Community Grant Outcome Report

Name: The Milwaukee Birthing Project: Improving Birth Outcomes for Mothers and Children
Grantee: Milwaukee Birthing Project; InHealth, WI (Fiscal Agent)
Academic Partner: Sarah Esmond, MS, Collaborative Center for Health Equity, UW SMPH
Program: Implementation
Grant Duration: 01/01/2005 to 03/31/2008 (39 months)
Expenditures: $414,389 of $414,474 (100% expended)
Use of Funds: Implementation of national program model

Description: The Milwaukee Birthing Project (MBP) replicates the promising Birthing Project USA model. The African American maternal and child health program model encourages better birth outcomes by providing practical support to women during pregnancy and for one year after the birth of their children. The program matches pregnant women (Little Sisters) with community volunteers or Sister Friends. The Little Sister and Sister Friend collaboratively identify health and wellness priorities and are linked with community agencies and experts to meet those needs.

Results: The MBP implemented a practice-based model to increase social support, self-reliance, and confidence and reduce anxiety and stress of African-American mothers and pregnant women in Milwaukee. In total, 296 pregnant women were referred to the MBP over the course of the project, and 110 pregnant women were successfully enrolled and matched/paired with a Sister Friend. A total of 225 Sister Friends were recruited over the project period, and 97 were successfully paired with Little Sisters (several served multiple Little Sisters). Sister Friends reported improved ability of Little Sisters to identify, navigate, and manage health care and social services, as well as improved ability to self-manage, self-advocate, and take action.

MBP enrollees also demonstrated improvements in birth outcomes compared with City of Milwaukee historical trends. Some proposed outcome measures, including social support and stress levels, were not measured due to limited capacity of implementation program model and objection to some measures by community partners.

In addition to the Provider’s Circle which informed Sister Friends about local resources, the Diverse Women’s Healing Collaborative and the Community Advisory Board were established and eventually merged to become the Leadership Advisory Board.

Met Objectives: Project completed

Baseline Progress on State Health Plan Objectives: Not measured

Academic Partner Role: The academic partner participated in Sister Friends training sessions and community meetings; regularly consulted and provided technical assistance for implementation, data collection, and data entry; and participated on the Advisory Board.

Matched Dollars (cash or in-kind): $2,915

Dissemination:
- Six local presentations
- Five newspaper articles
- Two magazine/newsletter articles

Sustained: Not presently sustained. Program participants, staff, volunteers, and supporters are committed to utilizing these findings to inform a second implementation effort. Members of the MBP Advisory Board, including the academic partner, continue to meet, trying to identify opportunities to share their experiences and secure additional programming support.