



Alabama's First Teacher Program Works to Prevent and Reduce Infant Mortality in Alabama

Overview

Research suggests that infant mortality is associated with sociodemographic factors such as low income, unmarried mothers, and young mothers and is higher among non-Hispanic black and Hispanic infants. Studies support strategies such as improving prenatal care, reducing maternal smoking and infant smoke exposure, breastfeeding, safe sleep practices, regular well child visits, developmental screening, and injury prevention as key approaches to reducing infant mortality. Multiple research studies show that home visits provided by a nurse, social worker, early childhood educator, or other trained professional during pregnancy and in the first years of life improve child and family outcomes, including maternal and infant health, prevention of child abuse and neglect, and improved child development and school readiness.

Promising Population Health Strategies for Reducing Infant Mortality

A recent report identified two Southern states – Florida and Georgia – as having significantly improved their infant mortality rates using state health policy approaches that incorporate promising population health strategies. Both states used multi-pronged approaches including improving pre and postnatal care, reducing preterm birth and low birthweight, reducing racial disparities in birth outcomes, promoting safe sleep, and home visitation for at risk mothers. Many of these approaches are imbedded into the key components of Alabama's First Teacher Home Visiting Program.

Alabama's First Teacher Home Visiting Program Addresses Infant Mortality

Alabama's First Teacher Home Visiting Program, administered by the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education and delivered through local community organizations, focuses on some of the most vulnerable pregnant women, infants, and young children in the state – groups known to be at highest risk for infant mortality. First Teacher provides voluntary home visiting services to at risk pregnant women and parents with young children, incorporating parent education, referrals for support services, and a strong data measurement component to understand outcomes for the program. First Teacher facilitates collaboration and partnership at the federal, state, and community levels to improve health and development outcomes for at-risk children. First

Teacher uses strong evidence-based home visiting models developed for pregnant women and young children, including Parents as Teachers (PAT) and Nurse Family Partnership (NFP). These models have decades of research indicating that they are cost effective and successful in improving maternal and child health to support healthy pregnancies, better birth outcomes, on-time well child care, and child development.

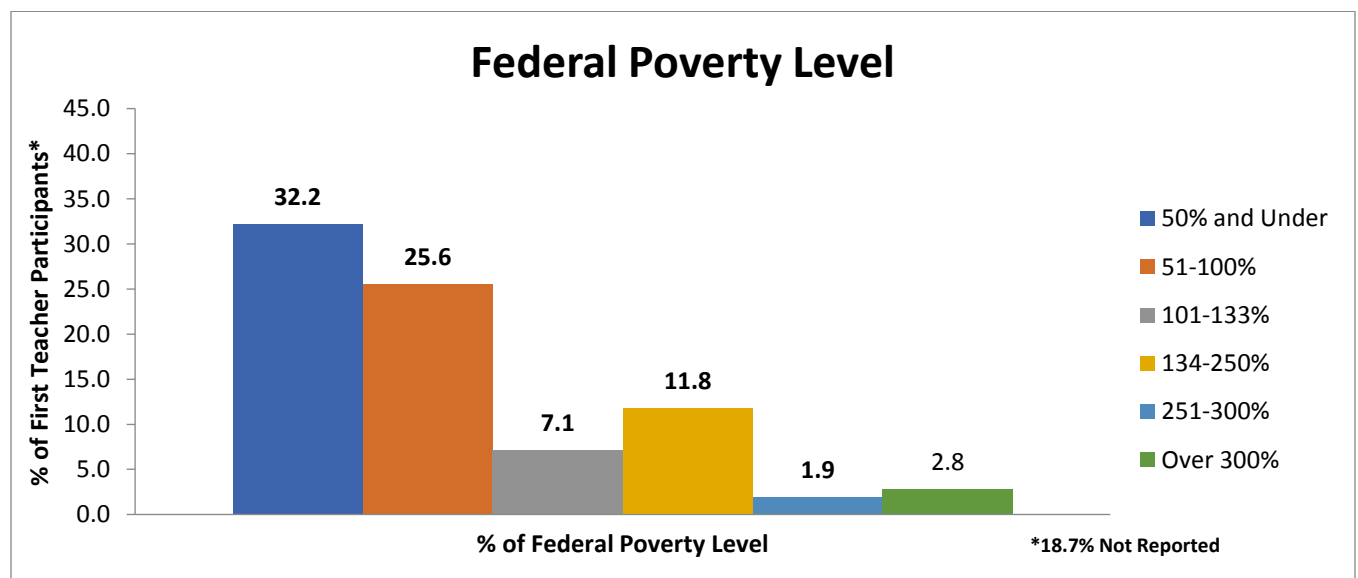
Specifically, Alabama is using federal and state funding to prevent and reduce infant mortality by focusing on several key strategy areas: improve safe sleep practices, reduce smoking before, during and/or after pregnancy, increase the number of infants who are breastfed, promote health for women before, after and in between pregnancies, support tobacco cessation before, during, and after pregnancy, increase the number of children who receive developmental screenings and well-child doctor visits.

