

Racial Disparities in Birth Outcomes

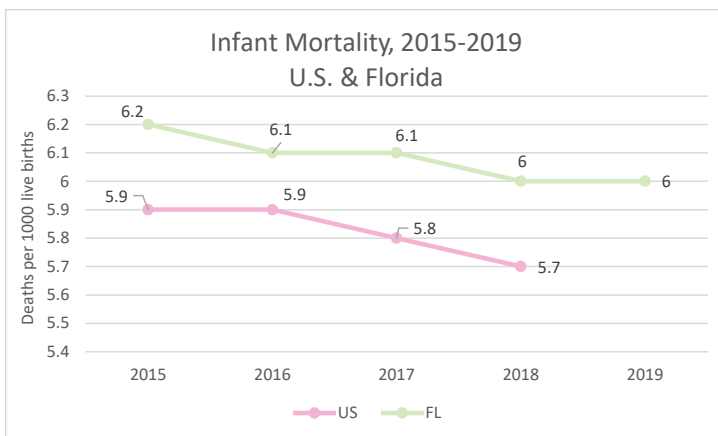
Florida

RACIAL DISPARITIES IN HEALTH

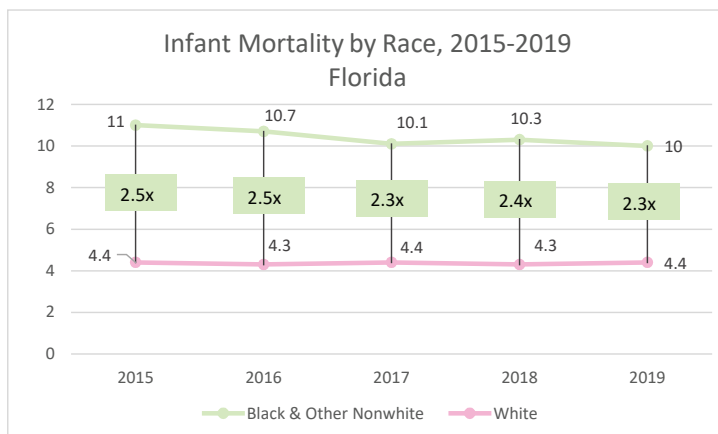
Health disparities are a particular type of health difference that is closely linked with social or economic disadvantage. Health disparities adversely affect groups of people who have systematically experienced greater social or economic obstacles to health based on their racial or ethnic group, religion, socioeconomic status, gender, mental health, cognitive, sensory, or physical disability, sexual orientation, geographic location, or other characteristics historically linked to discrimination or exclusion.” Source: Healthy People 2020 glossary for phase I report U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2008.

- Prematurity is a leading cause of infant deaths in Florida and across the country, and can lead to life-long health issues for infants that survive. There are also considerable racial disparities in premature birth –the preterm birth rate. In Florida, the preterm birth rate among black women is 52% higher than the rate among all other women.
- Infant Mortality: Infant mortality is the death of an infant prior to their first birthday. National and state level data have consistently demonstrated that Black infants are twice as likely to die in infancy in comparison to White

\$65,000
Average cost of premature baby
Source: March of Dimes



infants. Such a health disparity, or differing health outcome in a socially disadvantaged group, is concerning and should be addressed in order to ensure health and well-being of the population.

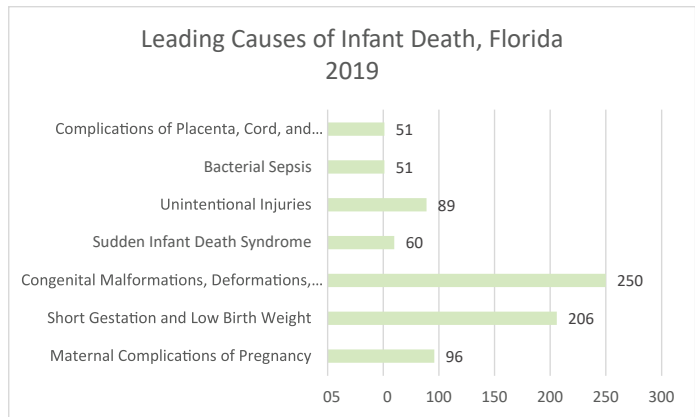


Solutions

- Address Social Determinants of Health
- Enhance Medicaid Services
- Improve Family Leave Policies
- Prioritize Housing for Pregnant Women
- Develop One-Stop Medical and Social Service Community Resources
- Support Infant Mortality Awareness Month

The most common causes of death cited by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are birth defects, preterm birth and low birth weight, maternal pregnancy complications, sudden infant death syndrome, and injuries.

The top five leading causes of infant death in Florida are consistent across race. Florida's Black infants were more likely to die due to gestation and low birth weight while White infants were more likely to die due to congenital malformations, deformations and chromosomal abnormalities (Florida Department of Health, 2019). Infant mortality rates are an indication of overall health.



SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

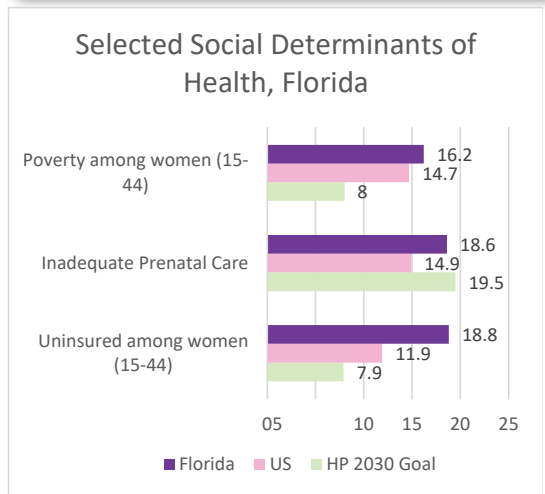
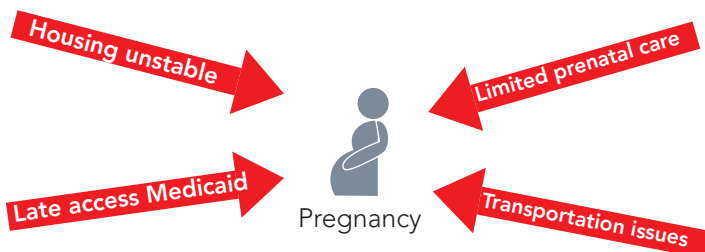
Social determinants of health (SDOH) are the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning and quality-of-life outcomes and risks.

Social determinants of health have a major impact on people's health, well-being and quality of life. They also contribute to wide health disparities and inequities.

For example, people who don't have access to preventive primary care prior to pregnancy are at higher risk of uncontrolled health conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and obesity — which can impact their pregnancy and raise their risk of a poor birth outcome.

- Safe housing
- Transportation
- Neighborhoods Racism
- Discrimination
- Violence
- Education
- Job opportunities
- Income
- Access to nutritious foods
- Physical activity opportunities
- Polluted air and water
- Language and literacy skills

Social Determinants of Health Identified in Fetal & Infant Mortality Review Cases



Florida Association of Healthy Start Coalitions

Racial Disparities: Best Practices & Solutions

ENHANCED MEDICAID BENEFITS

According to Perinatal Periods of Risk research in Florida, the leading cause of fetal and infant mortality is due to the health of the mother before she gets pregnant. Enhancing Medicaid coverage to 12 months postpartum will provide mothers access to medical care to address chronic health conditions prior to their next pregnancy. While more must be done, enhanced Medicaid benefits are an important means of addressing persistent racial disparities in maternal health and maternal mortality.

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

To address the social determinants of health, health policymakers should invest in community programs that offer one-stop comprehensive services to address their medical and social needs. Families looking for additional support face a fragmented system and can experience challenges like having to take time off work, arrange for child care (or bringing children to appointments) and secure transportation—often with no guarantee that, in the end, they will receive the necessary supports. In Washington, D.C., Mary's Center provides families with services such as family-centered health care through Medicaid and early education in a single location. In Tulsa, Oklahoma, Union Public Schools operates a community model that connects students and their families with nutrition assistance and operates full-service medical clinics on site. Research shows that this community-based, one-stop approach can promote healthy behaviors and reduce negative outcomes associated with maternal and infant mortality. One study showed that although Black women continued to experience higher rates of preterm birth compared to white women, community health centers nearly cut the disparity in half. Based on a recent Fetal & Infant Mortality Review conducted in Jacksonville, FL, one of the recommendations was to establish a medical home, one-stop-shop hub. Currently, local stakeholders are in the process of exploring the development of the hub.

PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE

International analyses show with access to paid family leave, children experience better health outcomes and lower rates of mortality. The greatest impact is among mothers with lower levels of education, unmarried mothers, Latina and Black mothers. Black and Hispanic workers have less access to paid family and medical leave than their White counterparts. They are more likely to work in low-wage jobs that offer few or no employer-sponsored benefits, forcing many to return to work within weeks of giving birth. Being at home with a newborn helps parents build secure early attachments, while also allowing time to facilitate breastfeeding and attend well-child medical visits, which include immunizations important in reducing mortality and illness.

HOUSING

Insecure housing has been shown to be a significant predictor of lower birth weight in young mothers as a severe stressor during pregnancy. The Boston Public Health Commission and Boston Housing Authority developed a policy and program to ensure public housing slots for housing-insecure pregnant women. Healthy Start in Housing Program (HSiH) launched in 2011, prioritizing access to public housing for homeless and housing-insecure pregnant women who have medical risks associated with poor birth outcomes. Seventy-five slots are now dedicated to housing-insecure pregnant woman, who are provided with housing as well as intensive case management aimed at housing retention and participant engagement in services and interventions that contribute to achievement of identified goals. Evaluations of the Healthy Start in Housing Program found that program participants experienced reduced stress and depression and improved mental health outcomes. Housing security enables action on other social determinants. Once instability is addressed, the women are able to successfully take on other problems such as finding employment, going back to school, addressing chronic health problems, and other goals.

Sources: Perinatal Periods of Risk: <http://nefhealthystart.org/new-site/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Project-Impact-2019-3.pdf>, <https://www.zerotothree.org/document/1816> Social Determinants of Health: <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2019/05/02/469186/eliminating-racial-disparities-maternal-infant-mortality/> Paid Family & Medical Leave: <https://stateofbabies.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Maternal-and-Child-Health-Inequities-Emerge-Even-Before-Birth.pdf>, <https://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources/economic-justice/paid-leave/children-benefit-when-parents.pdf> Housing: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4338127/>, <https://healthequityguide.org/case-studies/boston-uses-public-housing-to-promote-healthy-birth-outcomes/>