



FACT Sheet: Healthcare in Franklin County

(September 2009)

The Problem

Over **152,000 people** do not have health insurance in Franklin County (2008 Ohio Health Survey). Access Health Columbus found that there were at least **71,000 low-income people that need access to primary care** (based on 2004 information). Over the next ten years, the number of low-income residents is expected to grow faster than the general population.

Infant mortality for African American children is more than 15 deaths/1,000 births in children up to one year old. This rate is significantly higher than such countries as Cuba (5.3), Croatia (6.4) and Lithuania (7). Overall, infant mortality in Franklin County is twice the national average. Experts report that the single largest reason for this problem is that too many women don't have a doctor.

The death rates for the five leading causes of death (heart disease, cancer, stroke, COPD, and diabetes) are higher for Franklin County residents than for the U.S (Community Research Partners, July 2005). Early treatment from a primary care provider usually makes the key difference in treatment of each of these conditions.

When people do not have health coverage, they have to use the Emergency Room, even for primary care. This is the most expensive way to provide primary care and often leads to patients becoming sicker because they delay treatment. (ER Directors estimate that 40% of their patients are seen because they do not have a primary care doctor).

Various studies show that **over \$1,000 of the premiums paid for health coverage go to reimburse hospitals for the cost of treating chronic conditions of uninsured people admitted to hospitals**. Many times these conditions include things like hypertension or diabetes that can be successfully managed if they are caught and treated early.

While it is possible that proposed federal legislation will dramatically increase access to healthcare for the Franklin County residents, it is more likely that significant gaps in health coverage will continue to exist. None of the proposals being considered in Washington will take effect before 2013. And, it is not clear what the levels of coverage will be. If the threshold is 200% of poverty, a single mother with one child \$30,000 a year would not be offered coverage.

Proposed Solution

Community Health Centers in Ohio provide 340,320 medical homes for low income families at a cost of \$515/patient in 2007. Franklin County has three Community Health Center providers that operate eight centers (Columbus Neighborhood Health Centers, Capital Park Health Center and Lower Lights Health Center.) Community Health Centers are the most cost effective and provide high quality care for low-income people because of the way in which they provide wrap around services.

Polk County (Lakeland), Florida passed a ½ percent sales tax in 2004, generating \$27 million annually, to provide for indigent healthcare and is developing a coordinated system of care for more than 40,000 patients.

BREAD is studying an initiative to be placed on the November 2010 ballot to pass a 10 year, 1/4% sales tax dedicated to providing primary care for low-income uninsured. This would raise at least \$40 million annually and would be directed to providing medical homes for uninsured patients. The tax would be collected by Franklin County and allocated to providers, such as the Community Health Centers, who would provide a basic level of medical care for the uninsured and help to manage chronic conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure and asthma.