First Teacher Serves Alabama’s Most Vulnerable Populations

First Teacher serves some of the most vulnerable, highest risk groups for infant mortality.

- 58% of families served by our program were living at or below 100% of the Federal poverty line.
- 65% of families served by our program were single-parent homes.
- 65% of families served by our program were Black or Hispanic.
- Home visiting reached more than 2,400 at-risk families in Alabama in 2017.
- More than 20,000 home visits were provided in 2017.
- Home visiting services reached at-risk families in 43 counties.

Table 1. Income of Families Served, 2016-2017



First Teacher Home Visiting Program Provides Services in Counties with Highest Infant Mortality Rates

- First Teacher serves all 10 Alabama counties with the highest combined infant mortality rates
- First Teacher serves 23 of the 25 highest infant mortality rate counties in the state

Table 2. 10 Alabama counties with the highest infant mortality rates, 2014-2016 Combined

COUNTY	2014-2016 Combined*		Served by First Teacher Home Visiting Program
	Number of infant deaths	Infant Mortality Rate (per 1,000 live births)	
TOTAL	1,548	8.7	Y
PERRY	8	21.7	Y
PICKENS	15	21.7	Y
SUMTER	10	20.9	Y
MACON	11	19.1	Y
GREENE	5	16.9	Y
MONROE	10	14.9	Y
BUTLER	9	12.7	Y
BIBB	10	12.3	Y
WILCOX	5	12.3	Y
ESCAMBIA	16	12.0	Y
PERRY	8	21.7	Y
PICKENS	15	21.7	Y
SUMTER	10	20.9	Y
MACON	11	19.1	Y
GREENE	5	16.9	Y
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BUTLER	9	12.7	Y
BIBB	10	12.3	Y

*Alabama Department of Public Health, 11/11/2017

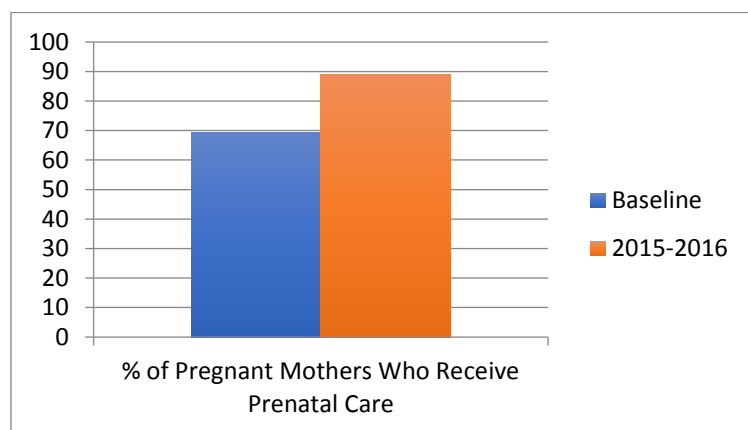
Alabama's First Teacher Home Visiting Program Accomplishments Relates to Lowering Infant Mortality

Since the inception of First Teacher in 2011, our state has made gains in several areas known to prevent and reduce infant mortality, including early prenatal care, preconception medical care, breastfeeding, and well-child doctor visits.

Improvements in early prenatal care

Table 3 shows that at the initiation of the home visiting program in Alabama, 69.2% of pregnant mothers enrolled in First Teacher received prenatal care in the first trimester of pregnancy compared to 88.9% in 2016. Early and adequate prenatal care is one strategy to address infant mortality.

