

**Annual Report Full Text Format
Southcoast Hospitals Group
363 Highland Ave.
Fall River, MA 02720
Serving the region of Southeastern Massachusetts
Fiscal Year 2005**

SECTION I

Community Benefits Mission Statement

Southcoast Hospitals Group, including Charlton Memorial Hospital, St. Luke's Hospital and Tobey Hospital, is committed to serving the healthcare needs of the South Coast region.

www.southcoast.org/mission

In recognition of Southcoast's commitment to improving the health status of the communities we serve, the Board of Trustees of Southcoast Hospitals Group has established a Community Benefits Committee to assist in the process of:

- identifying the unmet health needs of the community by working in collaboration with the relevant community health networks established by the Department of Public Health and other community representatives and providers;
- prioritizing the identified health needs, utilizing criteria inclusive of the severity of the problem, the availability of alternative resources to address the issue, the benefit to be derived, and the potential of collaboration with others to address the need;
- identifying which needs can most effectively be met through the resources of Southcoast Hospitals Group, and its affiliated corporations, particularly the needs of the uninsured and the medically underserved needing enhanced access to care;
- providing educational resources to educate the community regarding health promotion and wellness. Educational initiatives shall incorporate recognition of the cultural aspects of accessing the healthcare system;
- recommending to the Southcoast Hospitals Group Board of Trustees the adoption of meaningful programs and services to address specifically unmet needs and to improve the health of the community.

The Southcoast Hospitals Group Community Benefit Mission Statement was approved and adopted by the Southcoast Hospitals Group Board of Trustees on September 11, 1996.

SECTION II

Internal Oversight and Management

The Southcoast Community Benefits Program is under the overall direction of a trustee level Community Benefits Committee that meets regularly and authorizes and reviews activities and expenditures related to community benefits. This committee reports to the Southcoast Hospitals Group Board of Trustees.

Two advisory groups, comprised largely of community members along with some hospital staff, plan and carry out activities related to Southcoast's two major community benefits initiatives: cardiovascular health and youth risk behaviors.

Management responsibility for the community benefits program rests with Southcoast's Vice President of Strategic Services.

A number of Southcoast staff at all levels participates regularly in our two community advisory groups. There are also regular updates and presentations on community benefits activities to management staff through Management Operations Councils at all three hospital sites. Presentations on community benefit activities are also periodically made to all levels of employees at Employee Forum sessions held approximately six times a year at all three hospitals. Information is also presented through articles in our internal hospitals publication, "Coastlines" and in a community newsletter, "Your Health Matters."

SECTION III

Community Health Needs Assessment

Southcoast Hospitals Group commissioned a comprehensive needs assessment of the South Coast region by a nationally known health care research firm, Professional Research Consultants, Inc. This firm has conducted similar studies throughout the country. The survey, completed in 1997, consisted of telephone interviews of over 2,350 residents throughout the South Coast, focus groups with a variety of community representatives and a review of Department of Public Health and other data.

The survey examined health habits and risk factors including modifiable health risks, disease prevention habits and access to health care. The resulting report also incorporated regional health morbidity and mortality statistics from various sources such as the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and compared regional data to Healthy People 2000 goals. The survey identified six key concerns in the South Coast region:

1. Cardiovascular Disease

The death rate for cardiovascular disease in the South Coast (152.1 per 100,000 deaths) was considerably higher than both the state and national averages and much higher than the Healthy People 2000 goal of 100 per 100,000. Our survey found that unhealthy lifestyle habits play a likely role in this. The survey found:

- 24.8 percent have high blood pressure
- 24.4 percent have high cholesterol levels
- 29.1 percent are overweight
- 28.8 percent had no leisure time/physical activity during the month studied
- 23.6 percent were current smokers

As with the cardiovascular disease death rate, many of these rates were higher than both state and national averages.

2. Cancer deaths

Although cancer death rates in our region were second only to heart disease, these rates were comparable to or even slightly lower than state and national averages. The survey also found that Southcoast residents take advantage of local cancer screening programs, such as mammography and prostate screenings, at a rate higher than both the state and national averages. These screenings are widely available at low and no cost, particularly to those without health insurance or who are underinsured.

3. Mental Health

South Coast residents reported problems with mental health issues at a rate slightly higher than the Massachusetts and national averages. This was particularly true of residents living at the poverty level. The population living below the poverty level (11.6 percent) was

considerably higher than the state average of 8.9 percent. Per capita income was below the state level and the regional unemployment rate was four percent higher.

4. Family planning, prenatal care and child development services.

The South Coast as region has a high rate of teen pregnancy (12.9 percent of all live births) as compared with the state rate (7.3 percent) and the national rate (10 percent.) There also was a higher rate of women not receiving prenatal care in the important first trimester; 14.6 percent verses 11 percent statewide. The infant mortality rate, at 6.4 percent, was also slightly higher than the state rate of 5.1 percent although it is lower than both the national rates and the Healthy People 2000 guidelines.

