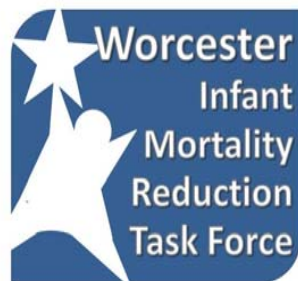


A Brief (& Incomplete) History of Worcester's Infant Mortality Reduction Work

September 22, 2017

Infant Mortality Summit

Sara Shields, MD

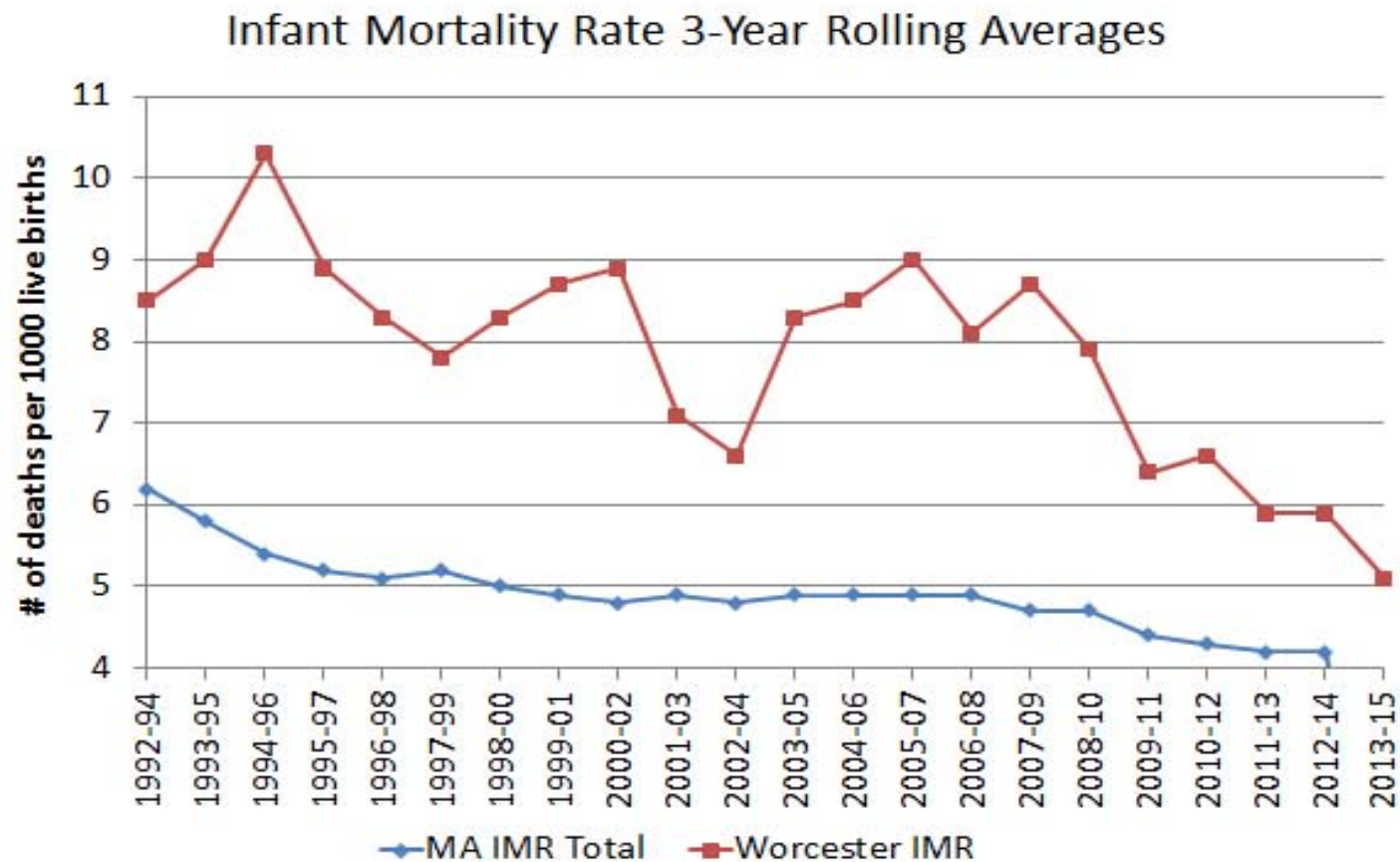


Background

The Worcester Infant Mortality Reduction Task Force (WIMRTF) was formed fall 1998 as a volunteer coalition of community programs, the public health service, and healthcare providers to address rising infant mortality rates (IMR), particularly in the African immigrant population.

