

Equal Health for All
A Mandate to Reduce Racial & Ethnic Disparities in Florida

Problem: Florida’s residents suffer from significant racial and ethnic disparities in health. Blacks and other groups are twice as likely to die from cervical cancer, stroke and infant mortality as whites; non-whites are two and a half times more likely to die from prostate cancer and diabetes as their white counterparts. There are eight times more deaths from HIV/AIDS among non-whites compared to the majority population. Florida is one of the most diverse states in the nation and these disparities have a direct and measureable impact on its human, social and economic well-being. Without continued efforts to ensure equal health for all of its residents state and local efforts to achieve health equity in Florida are greatly threatened.

Not Making the Grade: Florida’s Minority Health Report Card

Indicator	2004-2006 Rates By Race*					Healthy People 2010 Objectives
	White	Black	Hispanic	Other Non-White	Non-White	
All Cancers	168.3	187.1	129.7	128.9	178.9	159.9
Breast	21.1	28.2	17.7	15.3	26.4	22.2
Cervical	2.5	4.3	2.2	2.9	4.1	2.0
Colo-rectal	15.1	21.4	14.7	12.2	20.1	13.9
Prostate	18.3	50.0	20.5	12.5	44.7	28.7
Heart Disease	178.4	224.9	181.2	126.0	211.0	166.0
Stroke	34.2	66.5	32.1	39.9	62.8	48.0
Diabetes	18.7	47.5	22.8	21.4	43.8	45.0
HIV/AIDS	4.5	39.0	7.0	5.5	34.2	0.0
Infant Mortality	5.5	13.2	5.3	6.3	11.9	4.5

* Rates are deaths per 100,000 population, except infant mortality which are deaths <1 year per 1,000 live births.
Source: Florida Health Disparities Strategic Plan, 2008-2011, Florida Department of Health.

The Equal Health for All Education Committee began in response to the \$1 million in budget cuts to the *Reducing Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities: Closing the Gap Grant Program* and the potential transfer of the Office of Minority Health to the Division of Family Health Services. Both actions would have threatened state and local efforts in Florida to achieve health equity.

Representatives from the Black Infant Health Practice Initiative (BIHPI- Hillsborough; Palm Beach; Orange; Broward; Duval; Miami-Dade; 2 rural: Gadsden; Putnam), the Black Infant Health Community Collaborative (BIHCC – Kellogg Grant funded initiative to increase leadership capacity in BIHPI communities) and the FL Team of the Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Action Institute (REHDAI - CDC Initiative designed to support community action plans related to health disparities, community capacity building, and the social determinants of health), came together to voice strong opposition to these actions to Governor Crist and Surgeon General Viamone Ros.

After extending appreciation to Senator Arthenia Joyner and Governor Crist for their expedient response in rejecting the transfer of the Office of Minority Health to the Division of Family Health Services, the group decided to become more formalized and extend its reach to community stakeholders committed to the following vision, mission and objectives.

Vision: To galvanize stakeholders from across the state involved in the elimination of racial and ethnic disparities in all disease areas

Mission: To educate key legislators and other community stakeholders about the relevance of funding for health disparities/health equity

Objectives:

1. Advocate for an autonomous Office of Minority Health that will ultimately report to the FL Surgeon General
2. Make legislative appeal to assure optimum funding for the Office of Minority Health and the Closing the Gap Grants
3. Raise awareness to key issues related to health disparities
4. Work collaboratively with the Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Advisory Committee to carry out the aforementioned objectives