5. Access to primary medical care

Close to 10 percent of residents in the region reported lack of health insurance coverage, although the rate was slightly higher in the cities of Fall River and New Bedford. There are also fewer primary care physicians per population in our region. This was true for all primary care specialties, which include internal medicine, OB/GYN, Pediatrics and Family Practice.

6. Violence

The overall crime rate in the South Coast is higher than the state, particularly for crimes such as rape, aggravated assault and burglary. A higher percentage of South Coast residents report being the victim of violent crime within the five years prior to the survey.

Our survey results were presented to and analyzed by three community benefits advisory groups, which consisted of close to 100 representatives from throughout the region. The groups included representation from healthcare providers, social service providers, educators, the faith community, law enforcement, government officials and consumers. The groups decided to focus efforts on two areas: cardiovascular disease and youth risk behaviors. Members felt that youth risk behaviors encompassed several health priorities identified by the needs assessment, including teen pregnancy, violence, mental health issues and drug and alcohol abuse.

The health needs assessment also included two sets of focus groups that were conducted to assimilate the opinions, culture and beliefs reflective of all segments of our community. General focus groups were held to present our survey results and obtain feedback from various segments of our communities in developing priorities.

Then targeted focus groups were held with representatives of the two identified priorities of cardiovascular disease and youth risk behaviors. Discussions were held with various stakeholders and “at-risk” populations including cardiac patients, caregivers, and youth groups, including groups of pregnant and parenting teens. Southcoast’s Community Benefits Task Forces used information obtained from focus groups to further define the priority health issues and help develop subsequent strategic and action plans.

A consultant from Premier Health Care, who had lead similar discussions and planning at hospitals throughout the United States, facilitated our strategic planning process.

SECTION IV

Key Collaborations and Partnerships

In addition to wide inclusion on our health advisory committees, Southcoast staff collaborates extensively with a number of community groups, addressing such issues as health access, cardiovascular health, and drug use among youth. In developing and implementing the Community Benefit Strategic Action Plan, Southcoast collaborated with healthcare providers, social service providers, educators, the faith community, law enforcement, government officials and consumers. Groups include:

American Heart Association
Catholic Social Services
CFC Family Planning Organization
Domestic Violence Committee of the New Bedford Health and Human Services Coalition
Fall River Council on Aging
Fall River Diabetes Association
Fall River School Department
Greater Fall River Family Services Association
Greater New Bedford Community Health Center
Greater New Bedford Health & Human Services Coalition (Greater New Bedford CHNA)
Greater New Bedford Health Access Committee
Greater New Bedford Prevention Partnership
Greater New Bedford Women's Center
Greater New Bedford Youth on the Move
HealthFirst Family Care Center, Fall River
Martha Briggs Educational Club
Massachusetts Department of Public Health-Division of Prevention
Mended Hearts
NAACP
New Bedford Child and Family Services
New Bedford Council on Aging
New Bedford Historical Society
New Bedford School Department
PACE-Head Start
Partners for a Healthier Community (Greater Fall River CHNA)
Portuguese Youth Cultural Organization
Positive Attitude Against Chemical Addiction (covering Greater New Bedford and Wareham)
Regional Tobacco Control programs
SER-Jobs for Progress, Inc.
Stanley Street Treatment & Resource Center (SSTAR) / MediCall Program
United Way of Greater Fall River
United Way of Greater New Bedford
University of Massachusetts Extension Program
Wareham Community Services Collaborative
Wareham Council on Aging
Wareham School Department
Wareham School Health Advisory Council
Westerly Associates
Women of the Village

YMCA Southcoast (including Fall River, New Bedford, Wareham, Dartmouth, and
Mattapoisett
YWCA of Southeastern Massachusetts

SECTION V

Community Benefits Plan

Southcoast's Community Benefits Strategic Action Plan, first formulated in 1998 as a result of our extensive needs assessment phase (see section III), focuses on three regional priority health issues.

These include:

- Reduction of the high rate of cardiovascular disease in our region.
- Reduction in the incidence of youth risk behaviors such as teen violence and drug abuse.
- Improving access to health care.

Our initiatives focus on both the general Southcoast population and specific populations such as ethnic and other minorities and low income residents in our region, under, or uninsured, those without access to care, those at risk for heart disease and "at risk" youth.

A key strategic vision in all of our action plans is to collaborate and whenever possible, build upon and strengthen existing community resources that are addressing these problems, rather than create parallel new programs. We have been able to accomplish this successfully in all areas.

GOALS AND ACTION PLANS

Access To Health Care

Southcoast devotes considerable resources to improving access to primary health care in our region, providing outreach services to both educate residents on the availability of no and low-cost health insurance programs, and whenever possible, help families enroll in these programs. www.southcoast.org/free

Another key initiative in improving health care access is use of our Southcoast Health Van, which travels on almost a daily basis throughout the region bringing health screenings, education and other services to residents who do not have ready access to health care. www.southcoast.org/services/mobile

The van staff is trained in assisting people to access regular primary health care, through counseling about various health insurance programs and low and no-cost health services. Whenever possible, van staff follow-up with patients, to determine if they have been able to access other needed health services.

