



Tom Barrett
Mayor

Bevan K. Baker, CHE
Commissioner of Health

Administration

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City of Milwaukee Awarded \$4.5M State Grant to Improve Family Health Outcomes

*Funding aimed at expanding home visits and services to
high-risk families*

The City of Milwaukee Health Department has been awarded a five year \$4.5 million grant from the WI Department of Health and Family Services to improve health outcomes for high-risk families. At a news conference today, Mayor Tom Barrett, Helene Nelson, Secretary, WI Department of Health and Family Services and Commissioner of Health Bevan K. Baker launched Milwaukee's Comprehensive Home Visiting Program (MCHVP).

"Having strong, healthy children in Milwaukee is one of our top health priorities," said Mayor Tom Barrett. "The issues affecting high-risk pregnant women and their families are complex and require a comprehensive approach. I am hopeful that this program will be a step in the right direction."

The purpose of the five year MCHVP is to improve birth outcomes, enhance family functioning, support child health, safety and development and prevent child abuse and neglect. The target area will be in six zip codes in Milwaukee, 53204, 53205, 53206, 53208, 53212 and 53233. These zip codes have been identified as having the highest infant mortality rates in the Milwaukee.

"We are pleased to fund home visits as part of Governor Jim Doyle's *KidsFirst* agenda to give families support they need so babies are born and remain healthy and safe," said Helene Nelson, Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services. "We thank Mayor Barrett and Commissioner of Health Bevan Baker for their commitment to helping babies of all backgrounds to have an equal chance at a healthy life."

The City of Milwaukee's infant mortality rate (IMR=number of infant deaths per 1000 live births) remains very high. While the White infant mortality rate in the last 15 years has improved, the African American and Hispanic infant mortality rates have fluctuated but have not improved, Milwaukee's 12.0 IMR in 2004 remains significantly higher than the United States IMR of 6.9 in 2003¹.

Currently, Black infants are over three times more likely to die as compared to White infants, increased from 2003 when Black infants were less than three times more likely to die than Whites.

“It is clear that Milwaukee needs a radical and targeted approach to reverse these negative health trends,” said Bevan K. Baker, Commissioner of Health. “This evidence-based home visiting program will benefit disadvantaged families that need the most critical help.”

The City of Milwaukee Health Department (MHD) will partner with all members of the community including medical organizations, health care providers, governmental entities, elected officials, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations and families to establish the infrastructure needed to fulfill the goals of the program. The vast majority of funding will be disbursed to community-based organizations delivering accessible and culturally appropriate services.

The MCHVP will begin to enroll program participants in the summer of 2006. Participants will include pregnant women, new mothers and women with young children who live in the six targeted zip codes. Teams that consist of public health nurses, social workers and community health workers will begin family visits during a mother’s first trimester of pregnancy and will continue until the child’s fifth’s birthday. This team approach allows the program to place significant emphasis on comprehensive services and to build supportive relationships with families through consistent home visits.

Research has shown that families benefit the most from programs that provide intensive home visiting services beginning early in pregnancy. All staff and community partners will receive training and will be expected to follow standard protocols so that the program can be rigorously evaluated to ensure its effectiveness. The program expects to serve 700 families in Milwaukee.

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ⁱ National Vital Statistics Reports, Vol. 53, No. 15, February 28, 2005