
MODELS FOR PRACTICE

FOCUS AREA: ACCESS (PRIMARY CARE)

Program Name: Montana Faith-Health Cooperative

Location: Bozeman, Montana

Problem Addressed: Access to Primary Care

Healthy People 2010 Objective: 1-4, 1-5, 1-6

Web Address: <http://faithhealthcoop.montana.edu>

SNAPSHOT

The scope of MT FHC is truly inter-faith and all-inclusive, open to practitioners of all faiths, all healing arts, and all health care traditions.

The Montana Faith-Health Cooperative (MT FHC) is an alliance of over a dozen diverse faith-based and health organizations committed to the mission of fostering and promoting productive faith-health partnerships across Montana. The scope of MT FHC is truly inter-faith and all-inclusive, open to practitioners of all faiths, all healing arts, and all health care traditions. The impetus for developing MT FHC originated out of collaboration between the Montana Association of Churches and the Montana Office of Rural Health working together on a Rural Crisis Outreach Grant entitled “Seeds of Hope: Revitalizing Rural Montana.” Under direction of the grant, town meetings were convened by local faith-based organizations to bring together community members in seeking solutions to Montana’s farm/ranch crisis situation. Results of the town meetings underscored the plight of isolated, underserved rural communities faced with multiple years of drought, chronic economic decline, and persistent poverty. Another outcome suggested a key role for faith-based organizations in developing solutions. From its inception in June 2001, MT FHC has been evolving along some of the basic guidelines for developing rural cooperatives. For instance, MT FHC held exploratory meetings with individuals and representatives of organizations having similar interests and appointed a steering committee to guide the cooperative during the formative process—two important steps in organizing a cooperative according to the USDA Rural Cooperative Development Service. Membership on the steering committee includes representatives from state agencies, academia, professional associations, health associations, health insurance agencies, nursing homes, and faith-based organizations.

The cooperative has been involved in grant writing, participating in state and national conferences, and has sponsored the state’s two annual statewide Faith-Health Summits in 2002 and 2003. In September 2002, the cooperative was one of 21 awardees across the nation to receive support through President Bush’s Compassion Capital Fund Demonstration Program. The overall goal of the cooperative’s application, the Montana Faith-Health Demonstration Project, is to enhance and expand the role of faith-based organizations (FBOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) in

providing health and social services to the underserved and most needy individuals and families across Montana. For this project, social services are defined as those prevention, intervention, treatment, and rehabilitative services provided to individuals and families who need assistance in maintaining or achieving their full potential for self sufficiency and healthy independent living. These services promote and protect the physical, mental, spiritual, social, and economic well being of individuals and families. They offer hope, healing, holistic health, and social well being through acknowledgment of the inherent worth of every individual and the significance of healthy relationships. In addition to providing technical assistance and making sub-awards to Montana's FBOs and CBOs, this project supports, in part, the following two ongoing cornerstone foundational statewide programs:

- parish nurse and congregational health minister training through the Parish Nurse Center, Carroll College; and
- prisoner-community re-entry through Teach, Encourage, Assist, and Model (T.E.A.M.) Mentoring, Inc.

In March 2003, the cooperative made sub-awards to 22 FBOs and CBOs across the state designed to develop and expand the range of social and health services to Montana's underserved, at risk, and needy populations. The cooperative is very interested in identifying evidence-based best practices for possible duplication of projects and programs in areas of need across the state.

PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION

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