In addition to our outreach efforts, we actively participate in regional health access committees, including the MediCall program in Greater Fall River and the Health Access Committee of the Greater New Bedford Health and Human Services Coalition.

Cardiac Prevention Program

Southcoast's Cardiac Prevention Program now has over 4,436 individuals entered into its database for promoting its goals for primary and secondary prevention of heart disease. This program provides individualized screening for risk factors, which includes a questionnaire

and cholesterol screening. The information is entered into a database, and a designated nurse and dietitian conduct tracking follow up. The prevention efforts focus on promoting education, lifestyle changes and risk factor modification. These efforts were coordinated in a number of different ways, working with the Southcoast Health Van, local churches, businesses and other organizations and outreach efforts with local schools. Efforts are made to target specific underserved and underinsured areas in the communities served by Southcoast.

Youth Risk Behaviors

The strategic vision of our Youth Risk Behaviors Committee has been to catalogue services and attempt to increase collaboration among the wide range of regional youth services providers. Representation on this committee includes individuals from school districts, human services providers and very often, teens themselves.

The committee completed a survey of over 1,000 local teens in 1999 to determine opportunities for increasing communication about issues that concern teens. As a result, the committee sponsored a regional Youth Summit, with over 150 teens, at the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, in 2000. Teens again had the opportunity at the summit to give their visions about issues that concern them most.

All of this resulted in development of a regional, free information teen phone line, which serves the entire South Coast region. This effort is a true collaboration of regional agencies, with Southcoast building upon the efforts of two existing teen information lines that served just one of our communities. (See Section VI, Youth Risk Behaviors) It is a good example of our strategic vision to enhance and expand existing local services whenever possible.

SECTION VI

Progress Report: Activity During Reporting Year

A. Major Programs and Initiatives

ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

Access to healthcare, as documented by the Community Needs Assessment, is a concern in the region. Southcoast has a long-standing commitment to improving the access through services such as free care and insurance eligibility outreach, the Medical Van, support to the local Community Health Centers and contributions to the MediCall program.

Free Care & Insurance Eligibility Outreach

During the past year, our Patient Financial Services staff in conjunction with Coastline Elderly, Immigrant Assistance Center, New Bedford Mayor's Office of Health and Human Services, and Southeastern Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corp. hosted "Know Your Rights" for an elderly bilingual audience held at Fort Taber in New Bedford. An estimated 200 bilingual elders attended this event.

Two Patient Financial Services representatives addressed people with Medicare only and advised them about the process of filing for financial assistance. Available drug assistance programs were also discussed. Informational brochures were distributed.

Patient Financial Services staff also participated in health fairs conducted by radio stations WSAR & WBSM in the Greater Fall River area, providing counseling to interested parties and filing applications for the uninsured and under-insured to assist in obtaining health insurance coverage for families and children. Staff served over 320 individuals at these health fairs.

The Patient Financial Services Department efforts resulted in the completion of 1,448 free care applications, 2,252 MassHealth applications, and 4,123 Virtual Gateway applications in 2005. (Virtual Gateway applications combine free care and MassHealth eligibility determination.)

In upcoming plans, our Patient Financial Services staff joined the New Bedford Public Schools initiative, "Educating Hearts and Minds". The focus for our staff will be to attend open house and scheduled coffee hours at the Hayden/mcfadden Elementary School in New Bedford. According to the New Bedford school officials, the urgent need at this school is to enroll identified uninsured children who are in need of behavioral therapy, but not receiving this due to lack of health insurance coverage. Our staff will also assist the elder community with Medicare Part D enrollment.

Community Health Center

Southcoast provides financial support to the Greater New Bedford Community Health Center. The Greater New Bedford Community Health Center (GNBCHC) provides comprehensive primary medical care services, focused on the medically underserved. The Center's primary service area has been determined by the United States Public Health Service to be "medically underserved" and represents high ethnic concentrations of Hispanic, Black, Portuguese and Cape Verde populations. This area also has high rates of unemployment and poverty. The Center sees over 70,000 visits, representing 20,000 patients. The Center's much-needed dental service continues to grow, with treatments approaching over 5,000 patients. The need for this Community Health Center has never been greater.

Health Access Collaborative

Southcoast Hospitals Group is a founding member and contributor to Health Access Collaborative, a greater Fall River/New Bedford Collaborative to achieve cultural competency within and among healthcare member organizations and for the clients they serve. Specific goals include cultural competency training, interpreter training, and development of monitoring procedures for interpreter services and cultural competency for member organizations. This has been a tremendously successful effort, which will continue to expand across the region.

Medical Mobile Van

The Southcoast Medical Van served over 3,194 residents in Southeastern Massachusetts in 2005. www.southcoast.org/services/mobile

In existence since 1993, the purpose of the van is to provide free health screenings, education and some clinical services to a broad-based population, with the goal of improving the health status of residents-particularly those without access to regular ongoing health care. The intent of this service is to break down barriers to health care.

