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## **Open Society Institute awards grants to 10 Baltimore groups**

### **\$2.6 million from Soros fund to help most vulnerable amid recession**

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Ten Baltimore organizations have received \$2.6 million in matching grants from philanthropist George Soros to fund programs intended to ease escalating needs amid the economic downturn, the Open Society Institute's city chapter announced.

Soros created the Special Fund for Poverty Alleviation to help people particularly affected by the dismal financial climate. He allocated a total of \$5 million for OSI's Baltimore office, the remainder of which will be distributed in 2010.

"In this particular time with the economic recession, some populations that are most vulnerable have been very hard hit," said Diana Morris, OSI-Baltimore's director. "This fills some holes in the safety net and gives people a leg up when they need it most."

Baltimore Health Care Access will use its \$368,000 grant to pay for identification documents for its homeless clients so they can apply for public medical assistance and addiction treatment. The grant will also provide emergency dental vouchers in Baltimore, where residents have little access to free dental care.

The Family League of Baltimore will use its \$1 million grant, the largest awarded, to create 200 jobs for young people, including teaching farm skills at Great Start Farm, run by the city school system, to 50 teens leaving foster care, according to OSI.

With a \$400,000 grant, the Fund for Educational Excellence will hire workers trained to resolve conflicts and to address teaching-climate issues as they arise in city schools, said Lisa Wright, the fund's president and chief executive. The approach was tested in four schools last year, and the grant will allow the program to expand.

"When kids are disconnected in schools or disengaged, trouble starts," she said. "It's just a real opportunity for us to continue this innovative approach across more schools."