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PRESS RELEASE

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MHN Applauds President Obama Efforts to Improve the Situation for Boys and Young Men of Color

'My Brother's Keeper' Initiative

(Washington, DC) – Men's Health Network (MHN) is pleased with President Barak Obama's recent announcement of ['My Brother's Keeper' Initiative](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/02/27/fact-sheet-opportunity-all-president-obama-launches-my-brother-s-keeper) (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/02/27/fact-sheet-opportunity-all-president-obama-launches-my-brother-s-keeper>), a new initiative to help every boy and young man of color who is willing to do the hard work to get ahead.

"This is an important first step in acknowledging the needs of this extremely neglected and underserved population," said Jean J. E. Bonhomme, MD, MPH, member of MHN Board of Directors and National Black Men's Health Network founder. **"Young men of color face staggering odds of ending up in prison, being victims of homicide, becoming educational failures or facing premature death from a number of causes. This effort will enrich all of society by fostering an environment conducive to developing the vast talents of this population, a potential that has been lost so far due to their unmet needs."**

Data shows that boys and young men of color, regardless of socio-economic background, are disproportionately at risk throughout the journey from their youngest years to college and career. According to the White House website, large disparities remain in reading proficiency, with 86 percent of black boys and 82 percent of Hispanic boys reading below proficiency levels by the fourth grade and 58 percent of white boys reading below proficiency levels.

"Young men of all backgrounds are struggling when it comes to education, dealing with peer pressure and finding their place in the economy," said Brandon Leonard, Director of Strategic Initiatives, MHN. **"Too often we see these factors playing a negative role on their health as well. We support the President's initiative to leverage opportunities across all sectors that will lead to better outcomes for America's young men."**

Concomitantly, President Obama will sign a Presidential Memorandum establishing the *My Brother's Keeper Task Force*, an interagency effort, chaired by Assistant to the

President and Cabinet Secretary Broderick Johnson, that will help us determine what public and private efforts are working and how to expand upon them, how the Federal Government's own policies and programs can better support these efforts, and how to better involve State and local officials, the private sector, and the philanthropic community in these efforts.

For the past two years, the Dialogue on Men's Health (<http://www.menshealthnetwork.org/library/Dialogue1.pdf>) (<http://www.menshealthnetwork.org/library/Dialogue2summary.pdf>), an initiative organized by MHN in Washington, DC, has been engaged in a continuous series of discussions with key thought leaders about the challenges of improving the health and wellbeing of men, boys, and their families, especially those that face unique challenges due to poverty or circumstance of birth.

“My Brother’s Keeper’ initiative is a much needed effort for the nation's struggling youth,” said Leo J. Nolan III, an enrolled member of the St. Regis Mohawk tribe, who spent 25 years working at IHS HQ and served as Senior Policy Analyst for External Affairs for the last 12 years, and member of the Dialogue on Men’s Health series of discussions. **“We hope that the initiative extends to all struggling and under-provided young men, including the American Indian/Alaska Native population, among whom suicide and poverty rates are staggering.”**

[Men's Health Network](http://www.menshealthnetwork.org) (MHN) is a national non-profit organization whose mission is to reach men, boys, and their families where they live, work, play, and pray with health prevention messages and tools, screening programs, educational materials, advocacy opportunities, and patient navigation. Learn more about MHN at www.menshealthnetwork.org and follow us on Twitter @MensHlthNetwork and [facebook.com/menshealthnetwork](https://www.facebook.com/menshealthnetwork)

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