Improving Birth Outcomes in Milwaukee

Among the Milwaukee LIHF Collaborative’s top recommendations is strengthening African American families by increasing father involvement.

**Description:** As part of the Lifecourse Initiative for Healthy Families (LIHF), community stakeholders in Milwaukee established a collaborative to enhance coordination in service delivery systems and work toward community change at environmental, policy and system levels. The collaborative developed a community action plan that reflects the community’s vision and strategies for improving healthy birth outcomes.

**Relevance:** An African American baby born in Milwaukee is almost three times more likely to die before his or her first birthday than a white infant. Addressing disparities in birth outcomes will lead to improvements in overall community health and well-being.

**Partnerships:** Nearly 400 citizens and community leaders participated in the Milwaukee LIHF Collaborative’s two-year planning process. Strong partnerships with the Women's Fund of Greater Milwaukee, Public Allies Milwaukee, the Black Health Coalition of Wisconsin and the Milwaukee Fatherhood Initiative helped attract involvement of local funders, women of reproductive age and fathers.

**Results:** Established in 2010, the Milwaukee LIHF Collaborative’s comprehensive planning process resulted in a community action plan to eliminate racial disparities in infant mortality. The plan’s key recommendations were to expand health care access for African American families over the lifecourse, strengthen African American families by increasing father involvement and reduce poverty among African American men and their families.

An African American Task Force provided guiding principles and vetted all recommendations. The People’s Institute was invited to Milwaukee to share strategies to promote understanding the role of power dynamics in community change work.

The Milwaukee community action plan is available at www.med.wisc.edu/LIHF.

**MILWAUKEE LIFECOURSE INITIATIVE FOR HEALTHY FAMILIES**

Community Partner: Kathleen Pritchard, Planning Council for Health and Human Services, Inc., kpritchard@planningcouncil.org

Award: $250,000 over two years