This year, Southcoast introduced a new van to the community. The new van features new equipment for both screenings and blood drives, including private screening facilities and a blood donor center with five donor chairs. The new Southcoast Health Van also complies with new federal privacy regulations under HIPPA. Funding for the van was secured in part through Southcoast Hospitals Group and community organizations. Sponsors for the van include Fall River Five Center Savings Bank, Citizens-Union Savings Bank, St. Anne's Credit Union, Fall River Ford, Citadel Communications/WBSM & FUN 107, BankNewport, Bank of Fall River, Charlton Memorial Hospital Auxiliary, Karam Financial, Grimshaw, Gudewicz Charitable Foundation, NBC 10 WJAR-TV, Venus De Milo, The Feitelberg Company, Shields MRI, Dorothy Cox Chocolates, Rodgers Family Foundation, Southcoast Health System Volunteers, St. Luke's Hospital Auxiliary, Tobey Hospital Guild and Trio Liquors.

The Southcoast Health Van is licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and provides free health screenings and education in a number of highly visible and accessible sites though the region offering services including blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol, colorectal and vision screening, bone density screenings, pregnancy testing and extensive health education. Tetanus Diphtheria (Td), Pneumococcal Vaccine and Flu vaccine are also offered. The van also serves as a blood donor center to assure regional blood supplies and offers a range of cancer screenings and education on cancer prevention.

The Southcoast Health Van serves an ethnically diverse population including Portuguese, Brazilian, Hispanic and Cambodian immigrants. Health Van staff also work closely with cultural organizations, churches and other community groups such as soup kitchens, to conduct outreach to diverse populations in order to develop culturally sensitive programs.

Other initiatives include the ESL Program (English as a second language) in New Bedford and Taunton, which serves a diverse group of immigrants, a population with significant risk factors for a variety of diseases as well as educational, cultural and other barriers that limit access to routine primary health care. Van staff also collaborates with the Adult Learning Programs and the Immigrant Assistance Center in New Bedford. Health Van staff has also worked in collaboration with the YWCA Women's Health Program and the local YMCA of New Bedford and Middleboro.

In Fall River, the Health Van works in conjunction with the Cambodian Center, PYCO (Portuguese Youth Center Organization), Bristol Elder Services, and the local colleges. During the past year the Medical Van also worked with the Fall River, New Bedford, and Wareham Business Associations to target business communities in the South Coast. The Van also works closely with Catholic Social Services on outreach efforts.

The Southcoast Health Van offers a Teen Program at several high schools in the South Coast region, providing adolescents with a range of health screenings and health information. Local family planning agencies work with van staff to provide counseling on sexually transmitted diseases (STD) and pregnancy prevention and confidential pregnancy testing. This information and education to teens has resulted in improved follow up rates and reduced rates of repeat pregnancy tests. Southcoast Health Van staff work with teachers to reach students with health educational material and health screenings. The Van currently visits six area high schools: Diman Vocational High School in Fall River, Somerset High School, Westport

High School, Old Colony High School in Rochester, Wareham High School, and Apponoquet High School in Lakeville.

In addition to outreach, the Van continues to promote referral and follow up for regular primary health care services by networking with other service providers and disseminating information to patients. Staff also helps patients negotiate referrals and insurance applications. Patient satisfaction survey results indicated that this health information provided was useful and helpful.

The Southcoast-sponsored Community Health Needs Assessment, as well as the Massachusetts Department of Public Health Behavioral Risk Factors Survey data, show area rates at or better than the state average for cholesterol testing and blood pressure screening. The Southcoast Health Van's outreach services have contributed to these positive-screening rates. All services are free of charge and fully supported by Southcoast Hospitals Group.

MediCall Program

Southcoast continues to provide support to the MediCall program. MediCall's primary focus and unique mission is to link individuals who are unable to pay for health care with physicians in the community who are willing to provide free care for our underserved population. The MediCall Program continues to provide medical access to the underserved population in the greater Fall River area, who are unable to arrange health care appointments due to reasons such as lack of health insurance, financial hardship, language barrier, transportation difficulty or difficulty in making appointments. Staff evaluates patients based on financial eligibility criteria and coordinates referrals to over 175 local physicians who have volunteered to accept free care patients in their offices. MediCall referred 1,300 individuals to primary care physicians, and 171 individuals received specialty care in physician's offices. Outreach efforts were provided to 2,706 individuals within our community, 442 individuals were approved for MassHealth, and 980 individuals received "free care" with assistance of the MediCall staff. The program expanded to help uninsured individuals access prescriptions through a prescription coordinator. To date, 1,665 individuals have received medications through various programs such as the Pharmacy Assistance Program, sample medications from pharmaceutical representatives, and private donations.

Interpreter Services

Southcoast Hospitals Group offers comprehensive interpreting services for a wide range of populations with Portuguese, Spanish and Khmer being the prevalent languages serviced. Interpreters assist with verbal interpretations for patients and their families who receive inpatient and outpatient care. The interpreters also provide written translations of educational materials for patients and their families.

