

## news release

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### **Access HealthColumbus Receives \$300,000 Grant from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to Improve the Health of Employed Latino Immigrants**

*Columbus, Ohio*

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) announced that Access HealthColumbus (AHC) has been selected to receive a \$302,700 grant as part of the RWJF initiative *Fresh Ideas: Improving the Health of Immigrant and Refugee Communities*. *Fresh Ideas* aims to give immigrants and refugees the tools and support they need to improve and maintain their own health. Today more than 30 million immigrants and refugees live in the United States (including tens of thousands in Central Ohio) and often have high rates of chronic health problems, due at least in part to difficulties they have getting appropriate social and health services.

Launched by RWJF's Vulnerable Populations Portfolio, which supports promising new ideas to help overcome longstanding health challenges for the people in society who bear an excess of the burden of disease, the *Fresh Ideas* initiative drew close to 500 proposals from organizations throughout the United States. The AHC project was one of the two projects selected to receive a grant under the current round of funding.

"We hoped the 'Fresh Ideas' initiative would attract a diverse set of approaches to overcome the language barriers and cultural differences that affect the ability of immigrants and refugees to obtain culturally appropriate information and services that could help them live healthier lives. It accomplished this and much more, attracting many fascinating ideas and solutions," said Wendy Yallowitz, RWJF program officer. "We are excited about the potential of the grantees to create real and sustainable changes in the health of immigrant and refugee communities."

"I'm delighted that Access HealthColumbus has been selected to participate in this important endeavor. Through this grant opportunity, we can identify solutions that make sense and can be sustained in our community," said AHC President Jeff Biehl. "It is an honor for our community to be selected as an RWJF grant recipient in such a competitive process. We appreciate their confidence. Their financial support is a vital addition to the local support we have from the Columbus Medical Association Foundation."

Over the past several years, Columbus, (Franklin County) Ohio has experienced unprecedented growth in its immigrant and refugee populations. Columbus is home to a growing Latino population, which currently comprises 8% of the city's population with over 60,000 individuals living and working in Columbus and surrounding communities. Between 1990 and 2005, the county experienced a 776% increase in births by Latino women. Additionally, as the second largest Somali refugee resettlement area in the country, Columbus is home to over 45,000 Somali residents.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Initiative to Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Disparities, Latinos have poorer outcomes in diabetes and HIV/AIDS, have more problems with uncontrolled blood pressure and receive fewer childhood and adult immunizations compared with the general population.

The most recent Franklin County Profile of Minority Health reveals that Latino adults were more likely to be uninsured than any other racial or ethnic group and were more likely to have gone more than five years without receiving a medical checkup. The report also indicates that a significant number of Latinos were classified as being obese and that Latino adults were more likely than White, Black or Asian adults to be without a usual source of health care.

“A key strategy is to apply our learning from this project to other populations and find out how to replicate what works and modify what does not,” stated Biehl.

The AHC project, *Community Solutions to Improve Employed Immigrant Health: Employed Latino Health Initiative* is a public-private partnership designed to engage members of the Latino community, the local business community and federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) in planning, designing and implementing models that can be utilized by employers and sustained in the community to improve the overall health of employed Latino immigrants.

The *Employed Latino Health Initiative* has five objectives: They are to:

1. Assess the needs of employers and employed Latino immigrants relative to the need for health resources and information, access to services, and health care coverage;
2. Identify strategies that improve the health of employed Latino immigrants in order to develop models that attend to those needs;
3. Prioritize and select models to pilot based on affordability, sustainability and ease of implementation;
4. Pilot and evaluate select models to test their utility and effectiveness; and
5. Identify methods for sustaining models as a standard community and business practices.

Grant funding will be used to support expert consulting services, project management, evaluation and development of piloted models to be implemented by project partners.

Project partners include: Latino Empowerment Outreach Network; Ohio Hotel & Lodging Association; Central Ohio Restaurant Association; Universal Health Care Action Network of Ohio (UHCAN Ohio); Capital Park Family Health Center; Columbus Neighborhood Health Center; and Lower Lights Christian Health Center. The project also received letters of support from Columbus Public Health and the Columbus City Council's Health, Housing and Human

Services and Workforce Development Committee. In addition, the Columbus Medical Association Foundation has invested \$60,000 in local funds to support the project.

Project leadership will be provided by Jeff Biehl, President of Access HealthColumbus and Alicia D. Smith, Senior Consultant with Health Management Associates, who will serve as Co-Directors of the project. Access HealthColumbus is a non-profit organization located in Columbus, Ohio with a mission of ensuring access to health care for vulnerable people in Franklin County. To achieve its mission, AHC works in collaboration with health care, business, government and community leaders to coordinate projects and activities in our community. Health Management Associates is a national health policy research and consulting firm based in Lansing, Michigan with offices throughout the United States, including Columbus, Ohio. The firm specializes in health system restructuring, program development, economics and finance with a special concentration on those addressing the needs of the medically indigent and underserved.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change. For more than 35 years the Foundation has brought experience, commitment, and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those it serves. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, the Foundation expects to make a difference in our lifetime. For more information, visit [www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org).

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