

AMCHP Compendium on Infant Mortality

Forging a Comprehensive Initiative to Improve Birth Outcomes and Reduce Infant Mortality: Policy and Program Options for State Planning

Infant Mortality in the United States

The United States currently ranks 30th in infant mortality rates among all industrialized nations and disparities persist. Infant mortality among African American infants is double the rates of white infants. Despite decades of work to expand coverage and early access to prenatal care the preterm birth rate remains high. According to the Institute of Medicine preterm birth costs our nation an estimated \$26 billion per year.

Research shows that prenatal care may not be enough to improve the health of women and children. A comprehensive approach to improving birth outcomes and reducing infant mortality follows a life course approach, acknowledging and accounting for the interplay of biological, behavioral, and other factors influencing a women's health before the course of their life.

Seven Recommendations for Improved Birth Outcomes

Since the passage of Title V of the Social Security Act, state and territorial maternal and child health programs have been striving to address the causes of poor birth outcomes throughout the United States. Recently, national initiatives have encouraged state and community partners to enhance or develop comprehensive approaches for improving birth outcomes, including setting target goals and introducing new regional initiatives. The Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs (AMCHP) analysis of state action plans and national reports on reducing infant mortality led to seven broad recommendations for building a comprehensive plan to improve birth outcomes. These recommendations are:

- 1) Improve health promotion efforts
- 2) Ensure quality of care for all women and infants
- 3) Improve maternal risk screening for all women of reproductive age
- 4) Enhance service integration for women and infants
- 5) Improve access to health care of women before, during and after pregnancy
- 6) Develop data systems to understand and inform efforts
- 7) Promote social equity

A new AMCHP resource, *Forging a Comprehensive Initiative to Improve Birth Outcomes and Reduce Infant Mortality: Policy and Program Options for State Planning*, explores each of these recommendations and provides specific action steps that state agencies and partners can take to improve birth outcomes. Each recommendation is supplemented with state level programs or policies.

The compendium also highlights the work of California, Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, Ohio and Texas. These states are making progress in improving birth outcomes and reducing infant mortality through a comprehensive approach.

The Role of the Title V Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant

The federal Title V Maternal and Child Health Services (MCH) Block Grant provides critical funds to states for programs and services to improve infant and child health outcomes and reducing infant and maternal mortality rates. The Title V MCH block grant also includes requirements for coordination between state Title V and Medicaid programs which further enhance and improve the health and well being of women, infants and children.



The full document is available on the AMCHP website for free download. Please visit: amchp.org/programsandtopics/womens-health/resources/Pages/AMCHP-Publications.aspx to access this resource.