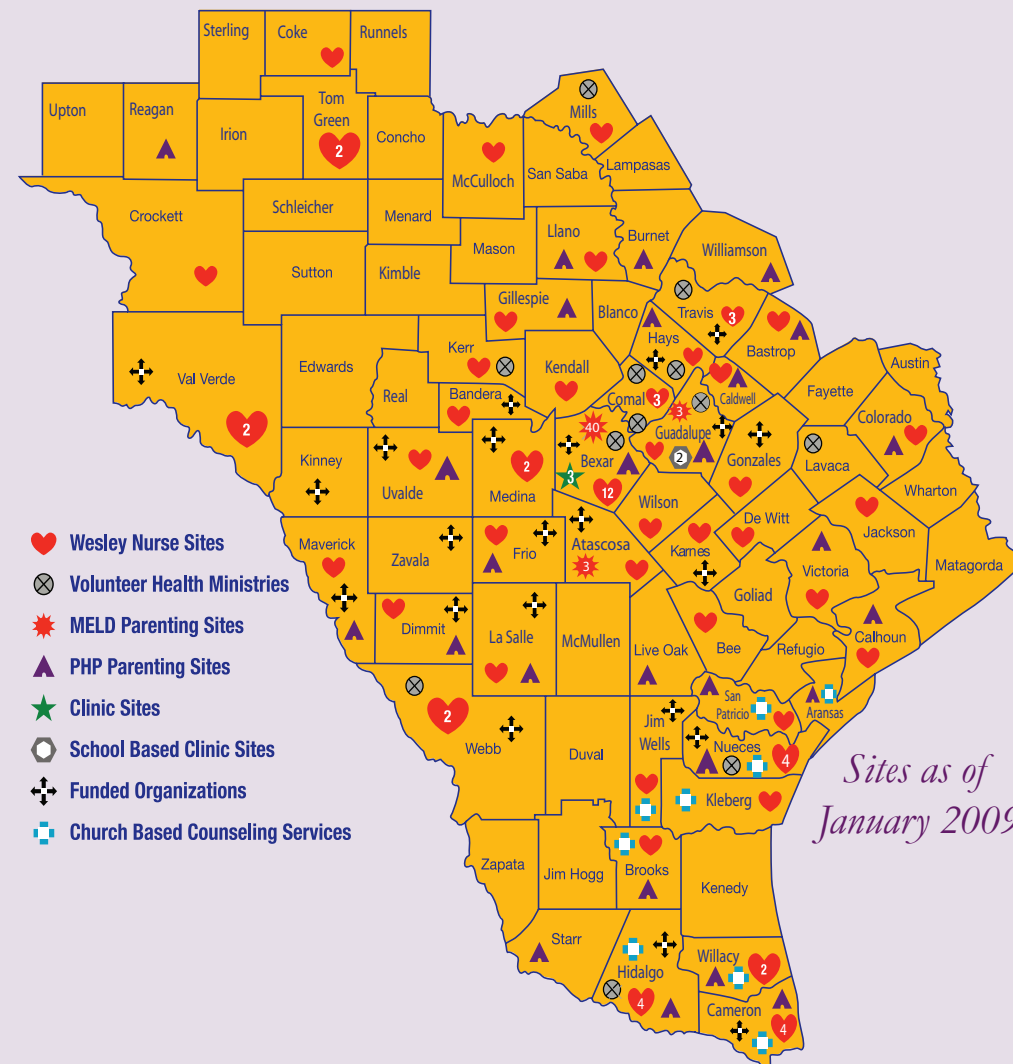


## About Methodist Healthcare Ministries

Methodist Healthcare Ministries (MHM) is a private, faith-based, nonprofit organization dedicated to providing medical and health-related human services to low-income families and the uninsured in South Texas. The mission of the organization is *"Serving Humanity to Honor God,"* by improving the physical, mental and spiritual health of those least served in the Southwest Texas Conference area of The United Methodist Church.

Since its inception, MHM has provided over \$203 million in health-care services through its clinics and programs as well as through partnerships, and has the unique distinction of being the largest private funding source for community health care to the indigent and uninsured in San Antonio and South Texas. In 2008, MHM provided over \$18 million in funding through its partnerships in Bexar County and South Texas.

### *Programs/Partnerships of Methodist Healthcare Ministries*



President & CEO  
Kevin C. Moriarty

Executive Directors  
Pilar Oates  
and  
Joe Babb

### Legislative Policy Contacts:

Miryam Bujanda, (210) 949-1834 or [mbujanda@mhmm.org](mailto:mbujanda@mhmm.org)  
Mary Louise Lopez, (210) 253-3253 or [mary.lopez@mhmm.org](mailto:mary.lopez@mhmm.org)  
Edward Codina, Ph.D., (210) 614-4712 or [ecodina@mhmm.org](mailto:ecodina@mhmm.org)

4507 Medical Drive  
San Antonio, TX 78229

(800) 959-6673 • Local (210) 692-0234 • Fax (210) 546-0989

[www.mhm.org](http://www.mhm.org)

## Legislative Agenda

# 2009

*"Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in  
all the ways you can, in all the places you can..."*



*at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as  
long as ever as you can."*

*~John Wesley, Founder of Methodism*



Public Policy & Advocacy

Mission

As a part of our mission to improve the health of those least served in South Texas, MHM works with similarly-focused organizations and state government in developing more socially conscious public policy. The purpose is to change legislative perspectives and policies so that the root of the problems of the underserved are addressed for the long-term resulting in a healthy and educated workforce in Texas.

