

## **Family “Centeredness” in the Context of a Maternal and Child Public Health Training Program**

In an effort to enhance workforce capacity and preparation, the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) funds the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Training Program. One of the six goals of the MCH Training Program is supporting workforce diversity, which includes training a workforce that is both culturally competent and family-centered.<sup>1</sup> Family-centered care is defined by MCHB as “care that ensures the health and well-being of children and their families through a respectful family-professional partnership that includes shared decision-making. It honors the strengths, cultures, traditions, and expertise that everyone brings to this relationship. Historically, in the field of MCH, the concept of family-centered care was developed within the community of parents, advocates and health professionals concerned for children with special health care needs (CSHCN).”<sup>2</sup> While it is well established within the clinical setting, the concept of family-centered care needs to be refined in order to serve a public health training program.

The MCH Leadership Competencies<sup>2</sup> list the knowledge and skills related to family centered care. Participants in the leadership training program are expected to “operationalize the “family-centered care” philosophical constructs (e.g., families and professionals share decision making; professionals use a strengths-based approach when working with families) and use these constructs to critique and strengthen practices, programs or policies that affect MCH population groups” as well as “ensure that family perspectives play a pivotal role in MCH research, clinical practice, programs, or policy (e.g., in community needs assessments, processes to establish priorities for new initiatives or research agendas, or the development of clinical guidelines)” among

others. Family centered care, as defined by MCHB, may be considered the *action* of delivering care. In order to deliver family centered care, or practice family centered public health, one must operate from a family centered paradigm, and in order to operate from that paradigm, one must possess certain *skills*.

In order to operationalize family “centeredness” for the public health training program we must begin with the end in mind. What is the Tulane MCH program training its graduates to do? How will these graduates interact with the public health care system? How can these graduates become “family centered”? Tulane MCH graduates often work in public health program settings, as public health program managers and/or policy advocates. The graduates will interact with the public health care system most often in the role of educator or program manager rather than clinical service provider. Using key terms from the MCHB definition, family “centeredness” can be defined as the transfer of a *set of skills* that will enable the MCH public health graduate to be “family centered”:

Key Term	Skills/Areas of Knowledge
Respectful	Cultural competency Ethics
Shared decision making	Empowering others Communication Adult learning Coaching Training
Relationship	Partnering Community organizing

These skills will assist public health graduates in approaching their careers from a family-centered perspective. Competency within these skills will also enable public

health program managers to institutionalize the philosophy of family centeredness within their organizations. Finally, obtaining the skills to become family centered enhances the overall leadership skills within the MCH program participants, as approaching public health practice from a family centered perspective fosters leadership within MCH public health programs.

1. MCH Training Program, found at:

[http://mchb.hrsa.gov/training/goal\\_workforce\\_diversity.asp](http://mchb.hrsa.gov/training/goal_workforce_diversity.asp); accessed Feb. 20, 2008

2. MCH Leadership Competencies, 2.0 found at:

[http://leadership.mchtraining.net/index.php?module=pagemaster&PAGE\\_user\\_op=view\\_page&PAGE\\_id=38](http://leadership.mchtraining.net/index.php?module=pagemaster&PAGE_user_op=view_page&PAGE_id=38); accessed Feb. 20, 2008