



## Urban Health Institute COVID-19 Small Grants For Research, Program Development, and Program Expansion

### Funded Partnerships

#### Community – Student Grant

- Mask On: Increasing Education and Access to Cloth Masks in the Greenmount West Neighborhood of Baltimore City

#### Community – Faculty Grants

- Baltimore Neighbors Network and JHUSON Partnership
- Interactive Video Conferencing for Early Home Visiting in Baltimore
- Partnering with African American Faith Leaders to Assess COVID-19 Concerns and to Develop a Novel Health Equity Educational Curriculum
- Strengthening Frontlines: Supporting Healthcare Workers in the Face of the COVID-19 Pandemic
- Telehealth Delivery of Behavioral Health Services for Homeless Persons at Helping Up Mission

### Community – Student Grant

#### Mask On: Increasing Access and Education About Cloth Masks to Greenmount West Neighborhood

Student: Mudia Uzzi, MSc, PhD Student, Department of Health, Behavior and Society, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

Community Partner: Lauren Kelly-Washington, Greenmount West Community Association

Black Americans are overrepresented among COVID-19 related cases, hospitalizations, and deaths in Baltimore City and Maryland. The CDC has advised for residents to wear cloth masks to prevent transmission; however, marginalized communities, including low income Black Americans, may not have access to this prevention method.

We are partnering with the Greenmount West Community Association (GWCA) to distribute 1,000 cloth masks to Greenmount West residents. We will also distribute instructional pamphlets on mask usage, and document the experiences of utilizing community partnerships towards achieving our COVID-19

public health goal. Additionally, we will survey residents to assess characteristics associated with mask wearing behaviors and identify facilitators and barriers to wearing masks. We will use social media, infographics, and flyers on neighborhood organizations' websites to disseminate information regarding mask distribution efforts. We will present updates at GWCA meetings regarding mask utilization and survey results. We expect that this initiative will reduce racial and economic disparities in mask wearing. This is an opportunity to expose factors that keep those who are the most vulnerable from engaging in COVID-19 prevention efforts. Results from this research can also serve as a guide to implementing community efforts to improve health outcomes.



## **Community – Faculty Grants**

### **Baltimore Neighbors Network and JHUSON Partnership**

Faculty Partner: Nicole Warren, Associate Professor, Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing

Community Partner: Ann Coy, Healing City Baltimore, % MPN

Many older adults are at risk for loneliness and mental health concerns as they isolate out of concern for their health and safety. Baltimore Neighbors Network is a network of volunteers building social solidarity in Baltimore during and beyond the COVID crisis. BNN volunteers make friendly, proactive phone calls to older adults across Baltimore City to check in, make conversation, and assist with resource navigation. This project aims to address the rising psychosocial/behavioral health needs of older adults in Baltimore City experiencing distress related to COVID-19. We propose to expand on a pilot community-academic partnership between BNN and Johns Hopkins School of Nursing to increase capacity of BNN to support older adults while also providing a meaningful opportunity for students to engage in service relevant to their career goals while learning from community leaders. The specific aims of the project are to increase social support via phone calls, connect older adults with necessary resources (e.g. food and pharmacy delivery), and provide pro bono mental health services as necessary. This project will support BNN training and recruitment of approximately 400 student volunteers who will contact more than 20,000 older adults, increasing BNN's capacity to meet their overall goal.



### **Interactive Video Conferencing for Early Home Visiting in Baltimore**

Faculty Partner: Kelly Bower, PhD, MSN/MPH, RN, Assistant Professor, Johns Hopkins School of Nursing

Community Partner: Jazmyn Covington, Program Director, Family League of Baltimore

