

Addressing Infant Mortality in DC ***Citywide Action Plan***



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GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Office of the Director

Addressing Infant Mortality in DC: Citywide Action Plan

The District's most recent epidemiological report for infant mortality revealed slight changes in infant deaths from 1996 to 2005. In response to this steady trend, the Department of Health (DOH) has developed a citywide action plan to respond to the maternal and child health needs in the District and reduce infant mortality rates throughout the city.

A service gap analysis conducted by the DOH identified potential holes in the safety net of services for residents of the District. DOH will focus on three strategies for improvement over the course of the next year, some of which are already in operation:

I. Increase capacity and impact of DOH home visitation program for pregnant women

The federally funded Healthy Start programs constitute the city's primary initiative serving low-income expectant mothers and infants at risk for adverse perinatal health outcomes. These home visitation programs administered by DOH and by Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Care, Inc. promote a healthier physical and social environment in the home and link families to needed care. In 2008, additional funds will be used to expand the capacity of the Healthy Start program, including an investment to recruit and train family support workers who will team up with nurse case managers to address major risk factors affecting the health of pregnant and parenting women and their children.

Service or Initiative	Participating Agencies	Timeline
Increase oversight and effectiveness of the Healthy Start program's nurse case management component through the establishment of the Bureau of Perinatal Infant Health.	Community Health Administration (CHA)	May 2007
Recruit, train and deploy new Family Support Workers under the Healthy Start program to provide complementary support services that address psycho-social risk factors affecting pregnant and parenting women and their children.	Community Health Administration (CHA)	January 2008
Design and implement a public information campaign educating women, including those who are not yet pregnant, and their families about the critical role of comprehensive pre-conception and prenatal care in ensuring a healthy pregnancy, birth, and infancy.	Community Health Administration (DOH)	March 2008
Facilitate the distribution of 15,000 to 18,000 free cribs over the next seven years to low-income mothers to prevent Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), thanks to an \$11 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to First Candle.	DOH and First Candle National Crib Campaign	March 2008

II. Enhance collaboration between DOH Community Health Administration's initiatives and other sectors of government serving at-risk women and families

The Community Health Administration will partner with sister administrations within DOH and other government agencies to ensure that screening and identification of at-risk families is widespread to increase enrollment in prenatal care and home visitation programs. Specifically, Healthy Start's nurse case managers and family support workers will link high-risk women to needed care provided by sister agencies, including tobacco cessation, substance abuse treatment, HIV screening and care, and other services.

Service or Initiative	Participating Agencies	Timeline
Increase early identification of pregnancy and ensure timely enrollment in prenatal care for all women of child-bearing age under Medicaid and the DC HealthCare Alliance.	DOH and participating managed care organizations (MCO)	January 2008
Increase well-child pediatric visits throughout the first year of life for all newborns on Medicaid, in particular, the first two visits at 48 hours and 1 month post-discharge.	DOH and participating managed care organizations (MCO)	January 2008
Implement routine prenatal HIV testing and treatment that prevents perinatal HIV transmission to the infant.	DOH HIV-AIDS Administration (HAA)	January 2008
Enhance linkage to substance abuse education and treatment services.	DOH Addiction Prevention and Recovery administration (APRA)	February 2008
Enhance community-based screening and prevention services for at risk families and youth served by child protective service agency.	DOH and Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA)	February 2008
Facilitate outreach and linkages to care for homeless pregnant women.	DOH and Department of Human Services (DHS)	March 2008
Improve screening practices for all women and youth at risk for mental illness.	DOH and Department of Mental Health (DMH)	March 2008
Provide adequate prenatal care for pregnant inmates during incarceration.	DOH and the Department of Corrections (DOC)	March 2008

III. Increase coordination between government and the community to ensure a comprehensive, citywide approach to reducing infant mortality.

The District will strengthen its partnership with healthcare providers, community-based organizations, and patient advocacy groups to identify opportunities for collaboration and mutual support in the effort to prevent mortality, lifelong disabling conditions, and other threats to infant health.

Service or Initiative	Participating Agencies	Timeline
Institutionalize and expand pilot program to improve discharge planning and linkage to appropriate medical and social services for women admitted to birthing hospitals with inadequate prenatal care and at risk for domestic violence, substance abuse or other factors that negatively affect infant development.	DOH and Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Care, Inc.	December 2007
Facilitate linkage to tobacco cessation programs for all at-risk mothers.	DOH and American Lung Association-DC	January 2008
Compile perinatal screening risk information into a perinatal data registry in order to increase utilization of risk data by clinicians and case managers caring for all newborns and their mothers.	DOH and prenatal clinics, community obstetricians and pediatricians, birthing hospitals and other health care providers	July 2008
Convene a year-long advisory group comprised of experts and stakeholders in perinatal and infant health to identify and compile best practices based on existing data regarding infant mortality and perinatal outcome disparities.	DOH and National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), health care providers, managed care companies, and community-based organizations.	March 2008
Commission a comprehensive study of factors associated with infant death and developmental disability for Medicaid beneficiaries in the District of Columbia and identify novel population-based preventive activities and individual health care interventions that will reduce infant mortality	DOH and the George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services	December 2008