



A Community Partnership created to improve health care and health education for African American mothers and their babies -- from pregnancy through early childhood.

Strong Beginnings is a program created through the collaborative efforts of many health care and community organizations in the Grand Rapids area. Funded through a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Strong Beginnings is a program created to address the African American infant mortality rate in the Grand Rapids\Kent County community.

Strong Beginnings will focus on four fundamental goals through the summer of 2020:

- Reduce the infant mortality rate for African Americans
- Reduce the barriers to care for pregnant women, infants and toddlers through community outreach, case management and education
- Improve care for pregnant women through improved screening and coordination
- Engage the African American community to advocate for culturally competent care

Aggressive, measurable targets for success have been developed, ranging from increased rates of first trimester care visits to increased treatment rates for women diagnosed with depression. Strong Beginnings has developed a coordinated approach to build new bridges among health systems, community-based organizations and the women and children at risk. This approach will include:

- Community Consortium convened by the Grand Rapids African American Health Institute to give oversight, feedback and hold all parties accountable for advancing the program's objectives
- Local Health System Action Plan coordinated by Healthy Kent 2020 Infant Health Implementation Team to improve risk factor screening and overall care
- Outreach and Support through Community Health Workers working collaboratively with the Kent County Health Department, Cherry Street Health Services, Spectrum Health and St. Mary's.
- Case Management during pregnancy through two years of age
- Education for families, providers and the community on ways to improve infant health
- Treatment for women with symptoms of mental illness\substance abuse disorders, coordinated by the Arbor Circle Corp.

Who is eligible:

African American women who live in the city of Grand Rapids\Kent County and are pregnant or the mother of a child 0-2 years of age.

How can I learn more?

Call 391-5000, or talk to your Health Department, MOMS or clinic nurse

Strong Beginnings is a partnership of Grand Rapids African American Health Institute, Kent County Health Department, St. Mary's Mercy Medical Center, Cherry Street Health Services, Arbor Circle, Healthy Kent 2020, Metropolitan Hospital and Spectrum Health.