From our 2016 Report

Worcester has higher infant mortality rates than similar cities in Massachusetts



Public Health and History

Lesson #1: Timely Data Matters

Collaborate: WHSI

From 2000-2012, the
Worcester Healthy Start Initiative
(WHSI)

offered case management
to Worcester's
neediest pregnant women
and families for up to two
years' postpartum.



Funded by grant
from federal DDHS's
HRSA's
Maternal/Child
Health Bureau

Participants in WHSI had
lower IMR than non-
participants



Working with the
Worcester Healthy Start Initiative
(WHSI), WIMRTF sponsored biannual
community education seminars.

WIMRTF also produced
radio public service announcements
about perinatal and infant
health in both
English and Spanish.

Public Health and History

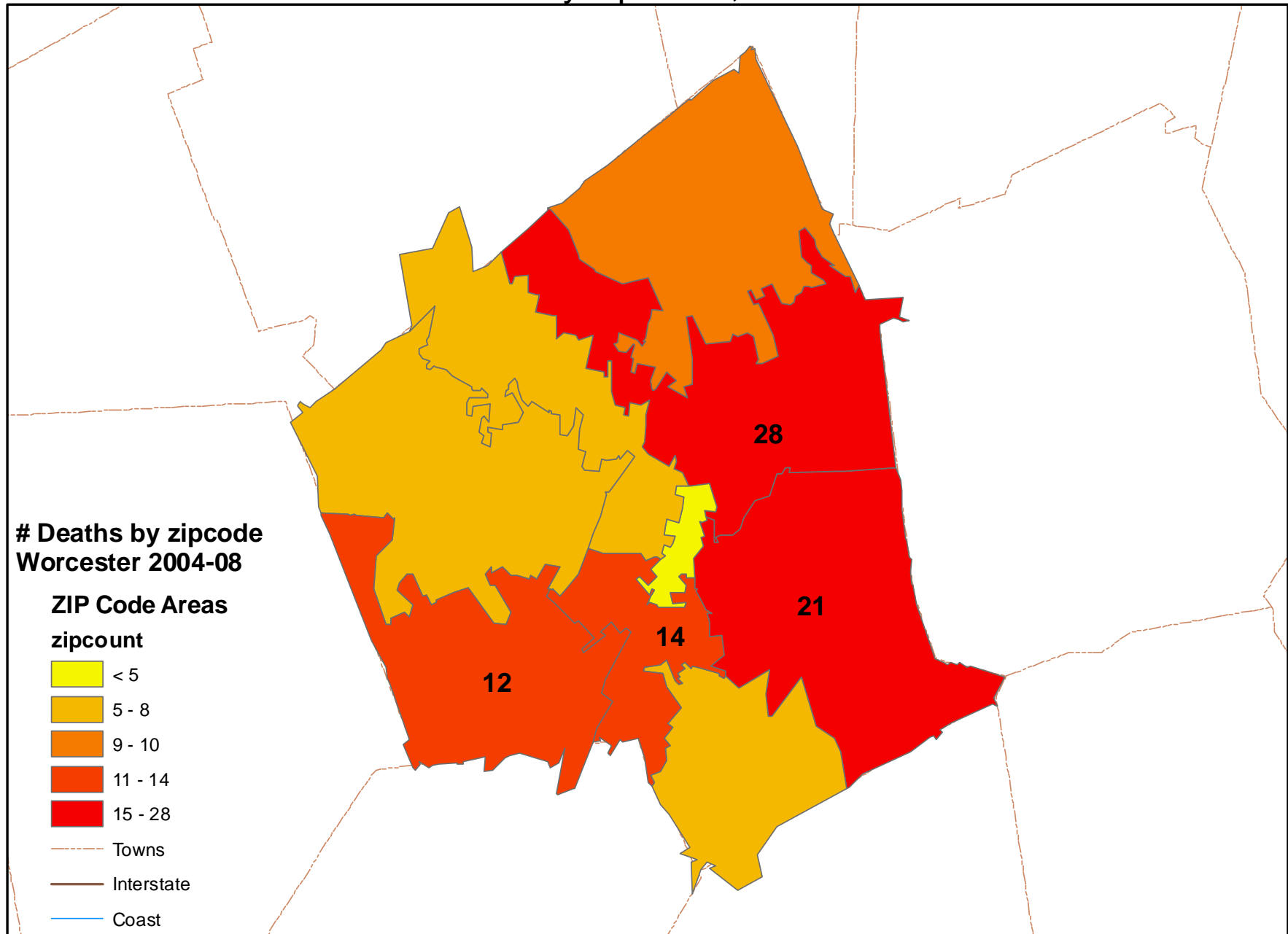
Lesson #2: It's Not Just Medical

Research: Geo-Coding

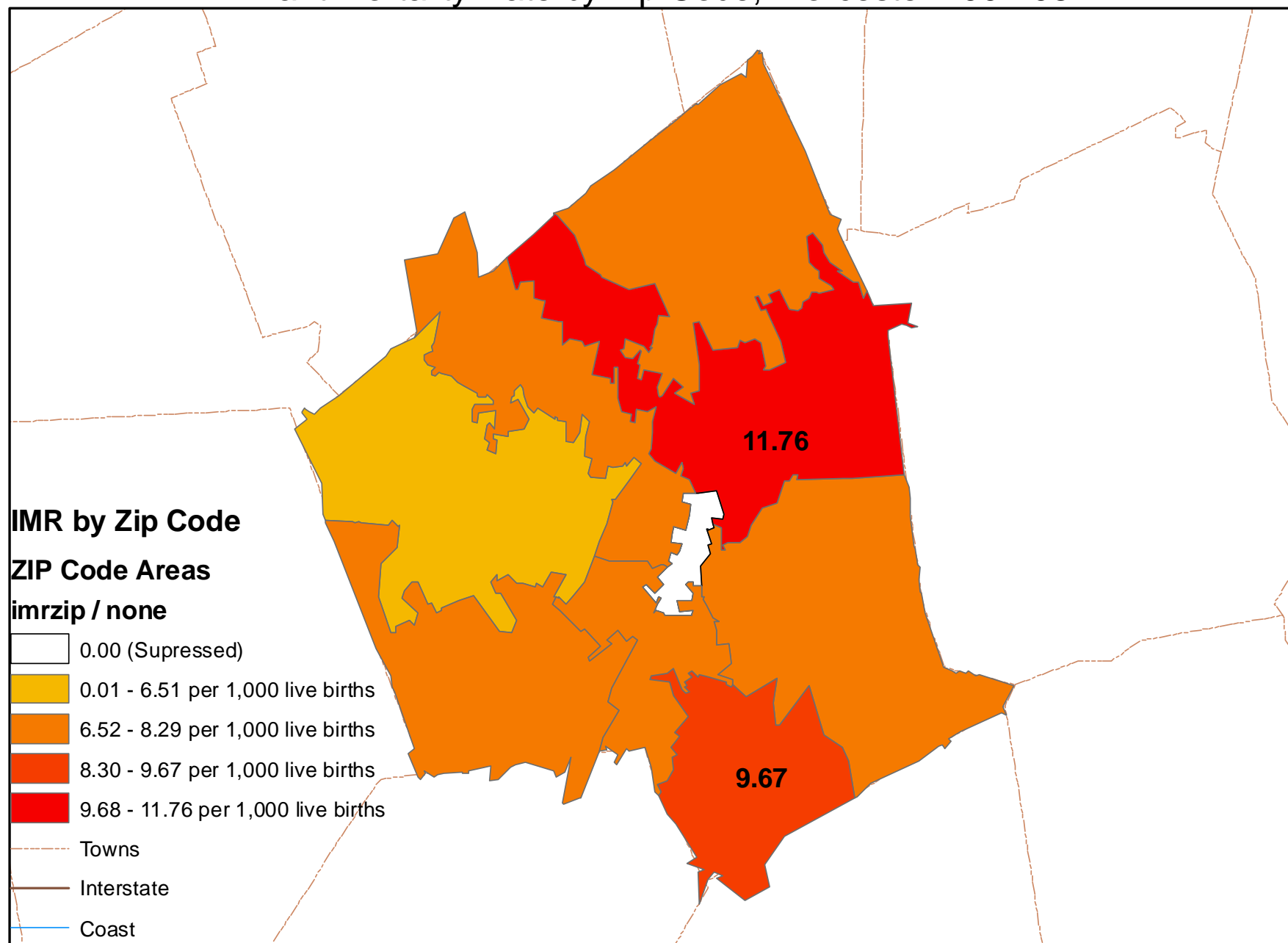
Mark Hayward, Clark U 2001
1990 Census & IM data 87-97

