

Whole Child Leon Healthy Infant Coalition, Community Report: June 2010



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Acknowledgement

The accomplishments described in this report are a direct result of dedicated and collaborative efforts among the following organizations, which, collectively, comprise the Whole Child Leon Healthy Infant Coalition:

Agency for Health Care Administration	Kids Incorporated
Best Beginning	Leon County Board of County Commissioners
Big Bend Health (BBRHIO)	Leon County Health Department
Bond Community Health Center	Leon County Healthcare Advisory Board
Brehon Institute for Family Services - Healthy Families Leon	Leon County Housing Department
Capital Area Community Action Agency	Leon County Schools
Capital Area Healthy Start Coalition	Leon County School Board
Capital Health Plan	March of Dimes Foundation - Florida Chapter
Capital Medical Society	Neighborhood Health Services
Catholic Charities	Office of Health Statistics and Assessment, Florida Department of Health
Children's Home Society	Office of Minority Health, Florida Department of Health
Capital Area Breastfeeding Coalition	Project Moses
Capital Area Infant Mental Health	Representative Alan Williams
Children's Medical Services, Florida Department of Health	Representative Michelle Rehwinkel Vasilinda
Diagnostic and Learning Resource Systems	Senator Al Lawson
City of Tallahassee, Housing Department	Tallahassee Democrat
Department of Children and Families	Tallahassee Equality Action Ministry (TEAM)
Department of Education	Tallahassee Junior League
Division of Family Health Services, Florida Department of Health	Tallahassee Lenders Consortium
Early Head Start	Tallahassee Pediatric Foundation
Early Learning Center	Tallahassee Memorial Hospital
Family Health Services, Florida Department of Health	The Birth Cottage
Florida A&M University (FAMU), Institute of Public Health	True Blue Doulas
Florida A&M University, Community Health Alliance	United Way of the Big Bend
Florida Dental Association	Whole Child Leon
Florida State University (FSU)	Whole Child Florida
Healthcare Advisory Board (HAB)	University of Florida
	University of South Florida, Lawton and Rhea Chiles Center for Healthy Mothers and Babies
	WFSU

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The World Health Organization considers infant mortality to be one of the primary measures of the health of a nation, state, or community. Florida's infant mortality rate ranks 31st among the states; Leon County's 2008 infant mortality rate was over one point greater than Florida's (8.3 per 1,000 live births compared to 7.2 respectively). The mortality rate for Black infants in Leon County was 11.3, more than twice the rate for White infants (4.3).

Low birth weight and prematurity are primary predictors of infant mortality and of increased risk of life-long health problems. In 2008, 312 infants in Leon County were born below normal birth weight. More than half of these newborns (175) were Black. As with infant mortality, Leon County's percentage of low birth weight births (9.6%) is greater than the state as a whole (8.8%); the percentage of Black births that are low birth weight (13.2%) is almost twice as high as for White births (6.9%).

Despite the wide range of expertise applied to the problems of low birth weight and infant mortality, Florida has experienced almost no positive change in the statewide infant mortality and low birth weight rates since 1996. However, low birth weights and infant mortality are not inevitable; for the most part, they do not need to happen.

The Whole Child Leon Healthy Infant Coalition is comprised of service agencies and organizations, medical and dental providers, advocacy groups, academicians, interested citizens, and local and state policy makers who are dedicated to working together to make sure that Leon County has a comprehensive approach to achieving healthy birth and infant outcomes. To date, more than 200 individuals representing 50 organizations have developed nearly 60 strategies to improve these outcomes.

These strategies are based on a comprehensive perinatal care framework developed by the Lawton and Rhea Chiles Center for Healthy Mothers and Babies of the University of South Florida and adopted by the Whole Child Leon Healthy Infant Coalition in 2009. This framework has four critical components to create an optimal perinatal health system:

- 1. Service delivery practices that exhibit respect, empathy and compassion for women and families.**
- 2. Health education for women and men of reproductive age by involving institutions that influence cultural norms and behavior such as schools, churches, social clubs, civic organizations and popular media.**

3. Comprehensive, holistic primary and prenatal care which includes medical care plus attention to economic, social, cultural, emotional, behavioral, and nutritional conditions that influence the health of the mother before, during, and after pregnancy.

