

# PROJECT NAF



*Nurturing  
Asheville &  
Area Families*

## PROJECT NAF

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## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church  
of Asheville, Inc.  
The Asheville City School System  
Asheville City School Foundation's  
In Real Life Program (IRL)  
Buncombe County Dept. of Health  
*The Urban News*  
*My Daddy Taught Me That*  
Western NC AIDS Project  
YMCA of Western North Carolina's  
21st Century Programs

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## April is Minority Health & Public Health Month!

### What Are You Doing to Improve Your Health Status?

#### INCREASING CDC'S IMPACT ON HEALTH EQUITY

Persistent health disparities in our country are unacceptable and correctable! The future health of the nation will be determined to a large extent by how effectively we work with communities to eliminate health disparities among those populations experiencing a disproportionate burden of disease, disability, and death.

Race is considered a "marker" for certain health problems. Race or ethnicity per se does not cause a particular health problem or status. It is likely that factors such as income, education, access to health care, stress, and racism are among the major causes of the poorer health of minorities on many health measures, compared to whites.

Few sources of health data record these types of health information, though most do have information on race or ethnicity. Showing data by race can identify specific areas of disparities and can help target resources and interventions to populations most in need.

In the data on the NC State Center for Health Statistics web site, "minority"



race or "other races" is often shown as a single category. Overall, African Americans comprise about 87 percent of persons of minority races in North Carolina.

African Americans or

Blacks have a substantial or disproportionately larger prevalence of the following condition or behaviors across the life span compared with other racial/ethnic populations:

#### MATERNAL & INFANT HEALTH

Safe motherhood begins before conception with good nutrition and a healthy lifestyle, and continues with appropriate prenatal care and attempting to prevent problems before they arise.

The goal is a full-term pregnancy, the delivery of a healthy baby, and a healthy postpartum period. Hopefully this would be in a positive environment which sup-



Belinda Grant, Executive Director of NAF.  
Photo: Urban News

ports the physical and emotional needs of the mother, baby, and family.

Pregnancy and childbirth have a huge impact on the physical, mental, emotional, and socioeconomic health of women and their families. Pregnancy-related health outcomes are influenced by a woman's health and other factors like race, ethnicity, age, and income.

One goal of the Project NAF Program is to help ensure that program participants have a safe and healthy pregnancy as well as a healthy baby.

*Resources: Centers for Disease and Prevention; NC State Center for Health Statistics; NC Public Health*

## Infant Mortality

The death of a baby before his or her first birthday is called infant mortality. The infant mortality rate is an estimate of the number of infant deaths for every 1,000 live births. This rate is often used as an indicator to measure the health and well-being of a nation, because factors affecting the health of entire populations can also impact the mortality rate of infants.

There are obvious differences in infant mortality by age, race, and ethnicity; for instance, the mortality rate for non-Hispanic black infants is more than twice that of non-Hispanic white infants.

Infant mortality is an important measure of health and an indicator of health status. Although infant mortality has declined over the past several years, the gap between minorities and whites has not narrowed.

Buncombe County's infant mortality rate was 6.2 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2011 (2011 NC SCHS). However there is a dramatic disparity in infant mortality by race. An African American baby was three and a half times more likely than a white infant to die prior to his or her first birthday.

The African American infant mortality rate was 14.0 deaths per 1,000 live births, while the white rate was 4.5. NC rate for minorities was 13.5 deaths per 1,000.

Two leading indicators of infant health are birth weight and maternal weight gain during pregnancy. The percent of very low and low birth weight for infants (7.8% for white and 9.3% for African American) for African Americans in Buncombe County is 1.3 times that of white women.



#### What are the Causes?

Fortunately, most newborns grow and thrive. However, for every 1,000 babies that are born, six die during their first year. Most of these babies die because they are:

- Born with a serious birth defect
- Born too small and too early (i.e., preterm birth; birth before 37 weeks gestation)
- Victims of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- Affected by maternal complications of pregnancy
- Victims of injuries (e.g., suffocation)

These top five leading causes of infant mortality together account for 57% of all infant deaths in the United States in 2010.

#### What Can You Do? Become Healthy Before Pregnancy

Pregnancy and childbirth have a huge effect on the health of women and their families. Pregnancy-related health outcomes are influenced by factors such as race, ethnicity, age, and income, but most importantly – a woman's health.

Good preconception health care means living a safe, healthy lifestyle and managing any current health conditions before getting pregnant. By taking action on health issues before pregnancy, many future problems for the mother and baby can be prevented.

It is important for all women of reproductive age to adopt healthy behaviors such as:

- Taking folic acid
- Maintaining a healthy diet and weight
- Being physically active regularly
- Quitting tobacco use

- Not drinking excessive amounts of alcohol and using "street" drugs
- Talking to your health care provider about screening and proper management of chronic diseases
- Talking with your health care provider about taking any medications
- Visiting your health care provider at the recommended scheduled time periods for your age, and discuss if or when you are considering becoming pregnant
- Using effective contraception correctly and consistently if you are sexually active, but wish to delay or avoid pregnancy
- Preventing injuries and considering the safety of your home and family (e.g., wear seat belt, take CPR, install and test smoke alarms).

A healthy pregnancy begins before conception and continues with appropriate prenatal care and addressing problems as they arise.

*Resource: Centers for Disease and Prevention*

## THANK YOU!

Investing our resources and energy in preconception health is vital to North Carolina's future. Better preconception health improves the overall health of women and babies, decreases health disparities in our state, improves our health care system, and decreases costs to families and society.

On behalf of Mount Zion Community Development, Inc., we would like to thank all of our community partners for making a difference in impacting minority health and the health status of the population served.