In 2005, Southcoast interpreters provided 14,287 encounters, which is a 22 percent increase from the previous year. This translates into 8,270 hours of interpreting services, which is a 17 percent increase from 2004. The predominant language encounters include:

- 6,923 encounters, or 4,167 hours of services for Portuguese-speaking patients;
- 6,940 encounters, or 3,662 hours with Spanish-speaking patients;
- 235 encounters, or 246 hours of interpretation with Cambodian patients who speak the Khmer language.

The Cambodian Outreach position provided 235 encounters equivalent to 246 hours of interpreting, translating and outreach services to the Cambodian community. Outreach includes participation in efforts to provide health services to the Cambodian population through the Southcoast Health Van.

This year, Southcoast researched health needs of the Mayan Indian population in Greater New Bedford. This group, which is estimated to number close to 5,000 individuals, has special health needs that are sometimes addressed in a fragmented way. The research project will serve as a base for further collaboration among community agencies that serve the Mayans.

Southcoast expended \$335,552 in interpreter services in 2005, and an additional \$1,007 for a “language line” telephone service, which is a resource for providing interpreter services for rarely encountered languages.

CARDIOVASCULAR HEALTH

Change of Heart

Given the prevalence of risk factors for cardiovascular disease and the Southcoast region’s death rate from heart disease, which exceeds state and national norms, Southcoast continues a campaign to prevent heart disease and encourage early treatment of existing heart disease.

The *Cardiovascular Health Task Force* (CVHTF) was formed in response to the Community Benefit Strategic Action Plan. Past efforts included a resource guide focusing on prevention and treatment of cardiovascular disease, a publicity campaign to promote a heart healthy lifestyle and advocacy of heart health. Known as the *Change of Heart Program*, this program was recently chosen to be profiled in a new book, “The Spirit of Excellence: How Healthcare Organizations Are Achieving Service, Quality, and Satisfaction.” This book showcases outstanding examples of innovation and initiative in the healthcare industry.

The Cardiovascular Health Task Force’s current focus is on the Cardiac Prevention Program, established in July 2002 with an emphasis on primary and secondary prevention of heart disease. Special focus is on the population identified in our community health needs assessment as being at higher risk for cardiovascular disease: the Portuguese population, elderly, low income, and those with no post-secondary education. The prevention efforts focus on promoting education, lifestyle changes and risk factor modification. Children are also targeted through the school system with the goals of promoting healthy lifestyle choices early and communicating with parents and families. Screenings are offered at various access points such as elderly and low-income apartments, local churches, immigrant assistance programs, schools and other community locations.

Our program is staffed with a comprehensive health team that includes:

- A full time registered nurse trained in risk factor assessments including lipids, tobacco abuse, hypertension, diabetes, stress, obesity, and obtaining family history.
- A full-time registered dietician who performs cholesterol and lipid screening as well as dietary instruction.

The primary prevention process provides individualized screening for risk factors, including completion of a nationally recognized questionnaire and administration of several free tests such as cholesterol, blood sugar and blood pressure screenings. The questionnaire is

designed to gauge various risk factors for heart disease; such as family history, nutritional habits and lifestyle habits such as lack of regular exercise. The questionnaire also provides the individual's predicted future cardiac risk based on Framingham Heart Study factors. There is also an educational component, as participants receive the results of their questionnaire and tests, along with suggestions and individual education on how to develop healthier lifestyle habits.

Test and questionnaire results for each participant are entered into a database, and participants are tracked six months after their initial testing. To date, a total of 4,436 individuals have been screened and entered into our database in initial encounters, and over 6,888 individuals have been seen in follow-up encounters. The average age of those screened was 40. Participants were reached through churches (including the Khmer Buddhist Temple and Santo Christo Church); the Immigrant's Assistance Center; elderly and low-income housing; along with industries such as Riverside Manufacturing, Alberox Manufacturing, and Duro Finishing, Titleist Corp., Joseph Aboud Clothing, and Gold Medal Bakery.

Staff also traveled to an area high school, Durfee High School in Fall River, where they enrolled over 600 students in the program. Many of these students were not at all familiar with the risk factors for heart disease and the program served as an important effort in early prevention. Both the school's students and faculty expressed enthusiasm for what they learned and looked forward to the program's return to check progress in developing healthy lifestyles. A number of students tested already had elevated blood cholesterol levels. The Cardiac Prevention Program is being integrated into other aspects of the school curriculum, and the sophomore class will be screened and followed longitudinally for three years.

The program has seen some improvement in risk factor modification for heart disease. Of individuals who received both initial and follow-up screenings:

- 71 percent reported achieving their "at-goal" blood cholesterol level (9 percent improvement)
- Over 90 percent reported being "at goal" for tobacco use (1 percent improvement)
- 85 percent reported being "at goal" for stress management (2 percent improvement)
- 22 percent reported being "at goal" for exercise habits (1 percent improvement)
- 35 percent reported being "at goal" for weight (2 percent improvement)

Below is a graph showing improved results for blood pressure and cholesterol levels for employees that were part of a large screening conducted with a local manufacturer in New Bedford. The graph shows initial readings and follow-up readings after screening and education about cardiac risk factors.

