

SUMMARY STATEMENT

The Title V Block Grant program responsibilities are assigned to the Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health Division (MCAHD) (Component A & B) and to the Children with Special Medical Needs Division (Component C) according to the operational structure of the Health Department. The MCAHD use the life course model as the framework for the approach of all strategies and activities. The Division works in collaboration with partners and stakeholders as allies, to reach goals and objectives. The better the health condition of woman of reproductive age (WRA), the healthier the baby will be and with the adequate care of the baby will result in a healthier adult.

Several core Title V programs facilitate and complement the health services in Puerto Rico at the health care system primary level:

The Title Home Visiting Program (HVP), staffed by Home Visiting Nurses (HVNs), serves pregnant women and their children up to 24 months after delivery in 71 municipalities. The HVNs do screenings for maternal depression, intimate partner violence, substance use, child development and oral health.

The Community Outreach Program (COP) is staffed by Community Health Workers (CHWs) that provide community health education. Health Promotion is overseen by the Health Educators (HEs), responsible for offering community education, parenting courses, and technical assistance to the COP. A key component are media/internet campaigns, dissemination of educational materials and tools, and training and information to health professionals.

The Perinatal Services are provided by the Perinatal Nurses (PNs) that visit birthing hospitals to offer pregnancy and breastfeeding support and post-partum and infant health education. They also promote the Title V HVP and the Prenatal Courses among women.

ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

Prematurity and low birth weight (LBW) infants are two leading causes of infant mortality (IM) in Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico Title V efforts include multiple strategies to decrease preterm births, decrease very low birth weight and prevent high-risk behaviors during pregnancy.

One key strategy of the Puerto Rico Title V Program to address poor birth outcomes is the four-session prenatal course, "A Baby on its Way" which promotes healthy pregnancy to prevent risk factors. The purpose of the course is for pregnant women and their partner to gain knowledge, which is measured in pre- and post-tests for each session. In fiscal year (FY) 2018-19, the average post-test score of pregnant women participants was 95% compared to 70% in the pre-test. The average post-test score of companions was 94% compared to 70% in the pre-test. Furthermore, we have been successful as 92% of 1,342 participants completed all four sessions.

Another strategy to address poor birth outcomes is the multimedia campaign, "The Encounter of My Life" that promotes healthy pregnancy and 40 weeks gestation. Videos appeared in movie theaters, TV, and the website: www.encuentrodemivida.com. Additionally, another activity includes the distribution of a magnetic pad featuring the warning signs and symptoms of preterm labor and the steps women should take if they suspect they are experiencing preterm labor.

In the past year, the Maternal Mortality Review Law was an achievement of our team. The regulation that is required by law for the implementation of the Maternal Mortality Review Law was drafted and will provide the tools to help identify preventable causes of death that will serve to prioritize the strategies chosen toward promoting healthier WRA. In addition, the WRA health services guidelines that have been implemented as public policy by the Department of Health (DOH), will help foster the improved quality of care based on evidence and changes in the delivery care system.

The Puerto Rico Fetal Infant Mortality Review (FIMR) identifies system-related risk factors for fetal and infant mortality and generates recommendations to address them. Puerto Rico FIMR has identified critical community strengths and weaknesses as well as unique health and social issues associated with poor outcomes.

At the individual level, the HVP offers case management, care coordination, support and educational services to pregnant and parenting women, their children up to age two and their families. A series of screening tools are used to identify participant's needs and strengths and services are tailored accordingly. To enhance services, the HVP protocol underwent a complete revision to perform the interventions and documentation more efficiently. During 2018-19, the HVP provided services to 5,643 participants (pregnant women, interconceptional women, infants, and children). The HVNs also offer education, support and care coordination to pregnant and parenting women who do not qualify for the HVP. Partners, relatives, and friends of HVP participants also receive education that enables them to support their loved ones.

COVID RELATED WORK

Since March 2020, the COVID-19 emergency has made it impossible to continue offering educational activities in the community. In response to the current prohibition regarding group activities, one of the steps taken has been to adapt the prenatal course, "A Baby on the Way", to an on-demand video presentation. It covers all the topics in an abbreviated fashion and refers viewers to the "Encounter of my Life" website where they can access more complete information. The video adaptation of the course will continue to provide participants with information leading to a healthier pregnancy and delivery, prevent risk behaviors, provide appropriate care for the baby, recognize the laws and regulations that promote quality birthing services and support for breastfeeding initiation in the hospital.

The "Encounter of my life" prenatal education campaign that started in 2018 acquired even more pertinence in the face of the pandemic, as it allows pregnant and parenting women to obtain information in a safe manner. The HVNs refer women to the website for information that complements their verbal communication. The campaign emphasizes the importance of completing 40 weeks of pregnancy, attending prenatal care regularly, adopting healthy behaviors and avoiding risks during pregnancy. It covers also the postpartum period and the importance of breastfeeding and having the father and other relatives support mom and baby.