



State-Local Teams Chosen to Participate in Partnership to Eliminate Disparities in Infant Mortality

Three leading maternal and child health organizations maintain their commitment to addressing disparities in infant mortality. With the mission of working to increase capacity at community, state and local levels to address the impact of racism on birth outcomes and infant health, the Partnership to Eliminate Disparities in Infant Mortality has announced the selection of five new state-local collaborative teams.

“The National Healthy Start Association (NHSA) is thrilled to continue this very important work with our colleagues at the Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs (AMCHP) and CityMatCH,” said Stacey Cunningham, MSW, MPH, Executive Director of the NHSA. “We recognize that we are only touching a few states through this project, however, you have to start somewhere if you are going to get to the root of racism and the significant impact it has on the health of our nation. This is our opportunity to effect change and improve birth outcomes in these communities.”

In 2008 CityMatCH, the Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs (AMCHP), and the National Healthy Start Association (NHSA) - with funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation - created the Partnership to Eliminate Disparities in Infant Mortality to address disparities in infant mortality. The purpose of this project is to eliminate racial inequities contributing to infant mortality within U.S. urban areas.

The first activity of the partnership was an eighteen-month long Action Learning Collaborative (ALC). Building upon the successes and lessons learned of the previous collaborative, the partnership determined there was more need for this important work and has engaged five new state-local teams. The following teams were selected through a competitive process to participate in the ALC:

- ◆ New Haven, Connecticut
- ◆ New Orleans, Louisiana
- ◆ Boston, Massachusetts
- ◆ Michigan (working with 6 metropolitan areas throughout the state)
- ◆ Fort Worth, Texas

While research documenting the impacts of stress and racism on birth outcomes is ever-increasing, there are few examples of effective practices to address such complex and interwoven issues. “This project emphasizes the development of innovative approaches to reducing racial inequities in infant mortality in urban communities, with particular attention paid to the impacts of racism,” stated Dr. Michael Fraser, CEO of AMCHP. “We know there are both biological and sociological factors that produce poor birth outcomes. This project is a chance to work with states and communities to link those factors and better understand how we can improve birth outcomes across the country.”

The belief is that the partnerships and common understanding gained through the collaborative experience provides a solid foundation for each participating team to be leaders in addressing racism in their community, well beyond the life of the ALC. Chad Abresch, MEd, Interim Executive Director of CityMatCH, shared, “This is a justice issue. The fact that some babies are more likely to die in their first year of life simply because of their race or ethnicity is unconscionable. This project is dedicated to righting those wrongs.”

Mr. Abresch continued, “I applaud the courage and dedication of the five communities who have joined us in this effort. It won’t be easy - working for justice never is - but we will make progress together.”

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■ ■ **About CityMatCH**

CityMatCH, located at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, is dedicated to improving the health and well-being of urban women, children, and families by strengthening the public health organizations and leaders who serve them.



■ ■ **About AMCHP**

AMCHP represents state public health leaders promoting the health of America's families through support for state maternal and child health programs, including service for children and youth with special health care needs.



■ ■ **About NHSA**

The National Healthy Start Association's mission is to be our nation's voice in providing leadership and advocacy for health equity, services and interventions that improve birth outcomes and family wellbeing. As part of its mission, NHSA promotes the development of community-based maternal and child health programs, particularly those addressing the issues of infant mortality, low birthweight and racial disparities in perinatal outcomes, through community engagement and grassroots efforts.



Press Release: 8/31/2011

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