

State Health Improvement Plan

Special Report on The Health Status of Minorities in Pennsylvania

2002



WE'RE THERE.

For Your Health. For Your Community.

DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH
Mark Schoeller, Governor

Robert S. Zimmerman, Jr., MPH, Secretary of Health

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

HARRISBURG

ROBERT S. ZIMMERMAN, JR., MPH
SECRETARY OF HEALTH

April 25, 2002

Dear Fellow Pennsylvanians:

The Special Report on the Health Status of Minorities in Pennsylvania is the latest in a series of health status reports prepared under the auspices of Pennsylvania's State Health Improvement Plan.

In May 2001, I appointed a Task Force to assist me in assessing the health status of racial, cultural and linguistic minorities in Pennsylvania. Through a series of community meetings held throughout the Commonwealth, the Task Force documented significant disparities in health status in many minority populations. They also identified numerous innovative programs developed in and by local communities to deal with these disparities.

The release of this report coincides with the March 2002 release of a major study by the Institute of Medicine on "Understanding and Eliminating Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care." While that study will undoubtedly set the tone for a national discussion, Pennsylvania has already implemented several initiatives focused on health disparities. A key resource has been made available through Pennsylvania's share of the tobacco settlement, enabling us to address tobacco-related concerns of disparate populations, including minorities, as part of our comprehensive, strategic approach to preventing and reducing tobacco use, especially among young people, pregnant women and women with children. And we are facilitating the creation and support of community-based health improvement efforts in all regions of the state by providing seed money to minority organizations striving to reduce health disparities and improve health status in their communities.

The fact remains that, while Pennsylvanians as a whole are healthier than ever before, not all Pennsylvanians share that good fortune. I hope that this report will serve as a catalyst in our efforts to eliminate health disparities affecting racial and ethnic minority populations throughout the state. I encourage all members of our communities—state and local government agencies, community and minority-based organizations, health care providers, church groups, social service agencies and individual members of the communities themselves—to work together so we can achieve our common goal of making Pennsylvania healthier for all the residents of the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert S. Zimmerman, Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

Robert S. Zimmerman, Jr.

MINORITY HEALTH TASK FORCE

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Bruce Dixon, M.D.	Allegheny County Health Department
Evelyn Marcha-Hidalgo	Intercultural Family Services, Inc., Philadelphia
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