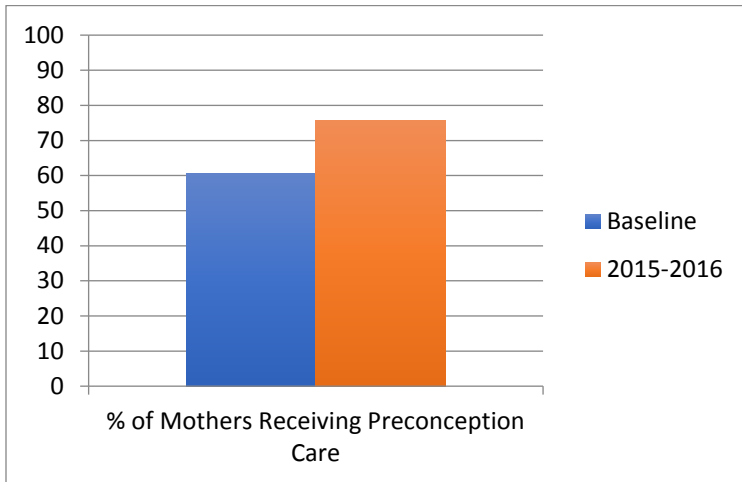
Table 3: % of pregnant mothers receiving prenatal care, baseline compared to 2015-2016



Improvements in preconception care

Table 4 shows that at the initiation of the home visiting program in Alabama, 60.7% of pregnant mothers enrolled in First Teacher received preconception medical care compared to 75.5% in 2016. Preconception care supports women to be healthy prior to pregnancy, providing the best chance for a healthy pregnancy.

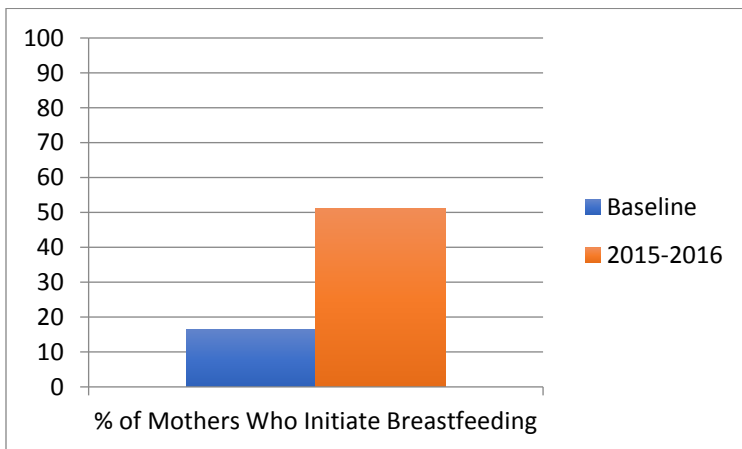
Table 4: % of women receiving preconception medical care, baseline compared to 2015/2016



Improvements in breastfeeding

Table 5 shows that at the initiation of the home visiting program in Alabama, 16.4% of pregnant mothers enrolled in First Teacher initiated breastfeeding compared to 51.2% in 2016. This is a significant “win” given the vulnerable population served by First Teacher is also historically less likely to breastfeed their infants.

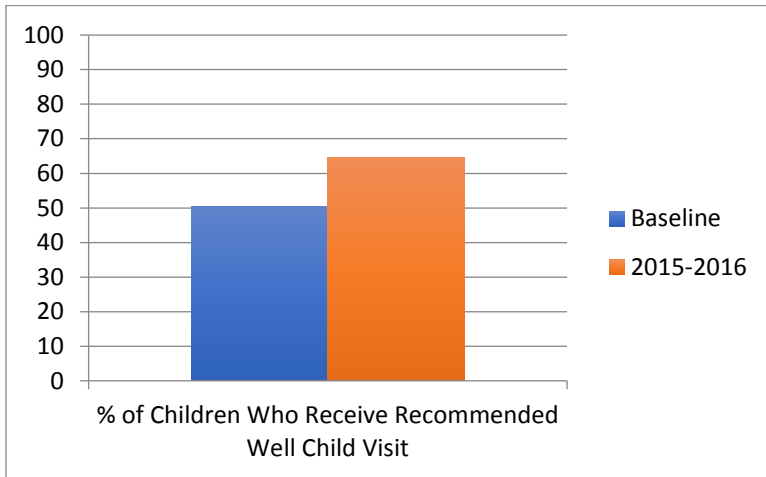
Table 5: % of Mother's Who Initiated Breastfeeding, baseline compared to 2015/2016



