needs include use of complex medical equipment, such as peripherally inserted central catheters for long-term antibiotic administration, positive airway pressure for obstructive sleep apnea, and wound vacs for chronic open wounds.
- Trained nurses to help them care for new residents.
- Reorganized units to better serve these individuals.
- Created a substance abuse program with one-on-one counseling and group programs to help address the social aspect of their care.

In addition, LHH has taken the lead in establishing state of the art dental care for long-term care residents. University of the Pacific Dental School has now established a clinic at LHH. The clinic will have three faculty members with residents and students help care and screen all our residents. There will also be a special focus on geriatric dentistry to help residents maintain the highest quality of life with improved nutrition.

Ten Year Plan to Abolish Chronic Homelessness

In March 2004, Mayor Newsom announced the formation of a 33-member Council designed to write a Ten Year Plan to end homelessness in San Francisco. Headed by former Board of Supervisors President Angela Alioto, the Council was charged with writing San Francisco's Ten Year Plan by the end of June 2004. The Department was well represented in this effort.

The Ten Year Plan is intended to re-energize and re-commit the community's effort toward the goal of ending homelessness. San Francisco's plan, as well as other plans nationally, draws upon the expertise of government, business, service providers, philanthropy, and homeless people to develop and implement a strategy to end homelessness. An important shift in the focus of these plans includes: 1) an emphasis on proven strategies that remove people from homelessness rather than manage or ameliorate their condition on the street; and 2) a special focus on a subset of the population known as "chronically homeless" because of the dire health conditions of this population and the expensive over-utilization of emergency services that erodes a community's ability to provide safety net services.

San Francisco's plan, "*The San Francisco Plan to Abolish Chronic Homelessness*," released in late June 2004, places a heavy emphasis on this "housing first" approach, which emphasizes immediate placement into permanent supportive housing and providing the necessary services on-site to stabilize individuals and keep them housed. The recommended goal of the Ten Year Council is to create 3,000 units of new, permanent supportive housing by 2010. The Department's Direct Access to Housing program is expected to play a large part under this plan.