



LOUISIANA

“I believe we are making progress in better educating our people, but we are not there yet. Education is the solution to every problem we have.”

–Senate President John J. Hainkel, Jr., July 16, 2001

In Louisiana, every 43 minutes a baby is born to a teenage mother, and every 24 minutes, a baby is born into poverty. Louisiana currently ranks 48th in the nation in children living in poverty. Infant mortality and low birth weight both have remained major public health issues in Louisiana. Maternal and child health has been identified, during the past 10 years, as one of the primary areas of concern for the state. Consistently, Louisiana ranks among the states with the highest rates for indicators such as low birth weight, infant mortality, perinatal mortality, and teen pregnancy.

In 2001, 10.4 percent (6,819) of total live births (65,193) were of low birth weight infants as compared to 10.0 percent (6,714) in 1999. Though the teenage birth rate is declining in Louisiana, it remains higher than the national average. In 2001, the birth rate to unmarried women was 46.3, compared to 43.9 in 1997, and has been increasing for almost a decade. These formidable trends have contributed to the state’s uprising infant death rates (9.8 in 2001, compared to 8.9 just a year ago and 9.1 in 1998).⁴³

The Office of Public Health (OPH) and the Department of Health and Hospitals have undertaken several initiatives to lower these indicators through a statewide process of evidence-based programs and interventions with strong involvement from the community. Programs and services offered through various sections of both departments include the following.

ChildNet: developed under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as an early intervention system that serves families, infants, and toddlers from birth to age 3 who have physical or mental conditions that result in developmental disabilities.

The system also serves infants and toddlers who, without a medical condition, are determined to be delayed in cognitive, physical, communication, social/emotional, or adaptive development. ChildNet is administered by the Department of Health and Hospitals.

State Facts 2001*

Infant Mortality Rate	9.8
Preterm Birth Rate	15.2
Low Birth Weight Infants	10.4
Prenatal Care in First Trimester	83.2
Pregnancy/Maternal Smoking	10.1
Teenage Birth Rate (age 15-19)	57.8
Birth Rate to Unmarried Women (age 15-44)	46.3

*Rates are calculated per 1,000 live births, except for low birth weight, prenatal care, and maternal smoking, which are calculated in percent.

Genetics Clinical Services Program: established in 1981 through a federal grant and administered by the OPH, Center for Preventative Health, it ensures that genetic evaluation and counseling are available and accessible to individuals in all regions of the state through genetics clinics at eight OPH sites and five hospital sites in the southern region of the state.

Epidemiology, Assessment, & Evaluation (EAE) Program: began in 1996 with a grant from the CDC, which brought the first Maternal and Child Health (MCH) epidemiologist into the Office of Public Health. Members of the program are actively engaged in epidemiological analysis with specific regions of the state in an effort to reduce perinatal mortality rates. The EAE Program also provides teaching activities at the OPH and at different local universities. The Program leads and collaborates in the dissemination process of MCH information statewide.

Louisiana SIDS Counseling and Risk Reduction Program: formed in 1994 through a joint partnership between the OPH and Tulane University Department of Pediatrics, it provides comprehensive information about SIDS and counseling to families that had experienced a SIDS death, improves infant autopsy rate and standardization, and establishes a SIDS risk reduction program. The primary audiences of the program are females 15-29 years of age, in both urban and rural areas in Louisiana. The secondary audience which this program targets is those with day-to-day interaction with infants under one year of age, including healthcare professionals,



grandparents, babysitters, child care/family daycare providers, and general community.

Partners for Healthy Babies: begun in 1993 as an ongoing statewide social marketing project to promote prenatal care and healthy behaviors during pregnancy. The project was established in response to the high infant mortality and low birth weight rates, along with the high teen pregnancy rate in Louisiana. Project activities use a multimedia and multi-channel approach, including television, radio, billboard, and bus signage advertising and is operated under the OPH, Center for Preventative Health.

