

Building a Culture of Health in Baltimore Early Head Start Centers
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Description: Eight (8) Early Head Start (EHS) centers serve over 400 low-income children and their families in Baltimore City. Although health oversight is a part of the Federal EHS program, there is no requirement to hire a Registered Nurse. Resources for these centers are limited, and the vast majority of eligible children in Baltimore City are unserved.

In partnership with the Maryland Family Network, the University of Maryland School of Nursing (UMSON) established the Community and Public Health Environmental Initiative to provide health oversight to Baltimore City Early Head Start centers using a school nurse model with students in community/public health (CPH) clinical rotations. The initiative focuses on implementing the Eco-Healthy Child Care Program®, providing health oversight of children, and offering a variety of health education programs tailored to meet needs identified by Center Directors. Led by an experienced school health nurse, students from five (5) programs at UMSON provide health and wellness services for families and staff members, including review of records, development of care plans for acute and chronic health conditions, health screening, home visits, health education and in-service training based on the centers' identified needs. Students are responsible for developing appropriate interventions and measuring their outcomes.

Results: Parents and staff members have welcomed the nursing students' presence. The students have acted as health resources and provided expertise on a variety of topics, including G-tube feedings, trimester teaching for expectant families, Epi-pen administration, asthma management and use of patient portals. The education and interventions provided by student nurses have increased staff and families' awareness of the importance of health and wellness in their community and their own lives. Families and staff now participate in a variety of health-related workshops and screenings and receive assistance with their children's health-related concerns. Center staff and parents have become more interested in environmental health and learning about what they can do in the Centers and their homes to keep their families healthy. The Initiative's Facebook page, Growing Up Green, has attracted EHS families and UMSON students to the Centers. Students are better able to understand the needs of the populations they serve in other clinical settings and have more opportunities to develop interventions that meet those needs. Our partners at Maryland Family Network now support the need for nursing services for EHS Centers and have a clear understanding of the benefits and expertise that nursing and nursing students provide.