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Healthy Men, Healthy Communities Initiative

Collaborating to address the educational, health, and social-emotional needs of marginalized males and their communities

SUMMARY

In January 2010, Grantmakers for Children, Youth, and Families established the Healthy Men, Healthy Communities Initiative (HMHC), a collaborative network of grantmaking organizations committed to understanding and improving the lives of men and boys of color and their low-income communities. The goals of the initiative were:

- To educate and mobilize the philanthropic community to address the unique educational, health, social, and emotional needs of marginalized males and their communities
- To establish effective strategies to promote healthy male involvement in families and communities
- To leverage philanthropic investments and strategies to help advance public funding streams that target healthy men and healthy community outcomes

Based in Silver Spring, Md., Grantmakers for Children, Youth, and Families is a membership association of grantmaking institutions that promotes effective grantmaking that integrates research, policy and practice to bring about systemic change for children, youth, and families. Two of its senior staff members serve on a 14-member advisory committee for Healthy Men, Healthy Communities, along with representatives from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), California Endowment, Chicago Community Trust, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and Open Society Foundations.

Results

In a 2012 report to RWJF, project staff from Grantmakers for Children, Youth, and Families reported the following results for the Healthy Men, Healthy Communities Initiative:

- **Project leaders from the initiative developed and hosted events throughout the country in 2010 and 2011, which highlighted issues facing boys and men of color from low-income communities.** These activities helped members of the philanthropic community and other interested stakeholders understand how the

societal factors and resulting negative outcomes impacted this particular population. For example:

- The 2011 Grantmakers for Children, Youth, and Families Annual Conference, September 11–14, 2011, in San Francisco featured sessions specifically related to Healthy Men, Healthy Communities:
  - Preconference sessions on "Place Matters: Strengthening Communities Through Place-Based Philanthropy" and "Innovative and Comprehensive Strategies for Improving Outcomes for Men and Boys of Color"
  - Plenary sessions on "Trends for the Future" and "What Works, What Doesn't, What's Missing"
- The Healthy Men, Healthy Communities Breakfast, with featured speaker Brenden Anderson, special assistant to the executive director of the Oakland Unified School District's African American Male Achievement Program
- Conference sessions and offsite sessions, including:
  - "A Way Out of No Way: How the Black Men and Boys Wellness Movement is Creating Opportunities"
  - "Engaging Parents from the Start: Improving Outcomes for the Youngest Latino Children"
  - "Living Together, Worlds Apart: Innovative Strategies to Strengthen Neighborhoods"

Grantmakers who attended the conference and the Health Men, Health Communities sessions are "funders who care about kids and families," said Maisha Simmons, RWJF program officer and the Healthy Men, Healthy Communities advisory committee co-chair. "We wanted to educate them about what is happening to marginalized males, since they may all not be well versed in those specifics."

For a complete list of all major events associated with HMHC during 2010 and 2011, see the Appendix.

- **Developed and continue to build key relationships with federal agencies, congressional staff, state partners, and nonprofit partners associated with and interested in changing the lives of marginalized individuals**.
  - The initiative's key relationship-building efforts from 2010 to 2012 included meetings, discussions, and shared events with senior officials from the U.S. Departments of Education, Housing and Urban Development, Labor, and Justice; The National League of Cities; National Conference of State Legislatures; Fathers and Families Coalition of America (Phoenix); Center for Law and Social Policy (Washington); and Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (Washington).

"Since 1985, we have been bringing people together to more effectively meet the needs of children, youth, and families," said Natacha Blain, JD, PhD, project director and associate director of Grantmakers for Children, Youth, and Families. "The more we all learn from each other, the better solutions we develop and the more we have to share. Our offices are just 15 minutes outside of Washington, DC. Our close proximity to our nation's leaders allows us to attend meetings and briefings they attend, and to initiate meetings with key potential partners to inform them of our work."

- **Expanded existing communication products and created new methods to share information about the Healthy Men, Healthy Communities initiative.** Under the initiative, the staff:
  - Expanded the monthly HMHC e-newsletter. Launched in March 2010, the newsletter provides information about marginalized males and best practices, as well as any related policy news and updates. Subscribers receive the newsletter by email, and it is available online. The distribution list has grown by 16 percent since January 2011.
  - Expanded the designated website for the Healthy Men, Healthy Communities Initiative, originally created in early 2010. The staff regularly updates the website with relevant news stories, policy developments, reports, and other resources.
  - Developed a Healthy Men, Healthy Communities Funders Network, composed of grantmakers interested in the health and well-being of boys and men of color, in October 2011. Members of the network interact through a secure, online forum where they can join in discussions with other like-minded funders about articles, media, and specific issues of interest.
  - Regularly publish information about HMHC issues in Grantmakers for Children, Youth, and Families' publications and reports, including "Policy Spotlight" (a weekly newsletter about policy news and developments) and "Making the Link" (an occasional issue brief).

Lessons Learned

1. **Establish an advisory committee early in the process to help set the direction of the work on projects bringing together multiple organizations**. Know who the experts are and use that to form strong leadership. "These people have been working on these issues a long time and are committed to the work," said Blain.

Funding

RWJF provided a $100,000 grant to support the Healthy Men, Healthy Communities Initiative from October 2010 through February 2012. Additional funders were Kellogg ($400,000 from January 2011 through December 2012); California Endowment:

($100,000 from October 2011 through September 2012); and Open Society Foundations ($50,000 from September 2010 through August 2011).

Afterward

The Healthy Men, Healthy Communities Funders Network is ongoing and remains a significant body of work for Grantmakers for Children, Youth, and Families. The network is in the process of identifying strategic priorities for the coming year.

Grantmakers participating in this network can expect to:

- Receive data, research, and best-practice knowledge
- Engage with Grantmakers for Children, Youth, and Families to analyze and influence policies that impact men and boys of color
- Partner with other foundations investing in young men at risk through complementary and/or joint investments in targeted communities.

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APPENDIX

Events attended, hosted or developed by the Healthy Men, Healthy Communities Initiative staff during 2010 and 2011

(Current as of date of the tine of the grant; provided by the grantee organization; not verified by RWJF.)

- Funder's Briefing on Federal Efforts to Increase Responsible Fatherhood and Strengthen Families, October 14, 2010, Washington
- "Addressing the Disparate Impact of the Mortgage and Foreclosure Crisis on Communities of Color," November 10, 2010, Boston
- Healthy Men, Healthy Communities Brunch, March 2, 2011, Los Angeles. With the California Endowment at the annual meeting of Grantmakers In Health.
- "Healing the Hurt: Improving the Health of Young Men of Color," March 3, 2011, Los Angeles. A workshop with the California Endowment at the annual meeting of Grantmakers In Health.
- "Investing in Men and Boys of Color: Opportunities for Philanthropy," March 17, 2011, New York. Presented by Grantmakers for Children, Youth, and Families and Thinking Man Consulting.
- National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention: Summit on Preventing Youth Violence, hosted by the federal Departments of Justice and Education, April 4–5, 2011, Washington
- 2nd Biennial Grantmakers for Children, Youth, and Families: Policy Summit, June 9, 2011, Washington
- Funders' Conference Call with Senior Officials from the Department of Education on the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention, July 29, 2011, Silver Spring, Md.
- Grantmakers for Children, Youth, and Families 2011 Annual Conference, September 11–14, 2011, San Francisco

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