4. Comprehensive screening and health insurance for all children and all women of reproductive age utilizing all available options within the federal Medicaid program.

This report summarizes the Coalition's progress on its priority strategies between May 2009 and May 2010. In some instances, these accomplishments were the work of a collective group of the coalition, and, in other instances, specific agency partners worked within their state and federal funding mandates to realize these outcomes. Throughout this report are examples of how participating organizations have improved conditions for women and infants. These are meant only as representative examples of many efforts, all of which could not be included in the report. A detailed report of all Coalition activity is available upon request.

Component 1. Service delivery practices that exhibit respect, empathy and compassion for women and families.

- Providing easy access to services is one way to promote respect, empathy and compassion. Forty-two Leon County Schools and seven locations in the Leon County Parks and Recreation System participated in the Access Florida Community Partner Network allowing low income families at 75 locations throughout the county to apply for food stamps. In addition, the Department of Children and Families facilitated applications for food stamps and medical insurance during 20 community events such as back-to-school programs, parades, festivals, health fairs, and faith-based gatherings. As of March 2010, nearly 13,000 Leon County children were receiving food stamps.
- A work team is collaborating with the Florida Department of Health, Office of Minority Health, to modify existing cultural competency training modules to educate different types of service providers who interact with women and children.
- The United Way of the Big Bend has implemented a new maternity and paternity leave policy that offers up to 12 weeks of leave including 2 weeks of paid leave for new fathers and four weeks of paid leave for new mothers.
- From mid-October 2009 through December 2009, 86 homeless women between 18 and 55 received services through the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing grant funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- The United Way of the Big Bend deployed community volunteers to provide assistance to 2,980 individuals and families resulting in \$908,667 in Earned Income Tax Credit refunds and provide financial education for 134 local residents between July 1, 2009 and April 30, 2010.
- To facilitate access to needed services, local providers often leverage additional funding from local and philanthropic sources. One example of such effort is that the Capital Area Healthy Start Coalition leveraged \$175,782 in local matching funds, increasing services for mothers and babies by 22%.

- A workgroup of obstetric and pediatric providers was formed under the auspices of the Capital Area Healthy Start Coalition to help integrate specific practices as recommended by the local infant mortality review team and address system of care issues.
- To promote a “no-wrong-door” culture among service providers, a new on-line tool, the Whole Child Connection, was developed to help families identify their needs and link them with service providers who can help. Eighteen human service agencies have agreed to serve as Whole Child providers with at least one trained whole child advisor on their staff.
- Two community Diaper Drives collected nearly 20,000 diapers for Healthy Start families.

Component 2. Health education for women and men of reproductive age by involving institutions that influence cultural norms and behavior such as schools, churches, social clubs, civic organizations and popular media.

- Much progress has been made towards improving family planning, reproductive health, and parenting education in the Leon County Schools.
 - Recommendations for curriculum changes were made to school administrators based on a thorough review of all elementary, middle, and high school curricula.
 - The Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent are supportive of appropriate curriculum changes.
 - A new health curriculum has been developed. It will be implemented and assessed using a standard evaluation tool developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Children’s Medical Services held four parenting classes using the *Parenting Tools for Positive Behavior Change* curriculum.
- The FAMU Institute of Public Health has been asked to participate in a pilot testing of "A Healthy Baby Begins With You, Preconception Peer Educators (PPE) Program." Aimed at the college-age population, the PPE Program enlists and trains college students as peer educators. The peer educators help disseminate essential preconception health messages to those who may not be actively seeking to start a family. Students from four universities will receive training as peer counselors in July 2010.
- The Whole Child Leon Healthy Infant Coalition has broadened community engagement through the active participation of an additional 175 community leaders in strategy implementation.
- Pregnancy Education Action Campaign Effort (PEACE), a partnership between North Florida Women’s Care and Tallahassee Memorial Hospital, has provided information about behavior choices associated with health before conception and free folic acid to Leon County women at healthcare events around the county.
- In September, 2009, as part of Infant Mortality Awareness Month, the Whole Child Leon Healthy Infant Coalition designed and distributed eye-catching refrigerator magnets to encourage residents to make decisions that will promote healthy birth outcomes.
- Twenty teen-aged girls are participating in STRONGER, a healthy teen girl’s program at Jack McLean Community Center, which focuses on building healthy self esteem, examining risky

relationships and behaviors, addressing nutrition, fitness, philanthropy and life skills. The Capital Area Healthy Start Coalition was instrumental in organizing this group.

