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## CELEBRATE PROGRESS DURING MINORITY HEALTH MONTH THIS APRIL



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**Tallahassee, Fla.**—Join the Florida Department of Health in recognizing April as National Minority Health Month. This year’s theme, “Building Healthy Communities: Accelerating Health Equity throughout Florida,” reflects our continuous and collective efforts to increase momentum toward becoming a state where all Floridians achieve the highest level of health possible. This observance serves as a reminder of the progress made and the commitment to improve health for minority communities.

“Florida is committed to improving the health of all residents through our programs, partnerships and county health departments,” said Interim State Surgeon General Dr. Celeste Philip. “Using data, we will continue to raise awareness about communities with large numbers of racial and ethnic minority members most challenged by health inequities. By addressing social determinants of health through strategic and innovative partnerships in these communities, we will continue to make progress toward achieving health equity for all Floridians.”

The Office of Minority Health works year round to promote several initiatives that support health in Florida:

### [Closing the Gap Grant](#)

In 2000, the department implemented the legislatively appropriated Minority Health Initiatives Closing the Gap program. During the 2014-2015 fiscal-year, more than \$2.8 million in grants were awarded to community-based organizations to provide services under the Closing the Gap program. The 16 grants awarded throughout the state address health issues such as HIV/AIDS, diabetes, heart disease, infant and maternal child health, cancer, sickle cell anemia and adult/child immunizations. These providers are putting in place projects to improve health outcomes of racial and ethnic populations and promote disease prevention activities, including healthy nutrition and physical activity.

A few highlights of the progress made in chronic disease prevention by Closing the Gap Grant projects since 2014:

- Over 10,000 people were educated and assisted with screenings and physical/ nutrition education to help prevent cardiovascular disease. Participants gained knowledge about weight loss, self-monitoring of blood pressure and referrals to primary care if necessary.
- Nearly 15,000 people were reached with healthy eating demonstrations, physical exercise programs and diabetes risk assessments. Of this total, 7,379 had either

experienced weight loss, body mass index (BMI) reduction or returned to a primary care doctor to receive follow-up counseling.

- 7,789 people were educated about colorectal cancer risk assessments and screenings, 500 of which completed the colorectal cancer FIT screening Test or received digital rectal exams for prostate cancer.
- Working to decrease cases of HIV/AIDS, grant recipients helped to educate over 20,000 minority participants about prevention. Almost 17,000 of these participants also received testing for HIV. Additionally, 2,608 youth received testing and preventive education, 40 percent of which improved better protective practices.

### **Florida Healthy Babies Initiative**

Florida's Healthy Babies Initiative provides all 67 counties with \$10,000 to conduct an enhanced data analysis on infant mortality (including an environmental scan of existing pertinent programs) and to host a community action-planning meeting to examine disparities in infant deaths, the role of social determinants of health, and propose local action. The department is committed to achieving health equity by eliminating infant mortality. In addition to the base funding, 36 counties received funding to work with 43 hospitals on promoting Baby Steps to Baby Friendly which supports exclusive breastfeeding in hospitals. Twenty-eight counties received funding to support protective factors for families. These factors include evidence-based programs to support parents and caregivers and reduce the risk of child abuse and maltreatment.

### **HIV/ AIDS Outreach and Prevention**

Over the past decade, Florida has renewed its commitment to eliminate HIV/AIDS disparities among racial and ethnic minorities. The state has 10 Minority AIDS Coordinators throughout the state focusing entirely on minority HIV/AIDS issues. The department works closely with faith-based organizations, civil rights groups and fraternities/sororities to provide HIV/STD testing and outreach and education in traditional and nontraditional settings. The department has invested in identifying linkage-to-care coordinators to link persons living with HIV/AIDS into care. As a result of our efforts, the black-to-white and Hispanic-to-white gap is closing.

To learn more about projects and resources related to Minority Health Month, click [here](#).

### **About the Florida Department of Health**

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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