BLOOD PRESSURE	TOTAL	INITIAL SYSTOLIC	INITIAL DIASTOLIC	CURRENT SYSTOLIC	CURRENT DIASTOLIC
Female	322	126	78	119	74
Male	379	134	80	125	78
Cholesterol		Initial	Current		
Female	335	205	188		
Male	378	212	192		

YOUTH RISK BEHAVIORS

Southcoast provides a variety of programs and services aimed at preschool through high school aged children to promote healthy behaviors and risk reduction. Historically high rates of teen pregnancy and other risk behaviors, such as smoking, drinking, and relationship and gang violence, caused Southcoast to focus on efforts to reduce youth risk behaviors. As a result of the Community Benefit Strategic Action Plan, the **Youth Risk Behaviors Task Force** (YRBTF) was formed and identified 3 objectives: youth programming, a youth resource directory and communication of a positive message.

The YRBTF synthesized information from a variety of area teens. Information compiled from a Southcoast sponsored survey of over 1,000 middle and high school students across the greater Fall River, New Bedford, and Wareham region showed what kind of health and related information teens need and where they go to find it. Over 150 teens also spoke out at the Southcoast sponsored Youth Summit 2000 about the types of resources they would like to see in the region. With their input, the YRBTF developed the concept of TEEN LINK, a toll free, regional information telephone line.

The Youth Risk Behaviors Task Force this year continued to promote Teen Link, a truly collaborative effort, that combines and builds on two local services for teens. These include:

- HealthLink, a 24 hour per day automated help line service with over 600 automated educational messages, sponsored by the New Bedford Prevention Partnership;
- Teen Talk Line, a peer volunteer talk line, operated weekday afternoons sponsored by the Southcoast RAPPP program and the New Bedford Prevention Partnership.

The Southcoast sponsored Teen Link offers one direct toll free line to access either of these services and greatly expands their reach across the region.

In our ongoing effort to partner with other youth services providers, Southcoast provided financial support to Junior Achievement to help develop an after-school collaboration in the Wareham area for adolescents to spend time as managers of their own student company. The Wareham area does not have as many after school opportunities for this at-risk age group, and this program is intended to offer an option for youth.

The Youth Risk Behaviors Committee this year also supported several youth initiatives in the community including Youth Summits in New Bedford and Fall River and also drug prevention and anti-violence efforts in New Bedford including a campaign against bullying, a mentoring program and educational programs on encouraging parents to communicate with their children. Both the New Bedford and Fall River Youth Summits had over 300 participants and offered numerous workshop presentations.

Responsible Attitudes toward Pregnancy, Parenting and Prevention RAPPP/ Males are Part of the Puzzle (MAPP)

The *RAPPP* (Responsible Attitudes toward Pregnancy, Parenting and Prevention) program is in its ninth year. www.southcoast.org/rapp Created in response to the region's teen pregnancy and birth rates, RAPPP's ultimate goal is to provide adolescents with important education by presenting objective, accurate and up-to-date information, facilitating discussion on issues of reproductive health and sexuality, engaging youth in creating and fostering positive attitudinal and behavioral changes through peer leadership and civic involvement and promoting parent/child dialogue on these issues.

MAPP focuses on educating young men and fathers about parenting issues and pregnancy prevention through a variety of educational activities and events targeted at males.

RAPPP participants, including peer leaders and MAPP youth representatives, reflect the diversity of our region. RAPPP participants' ethnic, racial and social background information is obtained and results are tabulated and retained by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

All RAPPP activities, classroom learning, staff, faculty and peer leader training, community outreach, health fairs, speaking engagements and conferences are offered at no cost to participating schools and community groups. The RAPPP program is totally funded through grants and by Southcoast Hospitals Group.

RAPPP In the Classroom

The RAPPP program is a 14 hour abstinence-based, comprehensive education program targeted at high school youth. This year, the program served over a thousand junior and senior high school students at area schools, including Greater New Bedford Regional Vocational Technical High School, Fairhaven High School, and Wareham High School, Friends Academy and Nativity Preparatory School in New Bedford.

The RAPPP Program also provided instruction in the Adults and Children Together Against Violence (ACT) Program to students at Dartmouth High School Child Care classes as well as Horizons Group Home.

RAPPP also held several after-school camps and school vacation camps utilizing the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) approved Making Proud Choices curriculum, including participation in the New Bedford Mayor's Invest In Kids program. Youth development activities included youth trips to Boston Museum of Science, Duck Tours, Pawtucket Red Sox games, movie days and bowling.

Patrick Pass of the champion New England Patriots has joined the RAPPP Program as a mentor and adopted students at the Greater New Bedford Regional Vocational Technical High School, where they started a fan club. Pass visits the school and keeps in touch with these students on a regular basis. RAPPP youth were invited to Gillette Stadium during Patriots Training Camp where they participated in the NFL experience and got to visit with the New England wide receiver.

