

9-2010

# Women's Health Disparities and Midwifery Care: Spotlight on Rhode Island

Dorothy Hiersteiner

*University of Massachusetts Boston*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://scholarworks.umb.edu/cwppp\\_pubs](http://scholarworks.umb.edu/cwppp_pubs)



Part of the [Health Policy Commons](#), [Nursing Midwifery Commons](#), and the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Hiersteiner, Dorothy, "Women's Health Disparities and Midwifery Care: Spotlight on Rhode Island" (2010). *Publications from the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy*. 49.

[http://scholarworks.umb.edu/cwppp\\_pubs/49](http://scholarworks.umb.edu/cwppp_pubs/49)

This Fact Sheet is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for Women in Politics & Public Policy at ScholarWorks at UMass Boston. It has been accepted for inclusion in Publications from the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at UMass Boston. For more information, please contact [library.uasc@umb.edu](mailto:library.uasc@umb.edu).



## Women's Health Disparities and Midwifery Care Spotlight on Rhode Island

Authored by Dorothy Hiersteiner, Research Assistant, Center for Women in Politics & Public Policy, and MPP Candidate, Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University

### Snapshot

Rhode Islanders face unique health disparities based on race, ethnicity and location. Just over six percent (6.3%) of the Rhode Island population is living in Primary Care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs), according to 2008 data.<sup>1</sup> Native American and African American/black communities face particular health disparities, specifically in the areas of reproductive and infant health. In 2008, 79% of the Rhode Island population was non-Hispanic white, while 5% was African-American/black, 11% was Hispanic and 5% had other racial/ethnic backgrounds.<sup>2</sup> In 2005, 12.4% of the total Rhode Island population was foreign born.<sup>3</sup>

### Reproductive, Maternal and Infant Health

In 2004, of women aged 40 and older, 94.1% of African American/black women, 90.1% of Hispanic women and 90% of non-Hispanic white women reported having had a mammogram within the past two years.<sup>4</sup> That same year, 89.2% of African American/black women, 94.2% of Hispanic women and 86.1% of white, non-Hispanic women reported having had a pap smear in the past three years.<sup>5</sup>

### Teen Pregnancy

Between 2001 and 2005:

- Native American teenagers (ages 15-19) gave birth at a rate of 149 per 1,000 teens.<sup>6</sup>
- The average teen birth rate (age 15-19) for Hispanic teenagers was 94.5 per 1,000. African American/black teenagers had a pregnancy rate of 77 per 1,000 teens, while the rate of non-Hispanic white teenagers was 30 per 1,000 teens.<sup>7</sup>

### Prenatal Care

Between 2004 and 2008, Asian women (24.2%), Native American women (21.6%), black women (21.4%), and Hispanic women (19.1%) were significantly more likely to receive delayed prenatal care than white women (12.3%).<sup>8</sup>

### Low Birth Weight

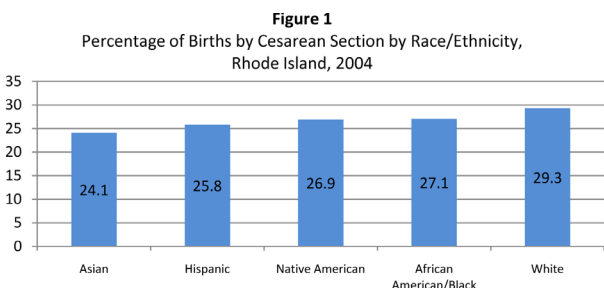
In 2007, the percentage of low birth weight births out of total births was highest for Native Americans, at 12.3%. African American/black infants experienced an 11.4% low birth weight rate. Hispanic infants had a 8.2% low birth weight rate, while non-Hispanic white infants had a 7.4% low birth weight rate.<sup>9</sup>

### Infant Mortality

The infant mortality rate is highest for African American/black infants at 11.4 incidences of infant mortality per 1,000 live births. Hispanic infants experience an infant mortality rate of 8 deaths per 1000 live births. Non-Hispanic white infants experience an infant mortality rate of 4 deaths per 1,000 live births.<sup>10</sup>

### Cesarean Births

In 2004, the Rhode Island cesarean section rate was 28.8%.<sup>11</sup> Figure 1 demonstrates that white women were more likely than women with other racial ethnic backgrounds to experience a cesarean delivery.



Source: Viner Brown, S, Cain, R. (2006). Trends and Patterns in Cesarean Section Rates in Rhode Island. Health By Numbers, Rhode Island Department of Health.

## Health Insurance, Access and Providers

- In 2007-8, 17.7 % of women aged 19-64 were insured through Medicaid.<sup>12</sup>
- In 2003, 37% of all births in Rhode Island were financed by Medicaid.<sup>13</sup>
- In 2007-8, 11% of women aged 19-64 were uninsured.<sup>14</sup>
- In 2008, 6.3 % of the Rhode Island population lived in federally designated, medically underserved areas.<sup>15</sup>

## Midwifery Care

There are approximately 48 Certified Nurse-Midwives (CNMs) in Rhode Island. In 2004, Rhode Island CNMs attended approximately 1,494 births. These deliveries accounted for approximately 16.5% of the total number of Rhode Island births for 2004. Nurse-midwifery is regulated in Rhode Island by the Department of Health. In 1994, the State Health Department's Primary Care Division established a task force to discuss barriers to practice for nurse-midwives. Rhode Island CNMs obtained mandatory third-party reimbursement in 1990.<sup>16</sup> In terms of Direct-Entry Midwives, Certified Midwives (CMs) who are certified by the American Midwifery Certification Board (AMCB) are the only direct-entry midwives permitted to practice in Rhode Island.<sup>17</sup>

## Selected Resources, Programs and Initiatives

### Women's Health Resource Guide

The Rhode Island Department of Public Health publishes a brochure for pregnant women, detailing the resources available to them.

