



## By the numbers

# Healthy Tomorrows program: 226 grants, 47 states, 20 years of progress

by **Kristy Kennedy** • Correspondent

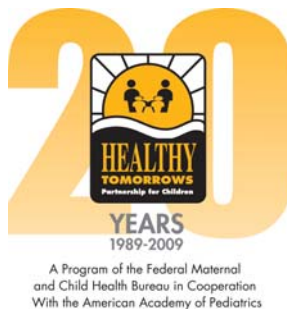
In Ohio, a physician saw a need for safer playgrounds. In Pennsylvania, another saw a need to treat obesity and improve children's access to medical care. In Massachusetts, a doctor discovered that legal issues were getting in the way of children's health.

All of those needs and hundreds of others are being addressed thanks to the Healthy Tomorrows Partnership for Children Program, a cooperative agreement between the Academy and the federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau.

### Target: low-income populations

Celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, the program has given out 226 grants in 47 states with about 50 grants running at a time. The grants tend to target low-income populations and address access to health care, community-based health care, preventive care and service coordination. The grants are coveted because they last five years and provide up to \$50,000 in each of those years.

The idea, said Peter van Dyck, M.D., M.P.H., FAAP,



is that pediatricians are best able to spot health issues in their own communities and best know how to address those problems. Healthy Tomorrows offers them a way to put their ideas into practice (pediatricians don't have to be grantees but must be involved in the program).



Dr. van Dyck

"These are often small programs with a particular need that may not be on anyone else's radar," said Dr. van Dyck, associate administrator for the Maternal and Child Health Bureau in the Department of Health and Human Services' Health Resources and Services Administration.

In years two through five, applicants are required to seek outside funds to double the total received from the federal grant (i.e., if the federal grant is \$50,000, the matching requirement is \$100,000). The requirement has led to the sustainability of Healthy Tomorrows programs, with about 80% remaining active after the grant ended, Dr. van Dyck said.

## 2009 Healthy Tomorrows grantees

- The Bronx Nutrition and Fitness Initiative for Teens Family-Centered Retention Initiative, Bronx, N.Y.
- Community-Based Care Coordination for Children with Complex Chronic Conditions, Winston-Salem, N.C.
- Healthy Futures: A School-based Mental Health Model, Chicago
- Hospital to Medical Home Project, Toledo, Ohio
- Improving School Readiness in Washington State through Reach Out and Read, Seattle
- Medical Home/Care Coordination for High-risk Infants: Baby Steps for Health, Philadelphia
- Mental Health Services for Children in Public Housing, Los Angeles
- MnCHIP: Investing in Health and Early Learning for New Americans, St. Paul, Minn.
- Vista Community Clinic Healthy Tomorrows Project, Vista, Calif.
- Visiting Nurse Associations' Love & Learn Teen Interdisciplinary Home Visitation, Omaha, Neb.

### Many programs blossom

Receiving the grant was a watershed moment for Gary A. Smith, M.D., Dr. P.H., FAAP, who started out with a concern that children in Columbus, Ohio, needed safer places to play. Back in 1999, Dr. Smith partnered with the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department and renovated 25 playgrounds in the city's neediest areas. Playgrounds were upgraded with safer equipment and soft, rubber surfaces made of recycled tires.



Dr. Smith

The program was the first in Healthy Tomorrows to address injury prevention. "Injury isn't on the radar screen as much as one might expect," Dr. Smith said. "When we were applying, I thought it would be a long shot that we would be funded. People who are thinking

of (launching) an innovative project that no one has done before should do so.”

The grant also funded education and outreach about playground safety as well as traveling safely to and from the parks. Although the grant ended five years ago, Dr. Smith has expanded the program into the 24-person Center for Injury Research and Policy.

David M. Keller, M.D., FAAP, credits the grant with giving his program — Family Advocates of Central Massachusetts — stability during its early years. The program links pediatric practices affiliated with the University of Massachusetts medical school and attorneys



Dr. Keller

to help patients and their families deal with legal matters. Issues include helping needy families obtain food stamps, domestic violence, special education concerns and making sure landlords keep apartments mold-free.

“We think you are better able to be healthy if you have a stable home or if you have heat or if you have food to eat,” Dr. Keller said. “It’s a really cool program.”

The program has helped about 500 families over the last five years and boasts a positive outcome for about 80% of cases. Today, the program has found other funding to continue. “Having Healthy Tomorrows as the core has been a tremendous boon,” Dr. Keller said. “We knew it was there and we could count on it for five years. That’s the kind of timeline to really get something done in a community.”

Dr. Keller advises participants to take advantage of the expertise of AAP staff, who can offer help in the grant-writing process and beyond. Two years into the grant, staff members visit programs to offer support, often on how to find outside funding, to better network with the community and to measure outcomes.



In Columbus, Ohio, 25 playgrounds were renovated in the city’s neediest areas with the help of a Healthy Tomorrows grant. Gary A. Smith, M.D., Dr.P.H., FAAP, partnered with the local parks department to install safer equipment and surfaces.

low-income children in the Philadelphia area. Called 215-GO (based on the area code), the program involved teaching kids to limit their screen time to two hours a day, to do at least an hour of physical activity, and to eat five fruits and vegetables a day.

They also are taught to think about their weight in terms of their health and not their looks. “We educate the kids about the complications of obesity,” Dr. Khan said. “A lot of times it is a lack of education.”

The program has seen success with 60% of kids losing weight, about 85% of those with abnormal blood pressure showing trends toward normalization and about 70% of kids having a healthier body mass index.

The program is being replicated in Texas and has led to better reimbursement in Pennsylvania for doctor visits related to obesity — up to six visits a year from one previously covered, Dr. Khan said.

“If I did not have this Healthy Tomorrows funding,” she said, “I would not have had these results.”



Dr. Khan

## RESOURCE

For more information on Healthy Tomorrows, visit [www.aap.org/compmpeds/httpcp/](http://www.aap.org/compmpeds/httpcp/).