

factsheet Putnam County Black Infant Health Initiative

Putnam County was one of eight Florida counties selected by The Black Infant Health Practice Initiative to participate in a project aimed at reducing black infant mortality. House Bill 1269 appropriated \$1 million to fund the project in urban and rural areas throughout Florida.

The Putnam County Black Infant Health Initiative was formed to determine factors associated with racial disparities in infant mortality, develop recommendations for improving health outcomes for black infants in Putnam County and implement community-based interventions and policies that address these racial disparities. The Putnam County Black Infant Health Initiative, Healthy Start of North Central Florida, WellFlorida and community partners in Putnam County worked together to raise community awareness, conduct focus groups and develop recommendations for finding solutions to high rates of infant mortality in Putnam County.

Key Project Recommendations

Form a community group dedicated to the examination of maternal and infant health and/or health disparities.

Continue to engage key black community stakeholders.

Increase communication and collaboration among community partners emphasizing the outlying areas of the county.

Develop and implement outreach activities targeting the black community utilizing the faith-based community, particularly in outlying areas, to increase knowledge and awareness of maternal and infant health issues.

Identify, develop, and/or modify interventions to address key issues including: reducing teen pregnancy, increasing social support, promoting positive role models and increasing male involvement.

For more information, contact **Julie Ackerman**, Program Director of Healthy Start of North Central Florida, at 352-313-6500 ext. 116.

Putnam County, with a population of nearly 75,000 residents, had the highest infant mortality rate (14.0) in the state for 2004-2006.

Blacks represent approximately 17% of the population, while experiencing nearly 50% of all infant deaths.

For every 1,000 black babies born in Putnam County, 27 will die before they are a year old. Black babies are 2.7 times more likely to die before their first birthday than white babies in Putnam County.

Infant mortality rates in Putnam County have fluctuated over the past 30 years, but have increased since 2000. The disparity gap between black and white infant deaths is widening. Blacks have significantly higher rates of fetal and infant mortality.

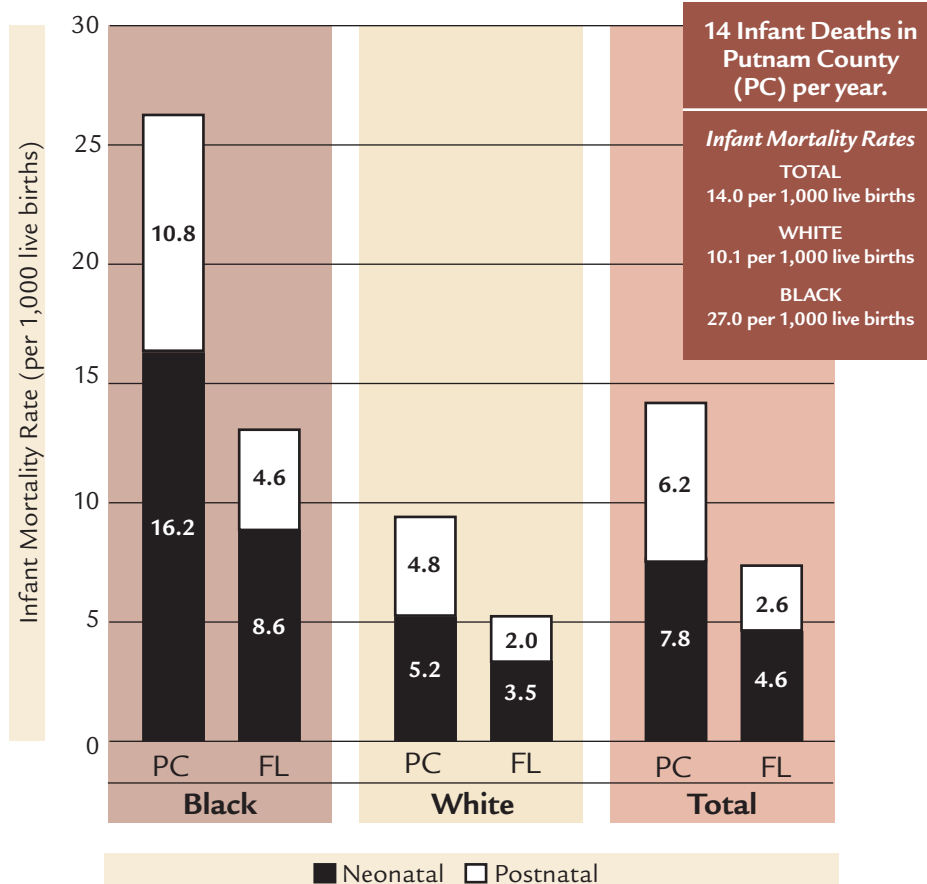
Why is this happening in Putnam County?

