

The Delta Health Alliance

Overview of Projects

The mission of the Delta Health Alliance is to advocate, develop, and implement collaborative programs to improve the health of citizens in the Mississippi Delta. The Alliance provides direct support for collaborative projects that: increase access and availability of health care in the Delta; conduct and apply research on health problems and issues to reduce ill health among Delta residents; or offer health education programs that encourage and enable Delta residents to adopt good health practices.

The initiatives of the Delta Health Alliance are organized around five major goals:

1. Increase access to quality healthcare for residents of the Mississippi Delta region;
2. Increase awareness of the residents of the Mississippi Delta region on healthcare issues to which they are especially vulnerable;
3. Increase the number of healthcare personnel available to provide services to residents of the Mississippi Delta region;
4. Increase our understanding of the healthcare issues that exist in the Delta region; and
5. Improve health outcomes of the residents of the Mississippi Delta region.

The Delta Health Alliance functions by coordinating limited resources across partnering organizations, coordinating the delivery of healthcare programs, providing targeted education and training to facilitate consistency across providers, and facilitating translational research to turn bench-side discoveries into bed-side healthcare programs. By collaborating with community and state partners, the Delta Health Alliance strives to provide culturally appropriate and responsive initiatives designed to address and assess the unique needs of the Delta population.

Collaborating Partners: Delta State University (DSU), Jackson State University (JSU), Mississippi Delta Community College Capps Center for Workforce Technology (the Capps Center), Mississippi Hospital Association (MHA), Mississippi State University (MSU), Mississippi Valley State University (MVSU), Mississippi Primary Health Care Association (MPHCA), University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMC), and the University of Southern Mississippi (USM).

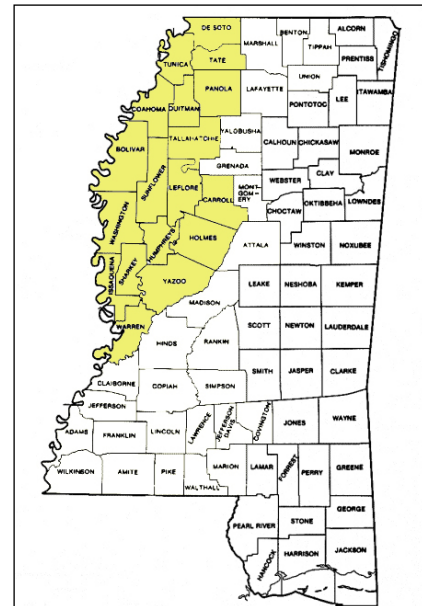


Figure 1. Map of Service Area

Health Delivery & Outreach Programs

These projects focus on the direct delivery of care and patient education with a focus on the illnesses and diseases which have the greatest impact residents of the Delta, including diabetes, cardiovascular health and strokes, infant mortality, mental health, and HIV/AIDS; and improved access to appropriate healthcare through technology.

Delta Diabetes Project (UMC)

- Expand development of community-owned diabetes management clinics.
- Begin development of rural Primary Care Physicians to partner with DMC/DDP.
- Collaborate with MVSU to translate DMC/CDC/CMS diabetes education model into community-based program.

Healthy Lifestyles Outreach Project: Diabetes, Hypertension, Cardiovascular Disease and Infant Mortality (MVSU)

- Promote wellness to prevent chronic obesity-related diseases.
- Increase pre-natal care awareness.
- Educate rural diabetes patients in self-management.

Rural Tele-Emergency Project (MHA)

- Purchase telemedicine video/computer equipment; add five rural Delta facilities to an existing tele-emergency network.
- Specialized nurse practitioners will treat patients in rural hospital emergency departments in collaboration with physicians in the Department of Emergency Medicine at the University of Mississippi Medical Center.

Addressing Mental Health in the Mississippi Delta (UMC)

- The University of Mississippi Medical Center Department of Psychiatry faculty will provide mental health treatment to patients of other clinics suffering depression via existing community-based tele-health infrastructure.

Electronic Health Records Project (UMC)

- Develop and maintain an Electronic Health Record network that can be accessed by providers across the region utilizing either secure, web-based access or in-clinic systems linked to other health information systems.
- Patients' longitudinal health information will be accessible to ensure safety, quality of care, fiscal efficiency, reduction in medical errors and increased access to care.
- Aligns with the President's national Electronic Health Systems Initiative

Agromedicine Program (MSU)

- Educate rural residents/farm workers in safety issues such as machinery accidents and environmental hazards.
- Track occurrences, outcomes and trends.