During 2005, RAPPP participated in a study conducted by nursing students at the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, which analyzed the impact of the classroom program on the knowledge and attitudes of middle school students toward sexual behaviors. Nursing students interviewed middle school students before and after they attended the RAPPP program as part of the health curriculum at their schools. Some key findings in the post-program survey included:

- 43 percent more students stated that sexual abstinence is the only sure way to prevent unwanted pregnancies;
- 24 percent more students agreed that it is best for young teens to postpone and/or wait to have sex until they are at least 18 years old;
- 33 percent more students agreed that teens should have equal rights and responsibilities for love and sexual relationships;

- 20 percent more students said they would not let themselves be influenced by peer or partner pressure to engage in sexual activities; and
- 20 percent more students said they use or plan to use birth control to prevent unwanted pregnancies.

RAPPP Community Events

Professional trainings were held in the community on several occasions utilizing the ACT curriculum. The RAPPP Program has the distinction of having the only staff trained by the American Psychological Association to deliver this program in Massachusetts. Its target audience is parents, caretakers and individuals responsible for the care of children from birth to eight years old, and its focus is training people to be aware of the devastation caused by children's exposure to violence. These trainings were held for Southcoast area social workers and nurses, including staff at Southcoast Hospitals Group, Catholic Social Services and Healthy Families of Fall River and New Bedford.

RAPPP staff continues to be actively involved in networking opportunities and community educational presentations at Salve Regina College, The New England Fathering Conference, White's of Westport, Catholic Charities Conference, the New Bedford Youth Summit, as well as many other programs. We have also been asked to represent the RAPPP Program/Southcoast Hospitals Group by presenting a workshop on our Fatherhood Training programs for Incarcerated Fathers at the seventh annual Arizona Fathers and Families Network Conference on February 22-24, 2006 in Phoenix, Arizona. Our staff also represents RAPPP and Southcoast Hospitals Group by sitting on several community councils including:

- the Greater New Bedford Health and Human Services Coalition
- Healthy Families New Bedford Collaborative
- Healthy Families Fall River Collaborative
- Southcoast Hospitals Group Youth Risk Behaviors Task Force
- The Children's Trust Fund Fathers and Families Network.

We have established and conducted our own Youth Risk Assessment and Implementation Task Force as part of a DPH grant as well taken part in the New Bedford ACTS coalition. We also host our ongoing RAPPP Program Steering Committee made up of business leaders, educators, private citizens and youth from the Greater New Bedford Community. In addition, we continue to work as affiliates with the National Fatherhood Initiative, most recently conducting the NFI National Golden Dads Acknowledgement Campaign on Father's Day Weekend at Fenway Park in Boston. Eight staff members from the RAPPP program manned the Golden Dads booth.

We conduct educational parents nights two to three times annually. Our most recent event focused on "Violence/Life Interrupted," featuring Tom Mauser, whose son was slain at Columbine High School in Colorado. Mauser's presentation was followed by a panel of experts including the Sgt. Richard Spirlet of the New Bedford Police Department, Massachusetts State Senator Mark Montigny, clergy members, community workers and youth who answered audience questions and tried to make sense of the violence in communities throughout the Southcoast area.

Another parents' night focused on recognizing drug use in our children, presented by Sergeant Donald Decker. A "Drug Recognition and Use" professional workshop was also presented to school administrators, teachers, youth workers and nurses. Sergeant Decker is a drug recognition expert for the state of Massachusetts.

The RAPPP Program and its peer liaison program also present several outreach booths to the community at conferences and public venues. Topics that are featured in these outreach efforts are condom use, sexually transmitted infections, national teen pregnancy prevention month, prostate cancer awareness, violence prevention, AIDS awareness and National Men's Health Week.

Commitment to Literacy

The RAPPP Program has distributed over 1000 books to children in the Southcoast area, at the YMCA/Camp Douglas, New Bedford Regional Vocational Technical High School child care class, and to expectant and new fathers and mothers as part of our commitment to literacy and life-long learning. This is accomplished in cooperation with the National Book Bank of America.

Fatherhood Programming/ MAPP

RAPPP staff offers bi-monthly community trainings for new and expectant fathers. Included in this fatherhood programming is:

- Basic Training for New Dads (community based)
- Basic Training for Incarcerated Fathers, Parenting Workshops for Dads (for incarcerated fathers)
- Basic Training for Young Dads (teen new or expectant fathers aged 13 to21).

In addition, fathers' support groups and alumni groups are run on a regular basis, both in the community and at the Bristol County House of Correction. Over 900 fathers have benefited from these services.

Annual Male Conference

We are starting our eighth year presenting our annual Male Awareness Conference to constituent schools and programs within the RAPPP Program family. We have offered a broad range of topics specifically for young men ages 13-17 years on education, responsibility, empowerment and positive community involvement. To date approximately 1600 young men have attended this annual event as well as teachers, mentors.

Heart of Fatherhood Essay Contest and Awards

The "Heart of Fatherhood" award is presented to individuals that exemplify family values and serve as role models at home and in their communities. The two Heart of Fatherhood Award recipients this year were Pete Braley, host of Pete Braley & Company weekdays on WBSM, AM 1420 in New Bedford, and David Patten, wide receiver for the New England Patriots until joining the Washington Redskins in 2005.