COVID-19 has simultaneously increased the importance of early home visiting while also introducing new challenges to its delivery. Low-income Baltimore families who receive home visiting services are at

increased risk for economic and social strains during the pandemic. While Baltimore Healthy Families America (HFA) programs are uniquely positioned to address and mitigate these risks, they have also been compelled to shift from in-person to distance services for the first time ever. Programs face technical capacity challenges to using distance modalities, in particular, interactive video conferencing (IVC). While this pandemic is disruptive, it can also be a catalyst for accelerated learning about how best to reach and empower families under conditions of economic and social instability. We propose to strengthen the capacity of the Baltimore HFA programs to provide and evaluate high quality IVC visiting and extend lessons learned post-COVID-19. To do this, we will 1) assess the needs of Baltimore HFA programs; 2) provide equipment for delivery of IVC visiting to Baltimore HFA families; and 3) evaluate the usability of IVC for home visiting from the perspective of families and home visitors. The study has the potential to inform home visiting programs nationally about how best to support IVC visits.



## **Partnering with African American Faith Leaders to Assess COVID-19 Concerns and to Develop a Novel Health Equity Educational Curriculum**

Faculty Partner: Tanjala S. Purnell, MPH, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Epidemiology, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

Community Partner: Rev. Michael Addison, Married Mates Ministry, Incorporated

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by SARS-CoV-2, a newly discovered coronavirus. In the United States, Maryland, and Baltimore, the rates of COVID-19 deaths are higher among African American residents than Whites or other groups. The complex drivers influencing COVID-19 health disparities include institutional racism, higher prevalence of underlying health conditions associated with poor COVID-19 outcomes, inability to shelter in place due to employment in service industries, and myths about the transmission of COVID-19 paired with historical injustices by the medical and public health communities. The goal of this project is to partner Johns Hopkins physicians and public health scientists with faith leaders, who serve as trusted agents within African American communities in Baltimore, to develop a survey study assessing COVID-19 knowledge, concerns, medical experiences, and tangible needs among African American faith leaders and congregants in Baltimore (Aim 1). We will use community-based participatory research approaches to engage faith leaders in the development of a novel educational curriculum that directly addresses residents' stated needs and concerns, while incorporating important faith-based principles (Aim 2). Our project deliverables and novel collaborations among JHU faculty and faith leaders will contribute to the UHI's mission to advance health equity in Baltimore.



## **Strengthening Frontlines: Supporting Healthcare Workers in the Face of the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Faculty Partner: Carmen Alvarez, PhD, CRNP, Assistant Professor, Johns Hopkins School of Nursing

Community Partner: Randi Woods, MS, MBA, RN, Sisters Together and Reaching, Inc.

The purpose of this study is to understand the personal and work-related stressors of frontline workers dealing with the coronavirus pandemic in underserved communities in Baltimore. These frontline workers are mainly nurses and community health workers (CHWs), helping low-income adults in urban and rural settings manage their chronic diseases and other social stressors that negatively impact health. Despite the intensive work and services they provide, little is known about the personal and work-related needs of these nurses and CHWs, particularly in times of crisis.

Understanding the needs of frontline workers is critical so that they can be supported in order to meet the needs of their communities. The aims of our study are (1) to identify and understand the personal and work-related needs of frontline nurses and community health workers in outpatient settings in Baltimore (2) to develop healthcare organization policy recommendations specifically for supporting healthcare workers working within crisis/disaster situations and preparing them for other emergencies in the future. We are unaware of any existing recommendations for how to support staff in low-income and resource constrained communities during times of crisis/natural disaster.

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## **Telehealth Delivery of Behavioral Health Services for Homeless Persons at Helping Up Mission**

Faculty Partner: Denis Antoine, II, MD, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

Community Partner: K. Daniel Stoltzfus, MPA, Chief Operating Officer, Helping Up Mission

The purpose of this proposal is to increase the technological capacity at our community partner, Helping Up Mission, to ensure the ongoing delivery of behavioral health services via telehealth services. Recent changes in federal and state law allow the provision of telehealth, however, a gap in the infrastructure exists. The funds from this COVID response grant would help purchase much needed equipment to increase the behavioral healthcare access of homeless persons residing at Helping Up Mission. Lessons from this project can be distributed to similar treatment facilities nationwide and can serve as a foundation for ongoing health services research to determine best practices and person-level factors that should be considered during these types of programmatic changes.