Evidence-Based HIV/AIDS Interventions (JSU)

- Reduce sexual risk-taking behaviors that contribute to HIV/AIDS and other STDs, and teen pregnancy in African Americans in the counties of Quitman, Sunflower and Washington.
- Provide capacity-building assistance to enable implementation of cost-effective, evidenced-based interventions.
- Build an organizational infrastructure to reduce acquisition and transmission of HIV/AIDS and other STDs.

Anthropological and Anthropometric Studies of Weight, Smoking Habits, Blood Pressure and their associations with Stroke in Washington County, MS (JSU)

- Conduct an in-depth assessment of overweight, cigarette smoking and high blood pressure as risk factors for stroke; and upon completion,
- Design and implement a comprehensive and culturally appropriate health education program that addresses the fundamental causes of stroke risk factors in the Mississippi Delta.

Confronting the Delta's Nursing Shortage (DSU)

- Expand recruitment/retention efforts for nursing students in the Delta.
- Provide scholarships and loans in exchange for practice commitments from graduates.
- Reduce attrition and improve graduation rates.
- Increase the number of nursing faculty.
- Invest in capital improvements for equipment, nursing laboratories and larger classes.

DELTA HEALTH ASSESSMENT PROGRAMS

These projects respond to the unmet health needs of the Mississippi Delta and will produce a comprehensive "State-of-the-Health" report for the region.

Health Services Research (MSU)

- Provide objective, unbiased health services research for the planning, development and implementation of program intervention and formulation of policy to improve the health of Mississippi Delta residents.
- Research will provide data in the areas of:
 - Cardiovascular health
 - Health status assessment
 - Estimating rural health population
 - Prevalence of chronic health problems and behavioral risk factors
 - Utilization of health services
 - Barriers to HIV testing and
 - Physician labor force

HealthConnect: Linking Communities to Healthcare (MSU)

A comprehensive and interactive process to help communities understand the importance of local healthcare that will:

- Quantify the economic importance of the local healthcare sector.
- Document the perceptions people have about healthcare in their community,
- Develop strategic planning tools to assist healthcare providers.

Surveillance of Health Services Research (JSU)

- Integrate database activities for Project 7, HIV/AIDS; and Project 8, risk factors associated with stroke.

- Develop and implement surveillance systems that will enable investigators to engage in health surveillance activities to:
 - Monitor disease trends.
 - Monitor progress toward control objectives.
 - Estimate the site of the health problem
 - Identify interventions.
 - Evaluate interventions and preventive programs.
 - Identify research needs for the Delta.
- Develop the capability to integrate databases; produce and disseminate surveillance reports.
- Collaborate with the State Health Department to share reports and information.

EDUCATION INITIATIVES AND TRAINING PROGRAMS

These projects include education and training for adolescents to adults to promote healthy behaviors in children; increase the number of healthcare providers in the Delta region; and enhance the Delta workforce through improvements in training and skills programs.

Mississippi Delta Child Health and Well-Being Research Program (MSU)

- Integrate child health and child care professionals in collaborative research in a project comprising approximately 426 licensed child care centers in the Mississippi Delta serving approximately 25,000 children.
- Design and implement three specific child health research projects:
 - Child Care Directors and Parents Assessment
 - Environmental Tobacco Smoke Study
 - Oral Health Intervention Study

Improving Health in the Mississippi Delta through a Coordinated School Health Program (MSU)

- Utilize a social marketing campaign to generate awareness of the importance of healthy eating and physical activity, and assist elementary schools to implement the program.
- Build an alliance (parents, teachers, community) that serves to empower children and families with strategies to achieve healthy lifetime behaviors and activities.
- Integrate health services, physical education, nutrition services, counseling, psychological and social services, a healthy school environment, health promotion for staff, and involvement of families and the community.

Mississippi Delta Project HEALTH [Health Education and Awareness for a Life That's Healthy] (JSU in partnership with The Sims Group)

- Address a wide range of behaviors among youth that contribute to ill-health and major chronic diseases.
- Educate children, youth and adults in Bolivar and Washington counties on the importance of physical activity and healthy eating habits in order to reduce obesity and improve health with an emphasis on lifelong fitness, health practices and behaviors.

