



Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Health

VPP Investment Partner Series



■ Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Health

Fifteen years and hundreds of healthier families after its modest beginnings as a prenatal clinic in a cramped basement office, Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Care has grown into a well-respected comprehensive community health organization that provides health, social, and educational services to underserved families—women, men, children, and adolescents—in the District of Columbia.

Mary's Center's comprehensive and holistic approach is especially helpful for clients like Lilian, who enrolled in Mary's Center Healthy Families DC program when she was only 14. Lilian was pregnant, living with her boyfriend's family, and not attending school. When she arrived at Mary's Center, one of the first things that her family support worker Sandra did was to talk with Lilian about

what she wanted to do. It was challenging for Lilian to look beyond her situation, but after much discussion she decided she really wanted to graduate from high school. Lilian also wanted to be a great mom. Sandra took Lilian to find a school that would work best for her while she was pregnant and helped her through the registration process. Lilian finished the school year and then attended summer programs, where she excelled in computers, before giving birth to a beautiful baby girl, Ana. She later became the first person in her family to graduate from high school and now plans to attend college. Mary's Center helped make it possible for Lilian to pursue her dreams, and she is determined to provide her daughter Ana with similar opportunities for growth and happiness.



■ Profile

Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Care provides an integrated set of health care, education, and social services that embrace a culturally diverse community.

Facts

Founded: 1988

Executive Director: Maria S. Gomez, RN, MPH

Chair, Board of Directors: Guadalupe Pacheco, MSW

2005:

Staff: 134

Budget: \$9.0 million

Children Served: 4,052

Mission and History

The mission of Mary's Center is to build better futures through health care, education, and social services that embrace our culturally diverse community.

Mary's Center was formed in 1988 with funding from the DC Mayor's Office on Latino Affairs and the DC Department of Health to address the need for maternal and pediatric services among Spanish-speaking residents in Ward 1 of the District of Columbia. Mary's Center has grown from an initial budget of \$250,000 to an annual budget of nearly \$8 million and serves a multicultural population residing in all Wards of the District of Columbia, as well as Northern Virginia and suburban Maryland.

Services

Mary's Center offers prenatal and postnatal health care, social service case management, home visitation, health care for male and female teens, early childhood and family education, and HIV testing and prevention. In November 2003 the clinic opened to men of all ages. Mary's Center also operates a family literacy program, a mobile health van, an elementary school health clinic, and manages the District of Columbia's Healthy Start contract in Wards 1, 2, 4, and 5. The Center operates at two sites in the Adams Morgan area, one clinic in Ward 4, and offers its family literacy program at Bancroft Elementary School in Mt. Pleasant and comprehensive school-based health services at Brightwood Elementary School. In 2002, Mary's Center served over 5,000 unduplicated medical patients including 3,082 adults and teens and 2,173 children from prenatal to age 12, and more than 10,000 individuals for non-medical patient programs and services.

■ Performance Summary and Fact Sheet

Summary

Mary's Center is a stronger organization and considerably better positioned to extend its reach to underserved communities in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia. Its effectiveness and sustainability have increased substantially as well. Despite delays in hiring a COO, its CEO continues to strategically and incrementally implement the growth plan.

Key Information

- *Date, years, and stage of VPP Investment:* April 2004; 1.75 years (early stage; partially funded)
- *Capital committed and disbursed by VPP:* \$3,386,507 committed; \$864,507 disbursed
- *Estimated children to be served in 2010:* 18,900
- *Revenue increase & % budget growth:* \$7.6 to \$9.0 million – 18% in three years
- *Leveraged funding:* N/A
- *Expansion to new places and coverage:* One new center in new neighborhood. Pending formal relationship with Washington Adventist Hospital.

Aspiration and Goals

Mary's Center aspires to strengthen overall community health by delivering integrated human services to support individual and family well-being and by expanding their presence to serve more children and families on a broader scale in the National Capital Region. They are working to better integrate basic human services by connecting a predetermined set of health, social, and education services for families in the heart of the immigrant community of

Washington, DC and linking them together to create a sense of “connectedness” to, and within, their community. In addition to expanding services and facilities at its current location in Adams Morgan, they hope to expand to Ward 4 of Washington, DC and to several locations in Northern Virginia and suburban Maryland adjacent to DC, and have already begun discussions with key local leaders and institutions there.

