

SUMMARY STATEMENT

Addressing birth outcome health disparities is a priority for the governor, state government, and Washingtonians, and is tracked as part of the state's Results Washington performance management system. Washington has met the Healthy People 2020 objective to reduce total preterm birth to no more than 11.4 per 100 singleton births, however, significant disparities remain in preterm deliveries for racial/ethnic and low income groups.

Our state can successfully reduce population-based disparities through culturally appropriate efforts that address social determinants. In July 2019, Washington State Department of Health launched the Birth Equity Project. Four grantees will engage in a three-year project to use evidence-based/evidence-informed programs or community-informed practices that are culturally appropriate and focus on the root causes of inequities.

ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

Cross-agency collaboration and engagement with partners across the health system is how we are working toward a state where healthy moms, dads, and babies can thrive. Among the activities:

The Birth Equity Project will support local hospitals and tribal clinics in focusing on enhancing prenatal resources and linkages through such approaches as home visiting, a Centering Pregnancy program, and prenatal yoga classes with an emphasis on expanding access in rural and tribal communities. In urban areas, partner organizations will launch the Culturally Responsive Integrated and Strength-based Parenthood (CRISP) support group, particularly reaching pregnant people and families from American Indian/Alaska Native and Pacific Islander communities, as well as support expansion of doula services for African American women.

The state is addressing the maternal/child impact of the opioid epidemic that is leading to premature births by expanding access to medication-assisted treatment, and expanding residential treatment to allow more women to bring their newborn with them into treatment.

The state offers expanded Medicaid and Medicaid during pregnancy for undocumented women. Our states' Medicaid program covers preventive care use of folic acid for all women of child bearing age, travel vouchers to get to appointments, and full parity telemedicine coverage for both medical and mental health appointments.

Washington State passed legislation to raise the age to buy tobacco and vaping products from 18 to 21. The law is expected to prevent tobacco use and addiction starting in the critical teen and young adult years, which we anticipate will have a positive impact on birth outcomes as we see a decline in smoking prevalence among pregnant women. By partnering on multi-agency initiatives our state is building healthier communities through regional collaborations and improving services that address social determinants.