[www.health.ri.gov/publications/resourcedirectories/2009WomensHealth.pdf](http://www.health.ri.gov/publications/resourcedirectories/2009WomensHealth.pdf)

### Minority Health Promotion Program

The Minority Health Promotion Program in Rhode Island currently funds nine community based, Minority Health Promotion Centers.

[www.health.ri.gov/chic/minority/promotion/centers.php](http://www.health.ri.gov/chic/minority/promotion/centers.php)

### First Connections

This program helps families with young children. Home visitors visit with families and provide support and resources to new families.

[www.health.ri.gov/family/familyoutreach](http://www.health.ri.gov/family/familyoutreach)

### Healthy Communities

Rhode Island's Division of Community, Family Health and Equity works to eliminate health disparities by assuring healthy

child development, and prevent and control disease and disability. Healthy Communities is a new initiative designed to reduce health disparities and improve access to care by providing communities with the information, skills, and resources they need to improve preventive health systems. Healthy Communities strives to create more effective connections between local initiatives and statewide policy development.

[www.health.ri.gov/programs/communityfamilyhealthandequity](http://www.health.ri.gov/programs/communityfamilyhealthandequity)

## References

- <sup>1</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation. (n.d). State Health Facts. Retrieved from <http://www.statehealthfacts.org/profileind.jsp?rgn=41&ind=682&cat=8>.
- <sup>2</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation. (n.d). State Health Facts. Retrieved from <http://www.statehealthfacts.org/comparebar.jsp?ind=6&cat=1>.
- <sup>3</sup> Pew Hispanic Center. (2006, October). A statistical portrait of the foreign born population at mid-decade. Retrieved from <http://pewhispanic.org/reports/foreignborn>.
- <sup>4</sup> Rhode Island Department of Health. (2007). Minority health fact sheet. Retrieved from <http://www.health.ri.gov/publications/factsheets/minorityhealthfacts/Summary.pdf>.
- <sup>5</sup> Rhode Island Department of Health. (2007). Minority health fact sheet. Retrieved from <http://www.health.ri.gov/publications/factsheets/minorityhealthfacts/Summary.pdf>.
- <sup>6</sup> The Office of Minority Health, Rhode Island. (2007). Minority health facts: Native Americans in Rhode Island. Retrieved from <http://www.health.ri.gov/publications/factsheets/minorityhealthfacts/NativeAmericans.pdf>.
- <sup>7</sup> Rhode Island Kids Count. (2006). Teen pregnancy and parenting in Rhode Island. Retrieved from [http://www.rikidscount.org/matriarch/documents/Teen%20Pregnancy%20and%20Parenting%20in%20RI%20Issue%20Brief\(1\).pdf](http://www.rikidscount.org/matriarch/documents/Teen%20Pregnancy%20and%20Parenting%20in%20RI%20Issue%20Brief(1).pdf).
- <sup>8</sup> Rhode Island Kids Count (2010). Women with delayed prenatal care. Retrieved from [http://www.rikidscount.org/matriarch/documents/10\\_Factbook\\_Indicator\\_23.pdf](http://www.rikidscount.org/matriarch/documents/10_Factbook_Indicator_23.pdf).
- <sup>9</sup> Rhode Island Department of Health. (2007). Minority health fact sheet. Retrieved from <http://www.health.ri.gov/publications/factsheets/minorityhealthfacts/Summary.pdf>.
- <sup>10</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation. (n.d). State Health Facts. Retrieved from <http://www.statehealthfacts.org/profileind.jsp?cat=2&sub=13&rgn=4>.
- <sup>11</sup> Viner Brown, S, Cain, R. (2006). Trends and patterns in cesarean section rates in Rhode Island. Health By Numbers, Rhode Island Department of Health. 2006, Vol. 8, 6. Retrieved from <http://www.health.state.ri.us/publications/periodicals/healthbynumbers/0606.pdf>.
- <sup>12</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation. (2008). State Health Facts. Retrieved from: <http://www.statehealthfacts.org/profileind.jsp?ind=162&cat=3&rgn=41>.
- <sup>13</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation. (2008). State Health Facts. Retrieved from: <http://www.statehealthfacts.org/profileind.jsp?ind=223&cat=4&rgn=41>.
- <sup>14</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation. (2008). State Health Facts. Retrieved from: <http://www.statehealthfacts.org/profileind.jsp?ind=142&cat=3&rgn=41>.
- <sup>15</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation. (2008). State Health Facts. Retrieved from: <http://www.statehealthfacts.org/profileind.jsp?ind=682&cat=8&rgn=41>.
- <sup>16</sup> American College of Nurse-Midwives. (2008). Certified nurse-midwives and certified midwives in Rhode Island. Retrieved from [http://www.midwife.org/siteFiles/legislative/Rhode\\_Island\\_09.pdf](http://www.midwife.org/siteFiles/legislative/Rhode_Island_09.pdf).
- <sup>17</sup> Midwives Alliance of North America. (2010, May 18). Direct-entry midwifery state-by-state legal status. Retrieved August 26, 2010, from <http://mana.org/statechart.html>.

This fact sheet was developed for the September 2010 roundtables project "Midwifery Care in New England: Addressing the Needs of Underserved and Diverse Communities of Women" sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office on Women's Health (Region I).

### For more information please contact:

Center for Women in Politics & Public Policy  
John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy Studies  
University of Massachusetts Boston  
100 Morrissey Boulevard  
Boston, MA 02125-3393  
Ph: 617.287.5541 · Fax: 617.287.5566  
Email: [cwppp@umb.edu](mailto:cwppp@umb.edu) · Web: [www.mccormack.umb.edu/cwppp](http://www.mccormack.umb.edu/cwppp)