

## URBAN RESEARCH CENTERS

### WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

- The urban disadvantaged are predominantly minorities. They bear a disproportionate burden of the nation's health problems (e.g. HIV infection, tuberculosis, violence, drug use).
- Evidence demonstrates that health is substantially influenced by social factors (e.g. income, education, discrimination, community characteristics), especially at the community level.
- Research is needed to develop intervention models that involve the community to produce effective, sustainable improvements in urban health and quality of life.

### WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

The Urban Research Centers (URCs) have been funded since 1995 to assess and improve the health of urban communities. Located in Detroit, New York City, and Seattle, URCs use an approach called community-based participatory research to engage government, academic, private, and community organizations as partners in priority setting and designing, implementing, and evaluating community focused public health interventions. Accomplishments include the following:

- The Seattle URC conducted basic assessment research in the context of domestic violence (DV) in nine ethnic and cultural communities. The follow-up intervention project resulted in the development of a social support group intervention, and increased community-based agency capacity in intervention design, safety, and referral protocols, and evaluation. Preliminary findings indicate that support group participation is strongly associated with reduced DV incidence, DV frequency, and perceived stress. Increased social support increased knowledge regarding where to go for help, and participants' ability to perform daily living skills.
- In the Detroit URC, the East Side Village Health Worker Partnership implemented a neighborhood-level intervention by lay health workers to reduce specific environmental, economic, and social stressors in a poor African-American community. Lay health workers are trained to use local resources to achieve such community health goals as improving access to healthy foods, establishing better relationships with local police, and exerting greater influence on city government officials to eliminate environmental toxins.
- The New York URC developed a *Survival Guide* in response to the need for interventions to help substance users and their families deal with the problems and consequences of drug abuse, and to build community support for services. The *Survival Guide* includes health information and how to navigate the system to obtain services; a comprehensive list of service providers; and relevant hotline numbers. Dissemination and evaluation of the guide will continue to involve substance users, community service providers, and academics.

### WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

In an effort to apply the URC model to a bi-national setting, a URC in El Paso was established in July 2002 through collaboration between the Paso Del Norte Health Foundation, the CDC Foundation, and CDC. An advisory board consisting of partners from both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border has been established and has identified environmental health and physical activity as priority health concerns.

For additional information on this or other CDC programs, visit [www.cdc.gov/program](http://www.cdc.gov/program)

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