

## Traveling the Rural Roads of Jefferson and Madison County Florida to Provide Health Services

March 2008

### Healthy People 2010 Objective:

1-3 Increase the proportion of persons appropriately counseled about health behaviors.

### Issue:

In 2007, 78.9% of adults in Jefferson County and 75.7% of adults in Madison County did not have any type of healthcare insurance coverage. Jefferson and Madison counties are neighbors in north Florida, with a combined population of less than 40,000. These rural counties suffer from limited healthcare resources. The healthcare facilities that are located in each county, such as hospitals or health departments, are often too far for residents to reach. Many residents in rural areas lack adequate transportation services and cannot access health resources for blood pressure screening, diabetes testing and education, and specialty care.

### Intervention:

In 2007, the Jefferson and Madison county health departments combined fiscal resources to purchase a mobile health unit. The unit was equipped with two dental chairs and other fixtures to accommodate healthcare services. The mobile unit is a ideal venue for blood pressure and diabetes screenings, and it provides privacy for one-on-one healthcare consultations. The retractable exterior awning allows health department staff to administer outdoor health screenings and education services in shaded comfort. The mobile unit further serves as a moving billboard, promoting health messages such as "*Just Move Jefferson!*," "*Just Move Madison!*," and the quit smoking "*Florida QuitLine*" information.

### Impact:

The health department staff devoted the first half of 2007 to make sure that the mobile unit had all of the necessary equipment and personnel to provide services the community. During the second half of 2007, employees of the Jefferson and Madison county health departments drove the mobile health unit out to key locations in the community to provide healthcare services such as blood pressure and diabetes screening and education. Community centers, grocery stores, post offices, and senior centers hosted the mobile health unit. During only the first seven days of operation, over 70 residents, who would have not otherwise received services, were:

- screened for high blood pressure.
- provided *Florida QuitLine* information.
- provided information on smoking cessation classes and nicotine replacement therapy.

Although the mobile health unit's primary purpose is to provide dental care to local children the unit also provides a range of healthcare services. This addition to these rural communities provides needed screenings for high blood pressure and diabetes and promotes healthcare messages, such as smoking cessation, that are essential in creating a healthy community.

The health department has many churches and community organizations that wish to have the mobile health unit provide services at their locations. Residents throughout Jefferson and Madison counties are learning that when the mobile health unit is in town, free and convenient services are only a few steps away. Citizens are excited and have appreciated these new health resources. The mobile health unit provides a healthcare access opportunity for Jefferson and Madison county residents who would have not otherwise received any medical assistance.

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