Improvements in well child visits

Table 6 shows that at the initiation of the home visiting program in Alabama, 50.3% of children enrolled in First Teacher received recommended well-child doctor visits compared to 64.5% in 2016. Well child visits are important for promoting child health and identifying problems early.

Table 6: % of Children Who Received Recommended Well-Child Visits, Baseline compared to 2015/2016.



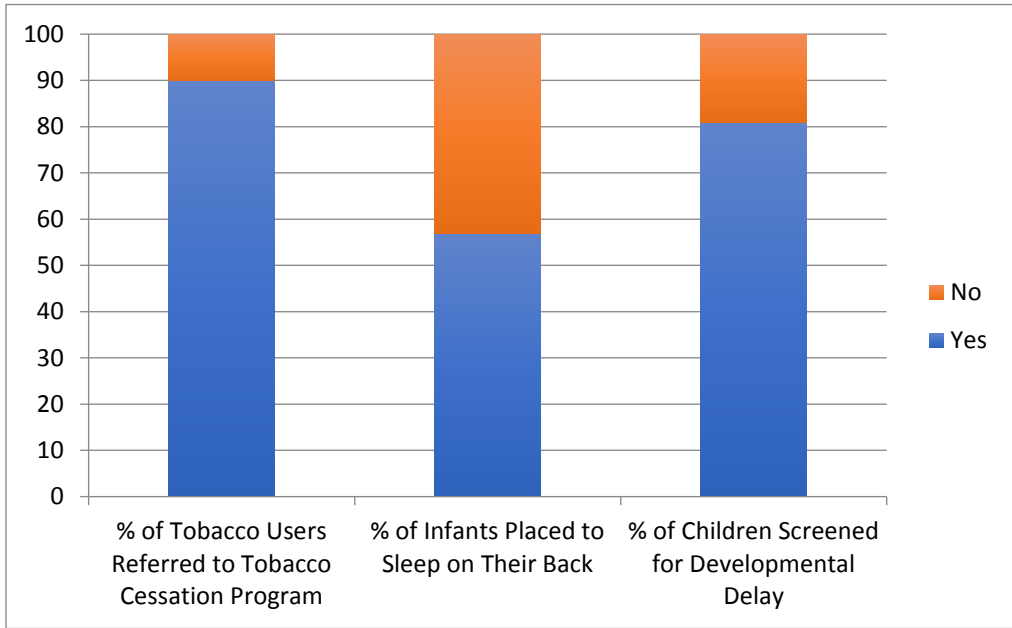
In 2017, First Teacher further improved efforts aimed toward reducing and preventing infant mortality by strengthening parent education and measurement related to:

- American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations for safe sleep
- American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations for breastfeeding until age 6 months
- American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations for developmental screenings
- Tobacco cessation support and referral

Selected accomplishments at baseline include:

- 90% of caregivers who used tobacco at enrollment received tobacco cessation referrals
- 57% of infants were always placed to sleep on their backs and without loose bedding
- 81% of children were screened for developmental delay at ages recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics

Table 7: % of Tobacco Users Referred to Cessation Programs, % of Infants Placed to Sleep on Their Backs, and % of Children Screened for Developmental Delay at American Academy of Pediatrics Recommended Timepoints



Summary

2011, Governor Bob Riley named the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education as the lead agency for home visitation. First Teacher home visiting services provide education, support, and referrals to expectant and new parents/caregivers in the home by a nurse, social worker or educator to Alabama’s most at-risk families. Along with expanding the availability of home visiting services, Alabama is conducting training to support local home visiting programs and is collecting data to measure program improvements in preventing and reducing infant mortality across the state. Alabama will continue to measure the performance of our home visiting program and strive to reach more vulnerable families to help to lower infant mortality rate in the state.

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