- Higher percentage of low and very low birth weight babies
- Higher percentage of pre-term and very pre-term babies
- A larger percentage of black mothers may have one or more of these high risk factors: less than adequate prenatal care, are under the age of 20, have less than a high school education, are not married, are overweight or obese, drink alcohol during pregnancy, have less time between pregnancies, and have twins or triplets.

Leading Causes of Death (2000-2006) for all races in Putnam County:

- 1 Perinatal Conditions (17)
- 2 SIDS (5)
- 3 Congenital Abnormalities (5)

Infant Mortality Rates for Putnam County and Florida, 2004-2006



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In an effort to raise awareness about infant mortality within the black community the Putnam County Black Infant Health Initiative implemented the following community engagement activities.

Celebrating Healthy Babies— A Healthy Baby Begins with You

The event was part of a national campaign to raise awareness about infant mortality with an emphasis on the African American community. This local event provided information, education and resources to promote healthy babies and healthy families in Putnam County.

Issue of the Month Campaign

A representative from each of the 50 black churches in Putnam County delivered a five minute presentation on issues impacting infant health in the County. Members of the congregation were provided with an informational brochure that included a list of resources.

Focus group Q&A:

Q: Health researchers who study infant health do not know exactly why black babies die more often than white babies. What are some reasons you think that this happens?

Access to Resources

“Money, that is the root of it. If you got the insurance you are probably going to get your baby to the doctor's office. If you got the job and you got the insurance you probably have the transportation.”

Ten focus groups, with nearly 90 community members, were conducted from April-June 2008 in West Putnam, South Putnam and Palatka to ensure geographic representation throughout Putnam County. Participants expressed a general lack of awareness of infant mortality and the racial disparity that exists, and shared a level of skepticism about the data. Family and social networks are considered important in obtaining health and pregnancy information, and the teen pregnancy rate is a significant concern. Participants identified behaviors associated with having a healthy pregnancy and healthy baby, but noted significant gaps in education and promotion of positive behaviors. Reasons identified as impacting poor health outcomes included: limited financial resources, inequity in the quality of health services, limited positive black role models, limited male involvement, lack of social support, and impact of chronic stress on mothers.

Focus Group Participants: 70% female 50% were over the age of 35 70% percent reported having children
Of the women who participated, over 66% reported ever being pregnant and the average number of children was 1.6.

Biggest Worries

“Sometimes the fathers ain't there. That takes stress to another level. I am dealing with that right now. My mom and dad gave me a lot of help. The father didn't want no more. He was upset. He said how are you going to give me another child. I said it takes two. I didn't do this by myself.”

Discrimination

“As a black man or a black women when you begin to try and educate yourself and try to get ahead there are stumbling blocks. There is always someone trying to hold you back, saying you don't deserve that.”

Q: What are some of the things that all mothers must have or all mothers must do in order to have a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby?

“If a female is in bad health all the bad things are going to be passed on. You basically have two people sharing the same house. If the house is messed up it is going to have an effect on everyone in there.”

“This is something as African Americans we don't necessarily believe in. Making all those

doctors appointments and talking all those vitamins. Making sure that you are taking care of your body.”

Q (Male groups only): As a man, what do you think your role is in helping the women of Putnam County have healthy babies?

“Be active and be there in the prenatal stages. I know I am working with young fathers. I found out, fathers, that prenatal stage is so important. The baby can hear your voice. The mother feel more love. That is going to transfer directly to the baby. It will take a lot of stress and load off of one parent.”

