Reducing Infant Mortality within the Worcester Community
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Infant Mortality in Worcester

- Infant Mortality Rates (IMR) are higher in Worcester than in Massachusetts
- Socioeconomic and racial/ethnic disparities influence this higher IMR
- Major causes of infant death include low birth weight/prematurity, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), and pregnancy complications
- The Worcester Healthy Baby Collaborative (WHBC) used a community engagement model & Project Nyhira Ba to address IMR in the Ghanaian population with success
- There has been an alarming rise in infant mortality in the Latino population in Worcester; this is the focus of current work
- Latinos comprise 22.2% of Worcester’s population

Community Forum

- A community outreach goal from last year that was successfully met
- A forum held by the WHBC on September 30th
- Community leaders of the Latino population in Worcester were invited to share their thoughts and suggestions to guide the focus of the WHBC
- Each member voted on a set of projects and ideas including:
  - Baby Boxes
  - Centering Pregnancy
  - Salon and Church Outreach Program
  - Text4Baby
  - Healthy Baby, Healthy Business
  - Community Health Fairs and Community Quilts
  - Doula Mentorship
  - Comenzando Bien
- Outcomes: Baby Boxes, Centering Pregnancy, and the Salon and Church Outreach Program received the most votes

Baby Boxes

- Population of Focus:
  - Universal distribution to infants delivered in Worcester hospitals.
- Objectives:
  - The Baby Box is a simple cardboard box with a clean mattress.
  - Baby Box University has agreed to sponsor a Baby Box for every new infant born in Worcester.
  - The box is designed to support recommendations for safe sleep to reduce infant mortality.
  - The box has the potential to be filled with educational materials or other items.
  - The idea of the Baby Box originated in Finland and has been used for over 75 years.
  - Finland’s infant mortality rates have dropped from 65 deaths per 1000 births in 1938 to 3 deaths per 1000 births in 2013.
- Next Steps:
  - Partnering with Worcester hospitals to determine distribution of the boxes
  - Determining what specific materials will go in the Baby Box.
  - Potential to work with UMass Medical School’s Burncoat House to help fill the boxes.
  - Adding to Baby Box University online collection of educational materials

Salon/Laundromat Outreach

- Population of Focus:
  - Pregnant women and mothers with infants under 1 year within Latino community in Worcester
- Objectives:
  - Community engagement and education at local Worcester businesses
- Next Steps:
  - Meet with management of forum-suggested salons and laundromats
  - Plan to attend Suds Up Laundromat’s 2nd Thursday “Laundry Love” events (Free laundry night for families with estimated attendance = 100+)
  - Determine community interests in specific topics

Centering Pregnancy

- Population of Focus:
  - Pregnant People of the Latino Population in Worcester
- Objectives:
  - Patient-centered group prenatal care
  - 33% risk reduction in the odds of preterm birth with the implementation of group prenatal care (Ickovics 2008)
  - Implementing more group prenatal care among the Latino population in Worcester will hopefully reduce prematurity, one of the main drivers of infant mortality in the US and Worcester
- Next Steps:
  - Spread awareness about group prenatal care benefits
  - Encourage patients to enroll in Centering Pregnancy or other group prenatal care

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Take Away Points

A baby’s health is a city’s wealth
- Infant mortality rates are indicative of a city’s public health status and progress
By the community and for the community
- When engaging in community work, it is important to partner with leaders and members of the community

References

https://www.worcesterhealthybaby.org/meeting-minutes/