



# HEALTH CENTERS AND THE MEDICALLY UNDERSERVED: BUILDING A RESEARCH AGENDA 2005 MEETING DESCRIPTION

In May 2004, the National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC), the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) cosponsored the first ever meeting of community health center researchers. This informally structured meeting fostered a collaborative dialogue among participants, honed and strengthened existing ideas, concepts, hypotheses, and sparked new ideas for research on the medically underserved, access to care, quality of care in a primary care setting, and other relevant topics. Nearly 50 people attended, and participants left the meeting enthusiastic for follow-up. Proceedings can be found online at [www.nachc.com/research](http://www.nachc.com/research). Given the success of last year's meeting, NACHC, HRSA, and AHRQ are collaborating to organize a second, day-long meeting for December 2, 2005.

## **2005 Meeting Goal and Objectives**

The main intention of this meeting is to establish consensus around research priorities on health centers for the next five to ten years. This goal collectively builds the body of evidence regarding health centers. The meeting therefore aims to produce a detailed research agenda for health centers and the medically underserved. In accordance with this goal, meeting objectives include:

1. Prioritizing research and describing the steps needed to achieve the research agenda;
2. Engaging more health centers in research endeavors; and
3. Engaging more researchers in health center-related research.

## **Meeting Participants**

Participation will include health center researchers (generally, those who have conducted extensive research and/or those interested in engaging in future research on health centers), NACHC, federal partners (e.g., HRSA, AHRQ, CMS, and others), foundations, and health centers. In order to build consensus around a prioritized research agenda and engage health centers in research opportunities, health centers must be especially well-represented.

## **Meeting Structure**

The meeting will be structured around commissioned papers that will summarize available literature and will drive the discussion on research needs. The meeting will begin with three panels that discuss and react to each paper, followed by a facilitated dialogue that prioritizes research and establishes a consensus-supported research agenda. The meeting will conclude with a discussion that engages meeting participants in planning a thoughtful and action-oriented dissemination process.

Three commissioned papers are proposed, covering health center quality improvement, the role of information technology in improving quality and safety at health centers, and health center cost effectiveness and value. Each paper will summarize what is known on the particular topic, suggest further research that should be prioritized and how to undertake it, describe barriers to accomplishing additional research, and lay out future concerns. In order to stimulate dialogue around research priorities within these major topic areas, panelists will prepare in advance brief reaction papers suggesting what needs to be done to enhance research.