Certain areas: clusters
No concrete correlations

Number of Deaths by Zip Code, Worcester 2004-08



Infant Mortality Rate by Zip Code, Worcester 2004-08



Public Health &
History Lesson #3:
Place Matters



Community

- **Focus Groups**
- **Meetings in Churches**

Focus Groups

- 2003: Ghanaian women (J Rich Edwards)
 - fear of and dissatisfaction with the health care system in Worcester
 - a widespread perception of racism within the health care community in the city
- 2003-4: African American women
 - Similar themes; less of a local community
- 2005: Recently immigrated African women
 - Rosemary Theroux (Umass GSN)
 - Work, diet, traditional practices; churches

Public Health and History

Lesson #4: Racism Matters

2011: Honey Child curriculum efforts

- “WIMRTF aims to develop a curriculum that not only covers the major tenets of perinatal health, but also one that provides an orientation to the health care system in Worcester, educates about where to find help navigating the system, and ***empowers individuals to be their own advocates***
- An important part of the curriculum will be educating about ***how to file a complaint in the different health care settings*** in the city
- WIMRTF wants to ***give a voice to women who have been victimized by racism***
- ***Empowering women to expose racist behavior*** in the health care system is an important first step in tackling the problem
- For too long women in Worcester have expected and accepted racism as a part of the fabric of health care in Worcester and have avoided seeking timely care as a result.”



Worcester Healthy Baby Collaborative

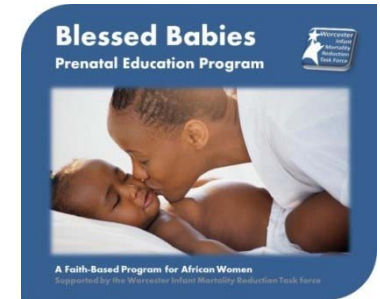
Working to reduce premature birth
& infant mortality



- MOD collaboration c. 2010
- Chair of group, with administrative support
- WHBC: name change 2012
 - Focus on education
- Blessed Baby curriculum development
 - Based on “Honey Child” from MOD in Texas
 - Adapted for African immigrant families



The Nhyira Ba Model



- Locally adapting March of Dimes “Blessed Baby” curriculum
- **“by the community and for the community”**, engaging *collaboratively* with the local community
- Students and professors linked us with local Ghanaian leaders
- These leaders encouraged us to focus on a positive message rather than “mortality”
- With these leaders, students and WHBC members created culturally and linguistically appropriate social media sites, educational pamphlets, and videos about prenatal nutrition

“By the community,
for the community...”



The quilt features the following text and drawings on its squares:

- Top Row:**
 - English: "Ensure her legal Rights are protected"
 - Spanish: "Show her Love" with three hearts
 - Spanish: "Aprende la importancia de la Nutricion" with a red apple and a green banana
 - English: "Help them exercise." with a stick figure
 - Spanish: "Support Ayuda" with a smiley face
- Second Row:**
 - Spanish: "Un Abrazo" with two hearts
 - Spanish: "Prepararse para dar seno" with a breast icon
 - Spanish: "Como puede USTED ayudar una persona embarazada" with a heart
 - English: "Family Support Lots of Love & Time" with a heart
- Third Row:**
 - English: "Darle Support" with a heart
 - English: "How can YOU help a pregnant person?" with a smiley face and a question mark
 - English: "Eating Healthy Foods & Lots of walking" with a heart
 - English: "Share your time" with a heart
 - English: "Give them water" with a water bottle icon
- Bottom Row:**
 - Spanish: "Comer Saludable" with a heart
 - Spanish: "Ayuda para tener un hijo sano" with a heart
 - English: "HELP PICK things to EAT" with a heart
 - English: "Support Time" with a heart