VPP's funding and strategic assistance supports Mary's Center in its work to reach its long-term goals, including:

- Increasing the capacity of the existing management team that can develop, expand, and manage high quality programs in multiple locations;
- Augmenting the information and management systems infrastructure to support future growth;
- Opening a second primary service location in Ward 4 in fulfillment of Mary's Center FQHC obligations;
- Opening at least two additional primary service locations to provide integrated medical, educational, and social services to underserved families;
- Opening three new school-based clinics in Washington, DC to provide health care and health promotion activities to school children in the District; and
- Continuing growth trajectory by partnering with organizations that can offer financial, space, personnel and other resources to offer delivery of integrated services and accelerate the formation of Mary's Center's advocacy, fundraising, and outreach relationships in new neighborhoods and jurisdictions.



Investment Rationale

Maria Gomez is among the strongest leaders in the region, and she has been able to demonstrate her abilities through the continuous growth and expansion of Mary's Center. She is held in the highest regard by the community she serves and has proven she can raise large amounts of funding, manage a growing and complex enterprise, acquire and build facilities, and navigate successfully through difficult political conditions. Public and private medical, health care, educational, and children's services institutions in the region regard Mary's Center as essential to the health and well-being of the city, a critical link in the city's tenuous health care system, and especially essential to the communities it serves. The immigrant population of the Washington metropolitan region is the fastest growing, yet government and social service agencies have been unable to develop and provide the range of specialized programs and services in culturally sensitive ways that meet community demand. Mary's Center has the capability to do so, as well as to do so in other localities struggling with the same issues. Research demonstrates that early intervention, family support, and the "one-stop-shopping center" concept (comprehensive and integrated services in one location) save millions of dollars in future health care, foster care, social service, and long-term special education costs. While Mary's Center is committed to improving its focus and implementation of outcomes design and assessment, it has some impressive data to report thus far. Some highlights include:

- *Adult Literacy:* The average gain on the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System test was 100% higher than the national average gain.
- *Parent-Child Education:* Parent attendance at Even Start conferences or informal education sessions at their child's school increased from 44 to 61 percent in one year.

- *Immunization:* In 2002, 90% of Mary's Center 2-year-olds were immunized vs. 76% of 2 year olds citywide.
- *Infant Mortality:* Mary's Center mothers had no (0%) infant mortality, compared with 12% for DC (2000).
- *Healthy Babies:* A recent study conducted by the Center for Applied Research and Urban Policy reported the incidence of low-weight births for Mary's Center Community Healthy Start participants was 3% in 2002 compared with the DC rate of nearly 12%.
- *Teen Mothers:* Premature births for teen mothers of all race groups enrolling in Mary's Center after delivery programs, "Teen Mothers Take Charge" (TMTTC) was 11% compared to 20% for African American mothers and 32% for Latina mothers city-wide. Moreover, for the 500 teens enrolled in TMTTC, no teen mothers have reported a repeat pregnancy, whereas nationally, 20% of teen mothers are pregnant again within one year of childbirth and 25% have another child within two years.

Innovations and New Thinking

As leaders at Mary's Center plan for and begin to expand their services into new areas of the city and region after almost twenty years of operation, they are learning all about the importance of understanding the political landscape when considering growth into new jurisdiction. Executive director, Mario Gomez, has a much deeper awareness of the need to navigate existing services, organizations, providers and potential partners. The organization is also increasingly recognizing the overall inefficiency of managing over 150 different grants and contracts and becoming much more selective in grants and programs it pursues. Many new senior hires are also driving home the importance of appropriately integrating senior management



team so it becomes high functioning and performing. At the same time, the executive leadership and board are increasingly aware that as they grow, the importance of maintaining the pieces of organizational culture that have made them so successful, is constant.