Delta Futures: Health Center Opportunities with the Youth of the Mississippi Delta (MSU)

- Foster the pursuit of health careers by Mississippi Delta youth.
- Present learning activities and options to middle school children to bring awareness of and interest in health career opportunities.
- Provide training in life skills to enable self-responsibility for health and wellness.

Healthcare Workforce Initiative (MHA-ONW)

- Increase the number of nurses practicing in the Mississippi Delta region through:
 - The High School Nurse Mentorship Academy, which exposes primarily at-risk and racial and ethnic minority high school seniors to nursing and allied health careers.
 - The Extern Program, an eight-week summer program to enhance clinical and critical thinking skills, providing opportunities to work in a hospital while earning college credit.
 - StudentMax™, a web-based centralized clinical placement system, that will enable educators and clinicians to maximize available clinical settings with educational experiences.

Mississippi in Motion: Improving Health in the Mississippi Delta through Physical Activity and Healthy Eating (MSU)

- Promote positive physical activity behaviors and healthy eating habits to adults using a research-based, peer-reviewed curriculum.
- Teach participants, in a 12-week program, about nutrition, physical activity behaviors, and chronic diseases; and how to self-management health conditions. (Ten pilot programs took place in Mississippi in 2005.)

Leadership Development and Teacher Shortage Program [DELTA: Developing and Enhancing Leaders and Teachers for Achievement] (DSU)

- Foster leadership development in Delta schools and communities through:
 - Delta Leadership Institute
 - Superintendent's Academy
 - Leadership Study Program
- Create the presence of caring, capable teachers who can impact life choices associated with wellness through:
 - Teacher Education Scholarships
 - Teacher Retention Program
 - Literacy Enhancement Clinic

Center for Distance Education of Minority Health Professionals (USM)

- Increase the number of minority health professionals practicing in the Delta.
- Offer the Bachelor of Science Degree in Health Promotion on-line to minority individuals limited by time or distance.
- Provide students with mentors to assist with coursework, local hands-on experience and prepare for entry into healthcare careers.

Enhancing our Workforce through Training and Technology (Capps Center, MDCC)

- Make the delivery of work skills and enhanced/advanced technical training more available to area workers and industries.
- Focus on improving skills sets of healthcare workers to improve job satisfaction, retention and economic performance of the healthcare industry.
- Provide improved skills and knowledge training to Capps Center educators and project coordinators.
- Establish and maintain infrastructure required to provide training on rapidly-changing technologies and advanced hardware systems to disadvantaged Delta workers.

HEALTH FACILITIES PROGRAMS

These projects were developed to meet the growing need for infrastructure across hospitals and health centers, and building new facilities on the grounds of Mississippi Valley State University and the Delta Health Alliance.

Rural Hospitals Master Facility Planning (MHA)

- Create a Master Facilities and Operations Plan to perform in-depth evaluations of aged rural facilities; identify construction/renovation needs; and assist in securing future funding.
- Select five to 10 rural hospitals facing obsolescence to receive mini-grants, based on their proposals, enabling them to assess and make informed decisions regarding renovation, replacement, etc., to best meet community needs with quality, accessible health care.

Enhancing Our Community Health Centers (MPHCA)

- Increase access to capital for Community Health Centers in the Delta for building and equipment projects through the *Mississippi Community Health Center Capital Grants Awards Program*.
- Designed to improve the performance of community health centers and access to high quality primary and preventive care for the medically underserved.
 - Extend CHC services to poor areas with no current CHC.
 - Provide new medical/information systems equipment including mobile units.
 - Replace existing facilities.

Promoting Wellness at Mississippi Valley State University (MVSU)

- Mississippi Valley State University will develop an initiative to provide services and health education programs to meet critical needs of the Mississippi Delta, based out of the Mississippi Valley State University campus. This community-based initiative will utilize students and graduates to assist in the delivery of services.

Capital Projects for the Delta Health Alliance (DHA)

- The Stoneville Lifestyle and Wellness Research Building to house a human research program focusing on obesity, nutrition and lifestyle issues; the telehealth hub for DHA and the Delta Diabetes Project; an obesity/diabetes education station for the DDP; and a fitness/wellness center serving Stoneville and Leland. (pending funding for FY08)
- Establish temporary housing units for scholars-in-residence (Stoneville).
- Completion of the unfinished third floor of the current DHA office building (Stoneville).