- Capital Area Healthy Start Coalition has designed a new Health Education Curriculum: a 3-part series on nutrition and obesity focusing on the African American community and culture.
- Leon County residents are more aware of the impact of social and environmental conditions on health and health outcomes through the efforts of the Health Equity Alliance of Tallahassee (HEAT). This alliance engaged 14 community organizations to host screenings of *Unnatural Causes* allowing more than 250 residents to view and discuss the series.
- The Healthy Start Coalition has launched an on-line newsletter to disseminate critical health education information.
- The Healthy Start Coalition provided 21 health education classes for 160 participants and participated in 21 health fairs with 2,433 participants.

Component 3. A system that provides comprehensive, holistic primary and prenatal care which includes medical care plus attention to economic, social, cultural, emotional, behavioral, and nutritional conditions that influence the health of the mother before, during, and after pregnancy.

- To determine why some Black women obtain prenatal care later than White women, a survey has been developed and will be conducted at the Bond Community Health Clinic and at North Florida Women's Care. The results of the survey will guide future strategies to encourage earlier prenatal care.
- The effort to expand the number of medical and ancillary providers who accept KidCare and Medicaid reimbursement rates succeeded in recruiting 17 primary care and specialty care physicians, two dentists, and 37 ancillary providers and early childhood specialists.
- The provision of medical care for children with special healthcare needs and their families has been enhanced through an agreement with the Bond Community Health Center to provide a medical home, primary care for eligible pediatric and adult patients, health education including family planning, entitlement screening (Medicaid, medication assistance, family services, school support, etc.), risk management (smoking, teenage sex, drug use, problem homes, truancy, etc.), primary care to patients who are without health insurance coverage or who may lose coverage at age 19, services to eligible families on a sliding fee basis and, especially, to provide access to health services on weekends.
- This enhancement should increase involvement of women in ongoing primary healthcare and encourage early entry into prenatal care. Ultimately, this enhancement should reduce the number of hospital emergency room visits and possibly reduce the number of low birth weight and preterm births.
- The Florida Dental Association Foundation provided \$5,000 to be used for prophylactic care for 25 children under age 5.
- The Capital Area Healthy Start Health Education Network in collaboration with Children's Medical Services hosted training for local social service providers on the signs and symptoms of preterm labor.
- The Capital Area Healthy Start Coalition obtained funding from the Rotary Club to purchase over 1,000 Healthy Women kits, 400 of which have already been distributed. Kits, designed

to prevent periodontal disease, were distributed at health fairs and through community partners providing services to women. Each kit includes dental supplies, a healthy cooking cookbook, multivitamins, and vital healthy pregnancy information.

- The Florida Newborn Screening Program, in collaboration with the Agency for Health Care Administration and several professional medical organizations, facilitated on-line registrations of physicians to access newborn screening results through the program's new website.

Component 4. Comprehensive screening and health insurance for all children and all women of reproductive age utilizing all available options within the federal Medicaid program.

- Through collaboration between Whole Child Leon and the Leon County Schools, 375 children were newly enrolled in Medicaid or KidCare during fiscal year 2008-2009; 65 more were enrolled in fiscal year 2009-2010.
- During the 2010 Legislative session, bills were filed in both the House and the Senate by Representative Alan Williams and Senator Al Lawson to extend Medicaid benefits for two years for women whose pregnancies were covered by Medicaid and who had poor birth outcomes.
- Twenty nine collaborating partners engaged in two successful Community-Wide Early Childhood Developmental Screenings. 95% of children with a detectable delay received a referral for full assessment and intervention services as a result of participating in these screening fairs.

Summary:

Much has been accomplished in this first year of collaboration, and much remains to be done.

The Whole Child Leon Healthy Infant Coalition is still searching for members from the community to take action on the following strategies:

- Addressing transportation needs related to health care and health promotion
- Engaging the faith community in health promotion

You are invited to join us in eliminating the causes of adverse birth and infant outcomes by contacting Courtney Atkins at Whole Child Leon at Courtney@uwbb.org or 850-414-8344.



For more Information Contact:

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