

Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Care demonstrates the partnership that the Affiliates of the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) form with Latino families. Nationally, nearly 300 of these organizations provide community and workforce development, education, social services, immigration, citizenship and other services. Collectively, the Affiliates serve millions of Hispanic Americans and immigrant families. "Day in and day out, our Affiliates work to strengthen families and communities," says Janet Murguía, President and CEO of NCLR. "Together, we are creating more opportunities for Latino parents to build a better future for themselves and their children."



# MARY'S CENTER FOR MATERNAL AND CHILD CARE

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Award-winning Program:

Healthy Families DC

Maria Gomez, President & CEO

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CHILDREN DO WELL WHEN THEIR FAMILIES  
DO WELL, AND FAMILIES DO BETTER WHEN  
THEY LIVE IN SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES

2005 FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

## FRAGILE FAMILIES, REMARKABLE RESULTS

When Maria Gomez founded Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Care, she wanted to help low-income families give their children a healthy start in life. Responsive and supportive health care services would be the entry point to a broad array of services, but families at risk of child neglect and abuse were of special concern. Mary's Center implemented Healthy Families DC (HFDC) to reach out to these families with the support services needed to deliver and nurture healthy babies.

The remarkable results, achieved with some of the District's most vulnerable families, speak to the success of Mary's Center's intensive and culturally sensitive approach. During 2003, the most recent data available, 99 percent of the families in Healthy Families DC had no substantiated reports of child abuse or neglect. Children in the program were born at healthy birth weights, were current on immunizations and were linked to a medical provider and health insurance program at rates significantly higher than the national average.



THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM SAYS  
'THE CLIENT IS NOT COMPLIANT,' BUT IT  
IS THE SYSTEM THAT IS NOT COMPLIANT.  
HEALTHY FAMILIES DC FINDS WAYS TO  
CONNECT FAMILIES TO THE CARE AND  
SERVICES THEY NEED TO SUCCEED.

—Maria Gomez, R.N., M.P.H., President & CEO, Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Care

## PASSIONATE ADVOCATES, TAILORED CARE

Health Families DC facilitates the process in placing these fragile families on the road to success by creating an ever-evolving program of services customized to address each family's needs. A family support worker visits families in their homes weekly for six to 12 months – a process that sometimes continues for several years.

"Many families do not know about child development, or they have stressors like immigration status and large numbers of people in the home," says Maria Gomez, President and CEO of Mary's Center. "We develop strong, respectful relationships with families that allow them to partner with us so their children can thrive."

Among the 10,000 people now served by Mary's Center, many are immigrant families. HFDC staff deliver services in ways that are culturally sensitive and connect parents who are feeling isolated to other parents who offer them support. As passionate advocates, staff help families gain access to other programs and services they need to succeed. That may mean helping families connect to high quality day care, ESL programs, skills training for better jobs and financial education.

"Once an immigrant family gains access to affordable health care," says Gomez, "parents can take advantage of other opportunities to improve their lives and the lives of their children."

## FAMILIES COUNT FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

Through a joint venture of the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), the FAMILIES COUNT Family Strengthening Awards recognize NCLR Affiliates with outstanding programs that work to give children what they need most—strong, capable and economically successful families. Responding to the varied needs of the families they serve, these organizations improve the economic prospects of working men and women and create the services and networks of support that all families need to realize their aspirations for themselves and their children.