Public Health and History

Lesson #5: Go to the Community

Worcester Infant Mortality Task Force 2001-2011

- **Monitor**
 - **Review infant mortality** data yearly (D. Magee)
 - Worcester Infant Mortality **Assessment Project** (WIMAP): BCBS Foundation/ MA DPH
- **Research**
 - **Focus Groups** (clay; herbal meds; racial discrimination); 2001, 2002, 2010
 - 2007-2009: **Structured Interviews**
 - **SNP (genetic) analysis**
 - DPH Grant (**Town Forums**) - Perceived discrimination; cultural insensitivity
 - **Chart Review** of all W, B, & H Premature Births (Moore Simas, Johnson, Felice, Magee – in progress).
 - **Ghana Visit**: To learn from Ghanaian experts
- **Educate**
 - City-wide **community education** program
 - UMass **Interdisciplinary Course** for nursing & medical students (R. Theroux and T. Moore Simas)
- **Share knowledge**
 - **Regular meetings of Infant Mortality Task Force with information exchange among medical and social services organizations**
- **Case Manage**
 - **Worcester Healthy Start Initiative** (Edward M. Kennedy Community Health Center); since 1998; Case Management & Community meetings

Source: Marianne Felice, MD Task Force chair

Retreat 2008

Umass Memorial
cosponsored a day-long
retreat for the WIMRTF in
2008 where we developed
mission, vision and values
statements and a strategic
plan

The mission of the
Worcester Infant Mortality Reduction Task Force is
to define the causes of and promote efforts
To decrease infant mortality in Worcester.

WIMRTF Vision Statement:

As a diverse, volunteer
collaborative, we will engage and
coordinate the Worcester
community in a shared effort to
insure that all babies are healthy
in our city.

December 2015 “Reinvention”

Reinvention Core Concept Volunteer Opportunities

2

Four Criteria for Membership

- Interested in Healthy Babies
- Willing to use influence to help
- Commit to Volunteer Up to 2 hrs/month
- Attendance at 75% of meetings
- Diverse Expertise



Other Reinvention Concepts



- Community Collaborative
- Describe Functions/Invite Members
- Business Plan
- Organizational Structure
- Goals/Mission
- Revenue/Expenses

Public Health and History

Lesson #6: Strategic Planning

Reports to City Council

- 2007: Dr Felice
- 2013: Dr Shields et.al.
- 2016: City Manager's Report

Worcester Infant Mortality Task Force

Recommendations to City Council 2007

- **Public education campaign to improve population Health:** healthy diets, exercise, weight control, healthy teeth and gums, decrease smoking, planned pregnancies, safe sex
- Promote **early and regular prenatal care** for all pregnant women.
- Incorporate the **case management** model of the Worcester Healthy Start Initiative into the city's health care systems
- Do Not Smoke campaign
- Support programs that encourage **learning about other cultures** and valuing differences.
- **Address racial and ethnic disparities** following the model used by the Mayor of Boston.
- **Keep young people in school**
- Support programs to eliminate infant deaths to older infants such as a **Safe Sleeping Campaign**.
- Support efforts by the Coalition to **Prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome**.
- Hire a statistician for the DPH

Source: Marianne Felice, MD Task Force chair

Recommendations to City Council 2013

- Improve **educational** opportunities and health literacy for Hispanics, & all immigrants and refugees
- Support intensive health education outreach to underserved communities to connect with primary care.
- Support expansion of **intercollegiate/community-driven efforts** at such health education at WPI, Clark and UMass.
- Encourage targeted outreach and bridge-building to **address the issues of perceived institutional racism and lack of trust** in the health care system by immigrant communities.
- Advocate at state level to **expand case management in Worcester** for programs like the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program.
- Support the Worcester Health Baby Collaborative (WHBC) plans for an **Infant Mortality Summit in September 2014**. Use this summit as an opportunity to prioritize and align the City Council's Health Subcommittee focus on the prevention of infant mortality and pre-term birth.
- Advocate for **improved data access**, including development of a city-wide birth registry, to inform timely data-driven policies in Worcester regarding prenatal care to refugees and immigrants.