Key Accomplishments

Mary's Center now has a clear plan for expansion and organizational growth. It opened its first satellite office to reach greatly underserved children, youth, and families in Ward 4, Washington, DC, in an area previously served by one doctor. The new clinic is well-positioned to quickly scale impact. Mary's Center overall expects to serve an additional 5,000 children and youth in the coming year. Mary's Center became a Federally Qualified Health Center, bringing funding and critical liability coverage. Other noteworthy accomplishments that contributed to improved capacity and increased effectiveness include:

- **Planning and Focus:** Completed business planning in January 2005, facilitated by Monitor Group, resulting in a well-defined expansion plan for growth into underserved areas of DC and possibilities for growth in Maryland and Virginia.
- **Human Capital—Board and Management:**
 - Fully integrated Chief Financial Officer and hired a Chief Operating Officer and Director of Outcomes in January 2006.
 - Improvements to solid board begun with the addition of two new members.
- **Capitalization/Revenue:** Receiving status as a Federally Qualified Health Center stabilized model of revenue generation for organization and results in \$650 thousand a year for three years in direct funding with expected continued funding beyond that time, increased funding through improved reimbursement rates through Medicaid of \$322 thousand, \$150 thousand in liability insurance savings for a total annualized financial benefit of approximately \$1.1 million.
- **Financial Accountability:** Completely reorganizing the finance function under the direction of the new CFO. Making changes in staffing to bring on board the talent required to support a growing, more complex organization. Selecting a new accounting system and redesigning the accounting “architecture” to generate meaningful, timely financial reporting, improving the overall financial management, compliance, and discipline of the organization. Hiring of a higher level management information system director will improve organizational capability and reporting.



■ Leaders

Maria S. Gomez, RN, MPH

President & CEO



Maria S. Gomez, a native of Colombia, South America, has led Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Care since its beginning 15 years ago, and has been responsible for the phenomenal growth of the Center's activities

in providing health care and related services to the underserved women, children, and adolescents of the District of Columbia. Mary's Center began as a clinic to provide prenatal and postpartum care for the primarily Latino women of Ward 1 and has grown from an initial budget of \$250,000 to an annual budget of nearly \$8 million. Mary's Center now serves more than 5,200 individuals and families from across the metropolitan area, and has established a full complement of programs to support its mission, which is to build better futures through health care, education, and social services that embrace our culturally diverse community.

In addition to the outstanding work Gomez has accomplished at Mary's Center, she has received many awards both for herself and on behalf of the Center, including the Jessie Bernard Wise Woman Award from the Center for Women Policy Studies; the Hispanic Community Leadership Award from the Hispanic Employees Association; Washingtonian of the Year as named by *Washingtonian* magazine; and the Hugh A. Johnson, Jr., Memorial Award from the Hispanic Bar Association of DC. As recognition for her outstanding leadership skills and management team, in 1999 Mary's Center received the Washington Post Award for Excellence in Nonprofit Management. Gomez was also named finalist to the prestigious Bender Prize and in 1999 became an Honorary Inductee of Sigma Theta Tau, the Honorary Society of Nursing. In 2001 she received the DC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy Conversation Changers Award and also was recognized by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) for her leadership in providing access to care for Latina women and their children. In 2002 Gomez received the Champions of Choice Award from Planned Parenthood of Metropolitan Washington.



Guadalupe Pacheco, MSW

Board Chair



Guadalupe Pacheco serves as a Public Health Advisor and Special Assistant to the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Minority Health, US Department of Health and Human Services. Pacheco has occupied mid-level and senior level

management positions in state and federal government agencies, as well as nonprofit organizations, focusing on health and human services program and policy issues. His work has included designing and implementing service delivery programs for diverse populations, developing and executing annual budgets exceeding \$20 million, managing annual procurement activities ranging from \$25,000 to \$11 million, and providing oversight of the human resources staffing and training requirements in a variety of human services settings.

In his current capacity as Special Assistant to the Director for Minority Health, Pacheco is responsible for managing multiple projects that address health disparities of racial

and ethnic minority communities. He coordinates cultural competency activities through the Office of Minority Health's Center for Linguistic and Cultural Competence in Health Care. Additionally, he staffs and coordinates the implementation requirements of the Department's Hispanic Agenda for Action Initiative, which serves to enhance service delivery to Hispanic Americans.

In addition to his role on the board of directors of Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Care, Pacheco serves on the advisory committee of the National Center on Cultural Competence, the advisory committee of the National Hispanic Medical Association's Resident Leadership Program, the advisory committee of the National Epilepsy Foundation's Diversity and Accessibility Initiative, and the advisory committee of Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Hablamos Juntos: Improving Patient Provider Communication for Latinos Program initiative.

Pacheco received his BA and MSW from California State University of Fresno.





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