

MOM (Making Optimal Mental Healthcare) Saint Louis University

North Star

Zero racial disparities in infant mortality by 2033.

High Infant Mortality Zip Codes



This project served participants in the following FLOURISH priority zip codes:

**63104, 63107, 63111,
63112, 63118, 63121,
63133, 63136, 63147**

How much did we do?



195

People screened positive for perinatal mood disorders and were referred to counseling



54

Clients engaged in mental health services



263

Counseling sessions were provided



5


Patients participated in patient council focus groups or interview

Program Description

This FLOURISH grant funded MOM (Making Optimal Mental Healthcare) program at Saint Louis University. The purpose of this project is to offer culturally-affirming mental healthcare to African American women and their families during pregnancy and postpartum for free through a coordinated effort from clinics providing women's healthcare and psychological services. This project took place from September 2021 to December 2022.

Priority Areas

FLOURISH Community Leaders Cabinet identified priority areas they believe will have the most significant impact on improving conditions for Black families. Infant mortality is a complex issue that can't be solved by one organization alone. Below, you will find population level data where FLOURISH is contributing to changes for Black families alongside other organizations. Saint Louis University is working to move the needle for the individuals they serve in the areas listed below.

FLOURISH Priority Area	Category of Work	Population Level Data
 Coordinated Quality Care	Perinatal Behavioral Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maternal Depression/Postpartum Depression Frequent Mental Distress Stressful Life Events During Pregnancy

FLOURISH uses a **results-based accountability** model of evaluation, because it helps show how collaborative efforts can make an impact on reducing disparities in infant mortality. We focus on how well programs address root causes of the issue and whether Black pregnant and parenting families are better off.

How well did we do it?



31%

of referred patients **engaged** in counseling services



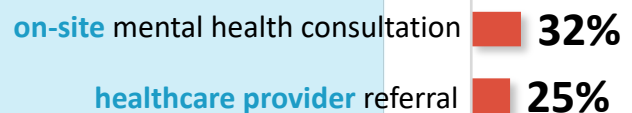
100%

of the 3 patients who took multiple measures, 100% reported a decrease in their EDPS scores

Is anyone better off?

The pilot determined which approach resulted in a greater likelihood of participation in therapy.

Percent of patients that made counseling appointments based on referral method:



Project Impact

We sought to reduce barriers and promote quality care for African American mothers currently being seen in the SLU affiliated Maternal and Fetal Care Center (MFCC). African American patients seeking obstetric services from MFCC were screened using the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS) for peripartum depression, adverse pregnancy events, and postpartum depression (PPD). All patients who screened positive for peri or postpartum depression or who demonstrated a need for mental health services were referred to the Center for Counseling and Family Therapy (CCFT) where patients were offered mental health counseling for free. Because of the demonstrated ill effects across family systems, the CCFT offered individual, couple, family, group counseling, parent group support, and maternal bonding classes. All patients had a telehealth option to reduce barriers related to transportation and to be cautious of pandemic safety concerns. We also sought out feedback from patients seeking services from the MFCC and CCFT to improve patient care.

Key Learnings

We have been surprised on numerous occasions about what we expected to work compared to what actually worked.

We purchased 25 tablets and hotspots for clients to use to access telehealth therapy. We have been surprised that the tablet check out process has not been more popular. Approximately 75% of patients have utilized therapy via telehealth. No one has reported a concern with access to technology. We are grateful for the tablets and hotspots and hope to utilize these tablets in the future to help patients access care in the CCFT.



Challenges

We began our program with a healthcare provider emailing patients who met criteria for a perinatal mood disorder (PMD) as measured through EDPS. When no patients responded, we resent messages and by mid-November we had only 1 person reach out after 160 patients were contacted via email. By December, we realized we needed a better plan and began to pilot having a therapist come to the MFCC. This proved successful and we had approximately 8 patients begin therapy. By the end of the program, we had four staff therapists going to the MFCC, providing therapy, and offering on-call consultation. This proved successful and in approximately two months had the same number of patient responders as we had in the previous 5 months. We felt like we were finally beginning to learn how we needed to reach out to patients by having more staff available for mental health consultation and we felt we were successfully navigating some of the language barriers and concerns about being culturally responsive and sensitive.

Partnerships

The MOMS program was a partnership with the Maternal and Fetal Care Center (MFCC). The MFCC specializes in gynecological and obstetric care. Therapists from the Center for Counseling and Family Therapy (CCFT) provide integrated care or on-site mental health consultation for patients being seen at the MFCC. Therapists also provided on-call mental health consultation for the MFCC. Patients who screened positive for a perinatal mood disorder or demonstrated a mental health concern at the MFCC were referred to the MOMs program housed at the Center for Counseling and Family Therapy.



FLOURISH Saint Louis, an infant mortality reduction initiative powered by Generate Health, is bringing together people and organizations across the region to fix the systems that impact the health of Black families. This organization received a FLOURISH grant which was funded by Missouri Foundation for Health.

For more information visit <https://www.slu.edu/medicine/family-medicine/index.php> or contact info@flourishstlouis.org