

Health Start Program

Goals:

The goals of the program are to:

Increase prenatal care services to pregnant women

Reduce the incidence of infants who weigh less than 1500 grams at birth and who require more than seventy-two hours of neonatal intensive care

Reduce the incidence of children affected by childhood diseases

Increase the number of children receiving age appropriate immunizations

Increase awareness and importance of good health through educating families

Program Components:

The Health Start Program is a community based program that utilizes lay health workers to provide education, support and advocacy services to pregnant and postpartum women and their families in targeted communities across Arizona. The lay health workers reflect the ethnic culture of their communities and receive extensive training on pregnancy, child growth and development and community resources. Women and families enrolled in the program receive home visits by lay health workers at least once per month during their pregnancy and regular visits after the birth of their children up to two years of age.

Funding

Funding for the Health Start Program comes from monies allocated to the Arizona Department of Health Services from the Arizona Lottery Fund and monies allocated from the state general fund. The funds are used to contract with local county health departments, community health centers and community based agencies to provide home visiting services to women who meet any of the Health Start risk factors.

Target Audience:

The target audience of the Health Start Program includes pregnant and postpartum women and their families who meet any of the Health Start risk factors. Risk factors include current health care problems, previous birth complications, previous poor birth outcomes, substance use, domestic violence, no access to medical care or age less than 19 or over 35. Currently there are 15 programs in 11 counties being funded.

Why is this Program Needed?

Arizona continues to have a lower percent of mothers giving birth who received prenatal care in the first trimester when compared to the Nation. Adequate prenatal care greatly reduces the likelihood of preterm birth and low birth weight. The percent of preterm births has risen fairly steadily over the last decade from 8.9 percent in 1995 to 10.7 percent in 2005. Preterm delivery is the strongest risk factor for low birth weight. In 2005, 6.9 percent of all babies born in Arizona were of low birth weight. The number of teens giving birth in Arizona has reached a



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record high of 12,916 in 2006 resulting in an average of 35 teen births per day. The teen birth rate continues to be higher than the national average even though there have been significant decreases since 1998, following the national trend.

What has the Program Achieved?

The 15 contractors provided over 10,061 home visits to enrolled women and families in 2005. There were 2008 women and 1535 children provided services in 2005. Of the 975 women who enrolled in the program prenatally, 45% were in their first trimester and 30% were in their second trimester of pregnancy. Over 53% of the women enrolled were in the 20-29 age group and 71% were of Hispanic origin. There were 785 babies born to enrolled women in 2005. Only 12 of those babies were of very low birth weight.

For Additional Information Contact:

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Leadership for a Healthy Arizona

