

## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

February 2014

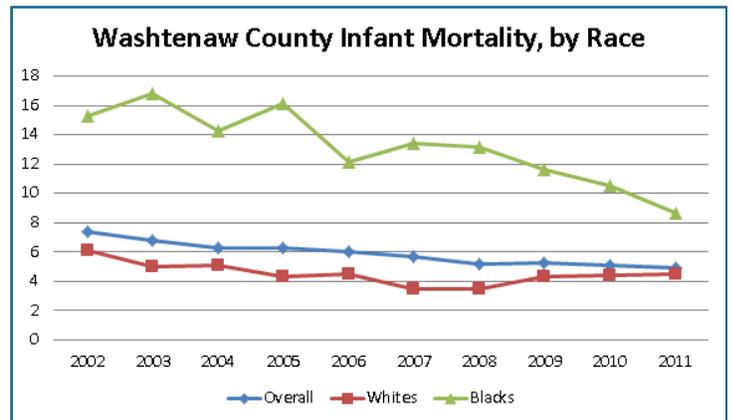
Public health interventions aimed at reducing infant mortality and low birthweight include:

- Folic acid supplements to decrease likelihood of neural tube defects
- Tobacco reduction efforts
- Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) prevention and treatment
- *Back to Sleep* campaign to reduce Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- Chronic disease prevention in childbearing aged women, including increasing physical activity, and decreasing obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure and asthma

## Perinatal Health

### Infant Mortality

Infant mortality (the rate of deaths of babies under age one) is often used as an indicator of a population's overall health. There are approximately 15-30 infant deaths per year in Washtenaw County. Historically, infant mortality rates for black babies have been 2-3 times higher than those for white babies. Although infant mortality has been making a steady decline over the past decade, black infant mortality rates remain nearly double those for white Washtenaw County infants.



Source: Michigan Department of Community Health

### Low Birth Weight

While infant mortality rates decreased from 2002-2011, low birth weight rates have increased for blacks and have remained steady for whites and Washtenaw County overall. Low birth weight, defined as <2500 grams at birth, is a primary cause of infant death and later disability for children. There are approximately 300 Washtenaw County infants born each year who are underweight. These infants are much more likely to require neonatal intensive care unit stays and have breathing and digestion problems, as well as cognitive disorders. Causes of low birth weight include poor maternal pre-conceptual health, maternal tobacco use, high blood pressure, stress during pregnancy, infections and cervical incompetence, among others.

### What is WCPH doing to address this issue?

- WCPH runs the WIC (Women Infants and Children) program to provide supplemental nutrition to pregnant mothers and children up to age five years, who qualify because of low income.
- WCPH does home visitation by nurses and social workers to pregnant women and infants up to one year of age who are on Medicaid, or are otherwise high risk for adverse outcomes.
- WCPH is working to enroll women of childbearing years who qualify for Medicaid, so that they will have good medical care between pregnancies, as well as during pregnancy itself.
- WCPH has applied for and received money for safe sleep initiatives which is being administered through the Washtenaw Area Council for Children, and three WCPH employees are on the Safe Sleep Task Force.
- WCPH participates in the Child Death Review Team, which evaluates causes of unexpected death for children 18 and under in Washtenaw County.

#### For more information:

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