

# GRASSROOTS MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH LEADERSHIP TRAINING

To Improve *Infant Mortality* Rates, Ask The *Women*®

2019-2020 Annual Report  
November 2019 - October 2020



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## **Greeting**

The Grassroots MCH Family hope that this annual report finds you and yours doing well. Throughout the challenges of Covid-19, social unrest and personal life changes, the Grassroots MCH Leaders persevered to create needed programs, advocate for impactful policies and draw upon their life experiences to inform and motivate the action of community members and MCH decision-makers to improve social structures underlying poor birth outcomes. *The hard work of the leaders brought our initiative state and national attention!* Below we present our year's successes in each of our project aims. We apologize for the lack of photos throughout this report. We have been working virtually as a team since February to ensure the safety of us all and the communities we serve.

## **Our Guiding Hypothesis**

Grassroots MCH Leaders are critical for driving social, economic and environmental systems change to create neighborhoods that foster healthy pregnancies and infants.

### **Aim 1: Facilitate the development of each grassroots leader**

#### Training and Launching New Grassroots MCH Leaders

- December 2019: Ten new leaders inaugurated. (cover picture is from the ceremony)
- October 2020: Five new leaders completed training, giving us 19 Indiana Grassroots MCH Leaders representing 12 high risk zip codes.

#### A Year of Advancing the Personal Development of Grassroots MCH Leaders

- Six women certified in **Mental Health First Aid**.
- Two leaders trained as **Safe Sleep Ambassadors**, distributed 11 Pack N' Plays to needy families.
- One leader hired part-time by **IU Dept. of Pediatrics** to help build the capacity of local churches to improve infant mortality rates.
- One leader recruited as a full time peer counselor by **Indianapolis Healthy Start**.
- One leader appointed to the **Indianapolis Fair Housing Board**.
- One leader selected to serve as an **Americorps Member**.
- One leader received **Perinatal Anxiety and Mood Disorders Assessment Certification**.
- One leader accepted as a community intern at the **Indiana Institute for Working Families**.
- Created the **Advanced Grassroots MCH Leadership Training Program**. Materials from *The Aspen Institute*, *W.K. Kellogg Foundation*, the *American Public Health Association* and classic literature were used to create this curriculum. Five leaders applied and began their training in late October. To learn more about this unique, impactful training, visit: <https://djoeschm5.wixsite.com/mysite>.

### **Aim 2: Leaders link existing healthy pregnancy/infant development programming for target community**

- **Affordable Housing Group**: Implemented the *100 Acts of Intentional Kindness for Pregnant Women*; canvassed community, hosted 2 virtual safe sleep seminars and started a weekly virtual support group for local mothers in Indianapolis' far eastside.
- **Columbus Team**: Implementing virtual *Partnering with Teen Parents* curriculum to support rural teen parents.
- **Reentry Team**: In partnership with IU Fairbanks School of Public Health and Indianapolis Healthy Start created a community navigation program for reentry pregnant/parenting

women. Formed partnership with Americorps, Indiana Department of Corrections and Indiana State Department of Health to implement this reentry program.

- *Faith-Based Team:* Working with IU Pediatrics and IUHealth Chaplaincy service to develop and implement a MCH framework in local African American churches.

### ***Aim 3: Media project: project dissemination activities***

#### **Launching a Grassroots MCH Leaders Media Platform**

A new website for our initiative was created, please visit at: <https://go.iu.edu/3jkX>

- Twitter: @IndyGMCHL

#### **Impactful Local Presentations Influencing MCH Decision-Makers**



• Hosted a *Spirit & Place Festival Event: HERSTORY: A Prenatal-Postpartum Pop-Up Museum* on November 9, 2019. Forty-one people attended the event. Important networks were created to help advance the work of the Grassroots Maternal and Child Health Leaders. (Figure A)

• Participated as plenary speakers at the 2019 Labor of Love Event (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VvElfQvsfu0>), which was instrumental in raising awareness about Grassroots Maternal and Child Health Leaders. Much of the policy work listed below resulted from the brave, impactful speeches provided by the women at this event. (Figure B)



• Leaders were selected to be a part of the IUPUI Covid-19 Oral History Project (<https://sites.google.com/iu.edu/covid-19oralhistoryproject/about?authuser=0>). As credible sources for traditionally marginalized communities, their inclusion provides a fuller understanding of the pandemic's impact.

#### **National Media Presentations – Revealing the Courage of Grassroots MCH Leaders**

- YouTube Video produced by Kyle Minor, reveals the pain a family experiences with a stillbirth. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VpJyAexrpNU>.
- Grassroots MCH Leader shares in a YouTube Video the tragedy of infant loss and unsafe sleep, “all it takes is one time”. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= PdAwi78er4>
- National Coverage of our reentry program in *US News and World Report*, hosted on Kaiser Health Network: <https://khn.org/news/incarcerated-mothers-reentry-prison-program-helps-new-mom-inmates-transition/>.

### Academic/Scholarly Presentations

- National virtual presentations at the CityMatCH and American Public Health Association Conferences.
- Manuscript describing critical importance of Grassroots MCH movements, accepted for publication in *Humanity and Society*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0160597620969748>

#### **Aim 4: Public policy maternal and child health advocacy**

- Worked with ISDH to develop and test the state's five year MCH assessment survey.
- Three leaders organized three focus groups for ISDH, each in a different high risk zip code, to solicit community members' ideas about improving safe sleep practice.
- Leaders presented at a press conference in the Statehouse to help launch the new bipartisan MCH caucus. (Figure C)
- Leader interning at the Indiana Institute for Working Families created important blogs about policy needs to support marginalized women and children
  - [http://iiwf.blogspot.com/2020/04/addiction-our-three-policy-challenges.html?blm\\_aid=446514](http://iiwf.blogspot.com/2020/04/addiction-our-three-policy-challenges.html?blm_aid=446514),
  - <http://iiwf.blogspot.com/2020/10/tia-washum-to-be-a-productive-member-of.html>
- One leader served on U.S. Senator Todd Young's study committee on providing paid family leave for women in prenatal and postpartum periods.
- Three leaders provided consult to US Rep. Andre Carson (D-Indianapolis) for his bipartisan *Excellence in Maternal Health Act 2019*, which passed the House.  
<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/4215/text?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22hr+4215%22%5D%7D&r=1&s=2>
- Collaborating with ISDH staff to create narrative collection and analysis process for Indiana families who have suffered maternal mortality and morbidity.



#### **Aim 5: Project infrastructure development**

- Private donor provided \$40,000 to support the professional development of the Grassroots MCH Leaders, funds were used to:
  - Support Mental Health First Aid Training
  - Support Internship at Indiana Institute for Working Families
  - Americorps Member service for Grassroots MCH Leader and MPH student
  - Support development and implementation of Advanced Grassroots MCH Leadership Training
- Received \$79,000 contract from ISDH to support:
  - Implementation of the Mothers on the Rise Community Navigation Program for reentry pregnant/parenting women
  - Develop of informant interview process for families who suffered maternal mortality or morbidity
- Our entire program is ready for use in Spanish Speaking communities: Our University of Florida intern translated all the training, recruitment and consenting materials into Spanish and has formed partnerships with the Immigrant Welcome Center, with the aim of recruiting and training a bilingual Grassroots MCH Leader in the next quarter.

We gratefully appreciate all your support of our work. We look forward to another productive year advancing healthy pregnancies and infants for communities still struggling with infant mortality. Please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Turman below with any questions about this report or any of the work of the Grassroots Maternal and Child Health Leadership Training Initiative.

**Respectfully Submitted by:**

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