The Impact of Social Determinants of Health on Feto-infant Mortality in Delaware County

Baby’s 1st Project conducted a Periodic Review of Risk (PPOR) study

PPOR is a data-to-action tool for studying racial disparities in fetal and infant mortality rates. PPOR helps communities identify and prevent risk factors contributing to disparities in birth outcomes through 3 phases. This study focuses on the social determinants of health associated with high rates of feto-infant mortality among black/African American women in Delaware County.

Analysis of vital records showed prominent risk factors among black women with very low birthweight babies vs. those with normal birthweight babies.

Key informant interviews spoke about similar risk factors, as well as those not captured in vital records. Improvements in several broad areas are needed to prevent very low birthweights.

We are taking action and need your help!

Using the PPOR findings, Baby’s 1st Project worked with diverse community stakeholders to develop a data-informed Strategic Plan. The plan includes 6 overarching goals:

1. Strengthen baby’s 1st project
2. Bolster case manager-based support
3. Improve health care & social service delivery & access
4. Develop programs for targeted populations
5. Build provider capacity
6. Improve access to quality screening

Baby’s 1st Project

Baby’s 1st Project is a cross-sector group of community partners working to reduce disparities in birth outcomes and to improve the feto-infant mortality rate in Delaware County. We do this by strengthening partnerships among maternal and child health organizations with Delaware County families during pregnancy through their child’s 5th birthday. The Periodic Review of Risk (PPOR) study informs Baby’s 1st.

Our Guiding Principles

• Racism and trauma are prominent stressors and determinants of health, including preterm birth.
• Chronic stress affects all aspects of the lives of women and families.
• Reproductive life planning is an essential aspect of women’s health.

The Data

Analysis was conducted using vital records data for all live births, infant deaths, and fetal deaths (N=33,752) in Delaware County between 2004 and 2012. Data was obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of Health, Bureau of Health Statistics & Registration.

Key informant interviews were conducted with local social service and health care organizations.

The PPOR framework was developed by CityMatCH with its partners.

Data analysis for the PPOR study was conducted by Public Health Management Corporation’s Research & Evaluation Group.

Preventing black babies from being born at very low birthweights will reduce the mortality disparity. Studying risk factors for very low birthweight helps focus efforts.

In Delaware County, the fetal and infant mortality rate is 2.5 times higher among black women compared to white women. The majority of this disparity occurs among babies weighing less than 1500 grams.

Analysis of vital records showed prominent risk factors among black women with very low birthweight babies vs. those with normal birthweight babies.

Of note, WIC participants have a lower rate of chronic conditions associated with low birthweight.

We spend so much time worrying about the clinical and medical and not enough on the social, spiritual and environmental side of things.

“Racism causes stress.

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