

CITY OF BALTIMORE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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JOINT EFFORT LAUNCHED TO HELP FREQUENT AMBULANCE CALLERS

BALTIMORE, MD (May 8, 2008) – The Baltimore City Fire Department, Baltimore City Health Department, and Baltimore Healthcare Access, Inc. are launching an effort, called Operation Care, on May 12 to assist vulnerable city residents who make multiple calls for ambulance transport.

In Baltimore last year, 38 individuals called for ambulances between 15 and 20 times, 37 individuals between 21 and 40 times, 13 individuals between 41 and 60 times, and two individuals over 60 times. One individual called 107 times. An important reason for the high volume of calls may be chronic health conditions that are poorly controlled, such as diabetes, hypertension, and asthma.

Under Operation Care, the Fire Department will provide names and contact information for frequent ambulance callers to Baltimore Healthcare Access, Inc. A case manager will then reach out to the individuals to (1) help enroll individuals in health insurance; (2) connect individuals to a medical home; (3) provide health education and information to avoid crises; and (4) link individuals to a variety of other services, including disease case management programs, food pantries, housing, employment, and homeless shelters.

These efforts should improve the care of high-risk individuals, avoid crises, and reduce the number of 911 calls for ambulances. Healthcare Access will start with the 25 most frequent callers as part of a 90-day pilot program.

“Operation Care should both help vulnerable city residents and reduce the stress on our ambulance system,” said Fire Department Chief James S. Clack. “I am looking forward to the results.”

“We know that most repeat callers have health insurance or are eligible for some type of coverage,” said Kathleen Westcoat, President of Baltimore Healthcare Access, Inc. “We are excited to be a partner with the Fire Department for this win-win program.”

“This partnership is a step towards a healthier Baltimore,” said Dr. Joshua M. Sharfstein, Commissioner of Health. “Our goal is for as few people to need ambulances as possible.”

For more information, please contact Baltimore HealthCare Access’ Communications Director, Therese McIntyre at 410-649-0521 ext 3007.

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