

Champions for Inclusive Communities Star Community

Jackson, MS

Jackson, Mississippi is routinely described as a “city with soul.” Located in the heart of the Deep South, Jackson is home to a rich array of people from different cultures. Because it is the capital of Mississippi and the most populous city in the state, the citizens of Jackson must pull together to form a united community. This is especially relevant when it comes to children and youth with special health care needs.

“The Mall with it All”

Jackson has a unique and highly effective approach when it comes to organizing services so families can use them easily. They are home to the Jackson Medical Mall Thad Cochran Center, a once-shopping mall that was converted almost 15 years ago into a thriving hub of medical services. In the words of Zakiya Summers, Public Relations Manager for the Jackson Medical Mall Foundation, “We are a model facility of non-profit, community, retail, and human services, all in one safe environment... we are the mall with it all.”



The Jackson Medical Mall is lucky to have Mississippi’s Title V CSHCN program – called the Children’s Medical Program (CMP) - located right within their walls. The CMP provides financial and medical assistance to children and youth with chronic or disabling conditions. They have 14 community-level satellite clinics throughout the state, but their central one stop multi-specialty clinic, called the Blake Clinic for Children, is located at the Mall. The CMP provides services such as pediatric specialty care, durable medical equipment, and referral services to other community resources via pediatric social workers and family liaisons.

The Value of Family Input and Involvement

Because of the expansive number of tenants that populate the Medical Mall, it only makes sense that families could turn to a number of these to become more involved in their child’s care. CMP is one of the leaders in parent advocacy within the Mall’s structure. As Lawrence Clark, Director of the CMP, says, “We value the input from our families.” Their parent advisory committee helps parents get involved in decision-making about current services that may fit their needs. As part of the CMP’s activities, parents can participate on conference calls with other families around the state. A number of focus groups held by CMP and the Family to Family Health Information Center help to pinpoint exactly what issues parents want to discuss on the calls.

Hollia Thompson, a parent of a child with special health care needs, is effusive about the fact that “CMP listens to families.” She discovered this herself years ago when she gave her input at

What makes a Star Community?

ChampionsInC has created the Star Communities program to recognize exceptional communities.

Star Communities will show excellence in 6 Performance Measures:

- Families are partners
- A "Medical Home" provides coordinated care
- Children receive early and continuous screening
- Families have adequate funding/insurance to pay for services
- Services are organized so families can use them easily and are satisfied
- Youth receive necessary services to make the transition to adult life

read about other Star Communities at
www.ChampionsInC.org

a parent advisory meeting about the lack of transition services for families. The CMP stepped in to organize a transition clinic that takes place once a month. Advisors from the state Center for Independent Living attend to counsel families about services that are available for persons after the age of 21. Acting on Hollia's suggestions is an exemplary model of how the Medical Mall practices continuous quality improvement onsite.

In addition, the local Family to Family Health Information Center is located close by in a part of the mall called the Resource Library. Jacqueline Washington serves as the Parent Liaison for the center and acts as a valuable resource by directing families who call in to the appropriate service for their needs. Jacqueline also advocates for families in monthly meetings with the metro community, where she discusses any concerns and upcoming center events.

Medical Home: Embedded in the Mall

One of the benefits of the Jackson Medical Mall is the fact that a family's medical home is essentially embedded within the walls. A child's primary care provider and many of his or her specialists are often located right within the mall. The Children's Medical Program makes it a point to ask every family they see in their clinics who their primary care physician is so that communication and coordination is fostered with a child's medical homes.



Help with Financing

Another big help for families provided by the Medical Mall is insurance aid. When families express concern about financing their child's medical needs, they are usually directed to the Medicaid office, a tenant of the Mall. Families who receive services from the Children's Medical Program also have the added benefit of knowing the CMP has developed a network of providers that accept their rates for services rendered. CMP

is the payer of last resort if patients do not have private insurance or Medicaid.

The Benefit of Screening Referrals

The Medical Mall partners with outside resources in the community to ensure that children are connected to screening services, such as those performed by the local Health Department. There, nurses screen the child for developmental red flags and refer them on to the appropriate services for further examination. Many of these services are located in the Medical Mall, and families are able to follow up with a variety of agencies in one stop.

Transition – A Team Effort

CMP is also vigorously involved with transition services. In addition to supporting the transition clinics mentioned above, the program partners with LIFE (Living Independence for Everyone) to fund a program called HOT! (Healthy Opportunities for Transition). HOT! prepares Mississippi youth to successfully transition to adult and community life.

As a parent herself, Hollia Thompson, who works for the ARC of Mississippi, says that the most helpful program out there to help her son transition to adult life was "person-centered planning." She has been able to sit down with her son and various agencies to make a long-term plan, her son being the constant center of all decisions made based on his interests and goals. Time was taken in these meetings to discuss possible barriers to transition such as wider doorways in Hollia's son's new living space, the availability of a personal care attendant, and transportation to school and work. Hollia quickly discovered that the frank discussion of these issues with professionals was key in achieving their set goals. Today, Hollia's son is a senior at the local university, lives independently in an accommodated home, and has personal care attendants – all because of a coordinated team effort.

Taking Care of Their Own

The idea to convert an ordinary shopping mall into a successful hub of medical services has been a relief for families in the area who can now attend to many of their child's needs by making one stop. The list of tenants in the Jackson Medical Mall is long, but each of them is working together to create an integrated community-based system of services for CYSHCN and their families. The Medical Mall truly is a good example of how this "city with soul" takes care of their own.

Community Contacts:

Zakiya Summers

Public Relations Manager, Jackson Medical Mall Foundation
zsummers@jacksonmedicalmall.org

Jacqueline Washington

Parent Coordinator F2F HIC
jacqueline.washington@msdh.state.ms.us