Braley and Patten were honored along with Father's Day essay contest winners at an awards dinner in October. The objective of the award and essay contest is to recognize fathers, stepfathers or father-like role models who go above and beyond the call of duty every day in the communities that make up South Coast.

For a complete list of the 13 "Heart of Fatherhood" award recipients or to learn more about the RAPPP program visit <http://www.southcoast.org/rapp/>.

Motherhood Programming

Parenting Workshops for Moms (Incarcerated Mothers) and Mothers' support groups are run on a regular basis at the Bristol County House of Correction.

Family Resource Center

RAPPP Family Education Youth Resource Center opened in February as a lending library and resource for area parents, youth and professionals. The center offers information on all aspects of parenting, along with information on youth risk behaviors such as drug and alcohol use, smoking and reproductive health issues.

RAPPP Peer Liaisons

RAPPP Peer Liaisons include youth who are highly trained to offer information and advice on topics that include reproductive health, communication and decision-making. There are currently five trained RAPPP Peer Liaisons, three boys and two girls, who act as a resource to their peers in social circles and at school, at the RAPPP Resource Center and as co-educators in junior high school programming. Additionally, these Peer Liaisons take part in community outreach, youth development activities, and play a crucial role on the RAPPP Steering Committee. Some of the activities conducted by the Peer Liaisons include:

- RAPPP TV: A cable access show targeting youth in the Southcoast area, designed, researched, videotaped and produced entirely by RAPPP Peer Liaisons. RAPPP TV airs every Wednesday at 7:30 pm on NBTV95.
- RAPPP Youth Council, which is funded through a grant from the Massachusetts Service Alliance. RAPPP Peer Liaisons lead a group of 15 youth from the Greater New Bedford area that have been commissioned to assess community needs, perform community service and fund 10 to 15 mini grants ranging in size from \$500 to \$1,500.00.

The RAPPP Program has enjoyed its most successful fundraising year yet, receiving \$150,000.00 in a multi-year grant from the Department of Public Health, along with grants from corporations and private donations to continue the work so desperately needed by the youth and parents of the South Coast area.

Emergency Outreach

Our Emergency Department staff continues their commitment to prevention of youth risk behaviors. *Life, Death, Drugs, Treatment* is a play that teaches school children about the dangers of substance abuse and how to access the Emergency Medical System. Emergency Nurses CARE (ENCARE) targets youth from middle through high school as well as church youth groups and community groups to educate about alcohol, drugs, peer pressure and seat belt usage.

WELLNESS, EDUCATION AND PREVENTION SCREENINGS

Southcoast Hospitals Group has a long-standing tradition of community education, prevention and screening activities. Thousands of area residents are reached by these free services every year.

Skin Cancer

Southcoast conducts annual skin cancer screenings each spring. This year, a total of 71 residents were screened at our Fall River site, and 111 were screened at the Oncology Center in New Bedford. A number of suspicious lesions were discovered and these patients were referred for further examination and treatment.

Head/Neck Screenings

Southcoast Hospitals Group and Northeast Ear Nose & Throat Surgeons provided free head and neck cancer screenings to 75 individuals on the Southcoast Mobile Van in April. The screening was held in cooperation with the Yul Brynner Head & Neck Cancer Foundation Inc. in honor of Head and Neck Cancer Awareness week. Oral cancer is a major health problem in the United States. Head and neck cancers are more common in men and in people over age 50. It is estimated that some 45,000 men and women in this country developed head and neck cancers in 2004. Black males have the highest incidence of head and neck cancers, with a survival rate over five years at 33 percent versus 55 percent for whites. To learn more about head and neck cancer visit <http://www.headandneck.org/>.

Women's Health

Southcoast is the recipient of a Department of Public Health Women's Health Initiative grant for a Breast and Cervical Cancer Initiative. This grant attempts to screen and identify cancers in an uninsured population without access to care. In cooperation with the New Bedford YWCA, this initiative targets racial, cultural and ethnic minorities and the under/uninsured. Approximately 630 women have been served through the grant.

Health Fairs

Southcoast again participated in numerous health fairs across the region, including a Portuguese Health Fair, a Senior Citizen Health Fair, a Womens' Health Fair and health fairs on-site at local industries.

SECTION VII

Activity During The Reporting Year Expenditures

In 2005, Southcoast contributed \$7,273,434 in community benefit and community service programs that reached the disadvantaged, underserved and those at-risk, bringing them services they otherwise would not have been able to access. Our major initiatives concerning health access, cardiovascular disease and youth risk behavior, all had significant impact, with growing programs that reached large numbers of Southcoast residents.

In addition to community benefit expenditures, Medicaid currently pays Southcoast Hospitals Group \$10,168,739 less per year than the actual cost of the services provided to Medicaid beneficiaries. Southcoast plays a critical role in providing care to a substantial Medicaid population and is the largest community hospital provider of Medicaid services in the Commonwealth. Southcoast's community benefit and community service programs and Southcoast's subsidization of unfunded Medicaid care totaled \$17,442,173 in 2005.

SECTION VIII

Contact Information

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