

## September 11, 2001

# A Call to Help

For New York City and the metropolitan region, the September 11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center took a devastating human and financial toll. Shortly after the attacks, the Fund's Board of Directors allocated \$300,000 to aid disaster recovery and preparedness in New York City. Part of the allocation was set aside for staff members to designate an appropriate charity or relief organization to receive a donation of \$500. The remaining allocation is being used for projects to be undertaken by health care organizations addressing short- and long-term needs.

One area of immediate need was the city's community health centers. After consultation with the Primary Care Development Corporation, a Fund grantee, an initial grant of \$50,000 was awarded to the Betances Health Center on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Betances is located about one mile from the World Trade Center site and serves a multiethnic population. After the attacks, the center experienced a sharp drop in patient volume and incurred expenses from loss of phone service and other problems. The grant has enabled Betances to hire two outreach workers to promote the center's services and to encourage participation in Disaster Relief Medicaid.

Another area of need is mental health. The terrorist attacks produced significant psychological distress among the city's residents, with widely reported increases in the incidence of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety. The Fund awarded a grant to the New York Academy of Medicine to conduct a follow-up survey of a cross-section of New Yorkers to assess the prevalence of these disorders and to gain valuable information about expected service needs.

The Fund is also considering other options for future support:

*Health preparedness.* The September 11 attacks demonstrated the importance of a health care system prepared to respond to a large-scale emergency. Lessons drawn from September 11 responses could assist in future preparedness efforts.

*International collaboration.* At the Fund's 2001 International Symposium, U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy G. Thompson called on the leading industrialized nations to collaborate on major issues such as bioterrorism — a challenge the Fund could help to address.

*Preserving health coverage.* Loss of jobs and other economic effects have almost certainly increased the number of uninsured city residents. Funding could support programs to assist displaced workers in ensuring coverage for themselves and their families in the months ahead.

In the coming year, the Fund will continue to look for ways to respond to new health care challenges arising from the September attacks.