Goals

MHM’s advocacy efforts aim to achieve the following goals:

- Increase the public’s understanding of how health policies impact their communities.
- Strengthen and cultivate relationships with other groups concerned with health policy.
- Advocate for policies that enhance the health and well-being of families and their communities.

Objectives

MHM’s public policy and advocacy efforts at the state level encompass the following objectives:

- Increase the percent of insured Texans.
- Increase state efforts at addressing prevention of chronic illnesses, particularly obesity and diabetes.
- Improve access to youth mental health services.
- Promote state policies that increase the health care workforce for the least served.

MHM also promotes policies that support accessibility and affordability of health care at the county level.

This document highlights MHM’s top priorities for the 81<sup>st</sup> Texas Legislature. Examples of other issues MHM supports are:

- Improving access to oral health treatment, mental health services, and health care for immigrants.
- Improving Texas’ immunization rate.
- Helping low-income women access breast and cervical cancer treatment.
- Reducing institutional barriers for non-custodial parents and kinship caregivers.

Access to Health Care • Access to Health Care • Access to Health Care

Uninsured

Approximately 80% of uninsured adults are in working households. Texas has the highest rate of uninsured children (21%) and adults (25%) in the nation. As a last resort, the uninsured seek healthcare in emergency rooms. These costs are shifted to the county and the insured. In 2005, Texas families spent an extra \$1,551 in health insurance premiums to cover the unpaid health care bills of the uninsured. In order to address the high rate of uninsured, solutions must be found within the public and private sectors.

Policy Recommendations:

- Restore funding for the Medically Needy Program for counties.
- Support innovative local efforts that address the uninsured population.

Small Business

Many of the uninsured work for small businesses with fewer than 50 employees. Small businesses often pay more for health premiums due to lack of regulation, and only 37% offer a health insurance plan to employees. Of these, about one in three actually enroll.

Policy Recommendations:

- Improve affordability in the small group health insurance market by narrowing rate bands and reducing wide disparities in coverage rates.
- Create tax credits and other incentives for small businesses to provide healthcare plans to their employees.

Uninsured Children

Of the 1.5 million uninsured children, over half are eligible for the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) or Medicaid, but are not enrolled due to lack of funding, limited outreach and barriers to access.

For each dollar Texas invests in CHIP and Medicaid, the federal dollar ‘return’ is \$2.52 and \$1.54 respectively. Texas has forfeited close to \$1 billion in federal funding for CHIP since the program’s inception.

Policy Recommendations:

- Increase funding to enroll all eligible CHIP and Medicaid children.
- Increase reimbursement for CHIP and Medicaid health providers.
- Increase Medicaid coverage to 12 months.
- Improve outreach and eliminate barriers to access.

Youth Mental Health

There are 1.2 million children in Texas who have a diagnosable form of mental illness and who are eligible for public mental health services. Texas only serves about 25% of those children. Lack of access to mental health services prevents adequate response to adolescent suicides, behavioral disorders, substance abuse and problems in school—including truancy. These require more of the state’s resources.

Policy Recommendations:

- Establish a system enabling agencies serving children to share records in an effort to increase efficiency and effectiveness.
- Expand funding for preventive youth mental health services.

Health Care Workforce

Of Texas’ 254 counties, 70% are designated as Medically Underserved Areas (MUA) and another 17% have partial designations. The supply of dentists, physicians and other healthcare workers is insufficient.

More importantly, Texas faces an unprecedented nursing shortage which will leave Texas lacking 71,000 full-time nurses by 2020.

Policy Recommendations:

- Provide incentives to attract more health care providers to MUA’s.
- Support effective pipeline programs that advance health care professions.
- Support diversity in the health care workforce.

Prevention of Chronic Illnesses

Obesity, Diabetes & Chronic Illnesses

Nearly two-thirds of Texas adults are overweight or obese, and problems related to obesity cost Texas businesses \$3.3 billion. Projections show increasing obesity in Texas in the coming decades, with costs to businesses rising to \$15.6 billion by 2010. Diabetes is also pervasive in Texas, with 2.25 million individuals affected. We could save millions in health care spending if Texas were to invest in proven community-based prevention programs to increase physical activity and improve nutrition to enhance the health of Texans.

Policy Recommendations:

- Strengthen the coordinated school health programs by improving oversight and funding.
- Support Texas school districts and the Texas Department of Agriculture in health nutrition policies.
- Invest in campaigns, programs and policies aimed at prevention of chronic illness.