Family Planning Program: begun in September 1974 as part of the federal Title X Family Planning Program, aims to reduce infant mortality and morbidity and teen pregnancy by providing disease screening, health education, counseling and contraceptive methods. Individuals and families also are provided with information regarding reproductive health. Target populations are low-income, underinsured individuals and families. This program is administered by the OPH, Center for Preventative Health. The Family Planning Program served 62,841 clients in 2000, and 85 percent of those clients were below 100 percent of the federal poverty level. Proven to be fiscally effective, for every government dollar spent on family planning services in Louisiana, an average of \$4.40 is saved as a result of averting expenditures on medical services, welfare, and nutritional services, and an estimated \$12 also is saved in costs associated with unintended pregnancy.

Shots for Tots: created in 1992 in response to the low levels of immunizations among infants and children and the epidemic outbreak of measles in Louisiana. The Shots for Tots is a network of public and private entities working cooperatively to update and educate parents on the importance of childhood immunizations.

Louisiana Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP): a USDA nutrition program designed to supplement the diets of low-income pregnant and postpartum women, children up to age 6, and seniors over the age of 60. One of 26 CSFP programs nationwide, Louisiana's CSFP is the second largest, with 76,000 participants in 2001, and currently is operated under the OPH, Center for Preventative Health.

Louisiana Birth Defects Monitoring Network: initiated in 1999, Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 29, created an 18-member task force to study

the feasibility of developing a birth defects registry in Louisiana. The purpose of the registry was "...to establish a system to collect, analyze, and disseminate data regarding birth defects in the state and to provide information to families of children born with birth defects regarding services available in their community and the development of appropriate prevention programs." On May 31, 2001, the Legislature passed Senate Bill 229 to create the Louisiana Birth Defects Surveillance System and advisory board, and the bill was signed into law by Governor Foster. This program is operated under OPH, Center for Preventative Health, Children's Special Health Services.

The Nurse-Family Partnership Program: established in March 1999, as a prenatal and early childhood intervention program designed to improve the health and social functioning of low-income, first-time mothers and their infants. Home visits by trained public health nurses begin before the 28th week of gestation and continue through the child's second birthday. The program currently is operating in four mostly rural, underserved areas of the state: the Lafayette Region (Region IV); the Monroe Region (Region VIII); the Lake Charles Region (Region V); and the Houma Region (Region III). The Nurse-Family Partnership Program is administered by OPH, Center for Preventative Health.

Healthy Families LA Paraprofessional Home Visiting Programs: a visitation program developed to lower Louisiana's high rates of infant mortality, low birth weight, and child maltreatment. Currently, there are four Paraprofessional Home Visitation Programs: 1) *Project Hope* serving first-time mothers and their babies in Quachita Parish; 2) *ETC ALPHA* serving high-risk pregnant and parenting teens and their babies in Calcasieu Parish; 3) *Healthy Kids* serving first-time and teen parents and their infants in Iberia Parish; and 4) *First Time Parents* serving high-risk, low-income parents and their infants in East Baton Rouge Parish. These programs are based on the Hawaii Healthy Start and Healthy Families



America Programs models and are administered by OPH, Center for Preventative Health.

Children's Choice Waiver: established in February 24, 2001, by the Department of Health and Hospitals, Bureau of Community Supports and Services, and offers supplemental support to children with developmental disabilities who currently live at home with their families, or who will leave an institution to return home. The waiver provides services such as family support, family training, center-based respite, environmental accessibility adaptations, and diapers for children age 3 or older. This waiver has an annual service limit of \$15,000 per recipient. The Children's Choice Waiver is an option offered to children on the Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (MR/DD) Request for Services Registry as funding permits.

Families choose to either apply for the Children's Choice Waiver or remain on the MR/DD Request for Services Registry.

SAFE KIDS: founded in 1994 by OPH and the Children's Hospital as a coalition of public, private, and voluntary organizations working to prevent unintentional injuries to children from birth to 14 years of age through a multifaceted approach by increasing public awareness, changing behavior through education and safety devices, advocating for public policy changes, and creating and supporting child safe communities. SAFE KIDS is administered by OPH, Center for Community Health.