Recommendations to City Manager 2016

- **Annual day** of IM awareness
- **Representative** to WHBC meetings
- Collaborate with March of Dimes to implement **Healthy Babies, Healthy Business**
- Work to improve **educational** advancement and job opportunities for disadvantaged populations.
- Encourage and support **targeted outreach work and collaboration** with Worcester's **academic institutions**, through the Center for Public Health Practice at Worcester's DPH.
- Support opportunities for **anti-racism trainings** and adoption of culturally and linguistically appropriate community services.
- Advocate for funding:
 - For Worcester's community health programs and agencies to receive **Maternal/Child Health funding and postpartum depression funding** at state level.
 - For Worcester's community health programs and agencies to receive funding for **MA Healthy Families program**.
 - For adequate **staffing** of the Worcester DPH
 - For increasing the minimum wage and the Earned Income Tax Credit

Public Health and History
Lesson #7: Summarize and
Present Regularly

Infant Mortality Summits

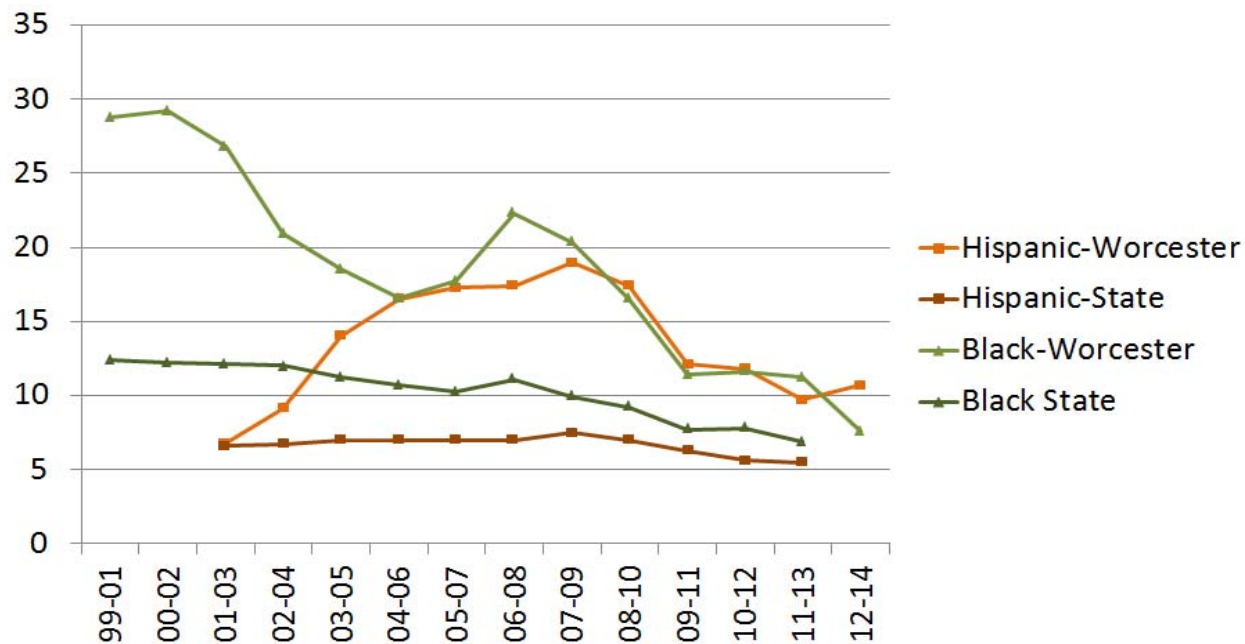
- 2014—Westboro at MOD offices
 - Best Practices: Boston PHC, Springfield Project Baby, WHBC
- 2015—with CoIIN (Waltham)
 - National Program: Collaborative Improvement and Innovation Network for IM
- 2016—Community Healthy Baby Forum
- 2017—today

From our 2016 Report

Hispanic infant mortality rates in Worcester are higher than similar cities in Massachusetts



Infant Mortality by Race 3 Year Rolling Average



2016: March of Dimes Grant Implementing a Community Engagement Model for Reducing Hispanic Infant Mortality: Goals

- Regular Hispanic leadership participation in WHBC
- Connecting with community
 - Student project summer 2016
 - Neighborhood health fairs
 - Community quilts
- Community Healthy Baby Forum September 2016 at Worcester's City Hall
- Toolkit

WHBC Next Steps Overall

- Baby Box Program
- Fetal and Infant Mortality Review (FIMR)
 - Partnering with Boston Public Health Commission to support proposed legislation
- Ongoing real-time chart audits
 - City DPH epidemiologist
- Strengthening community connections
- Worcester's CHIP
- Strategic Planning

