

CASE STUDY

Overview

In part of the community that Adventist Health White Memorial (AHWM) serves, there are high rates of poverty and overcrowding. Meanwhile, changes to health care funding have made it harder for women in those situations to obtain prenatal and postpartum care, as well as pediatric care for their newborns. To increase access to care, AHWM launched the Welcome Baby Program.

The Welcome Baby Program is part of a community network of programs that work together to provide supportive services to families with newborns. Developed in partnership with First5LA, it is a voluntary, universally provided hospital and home-visitation program offered at no cost to pregnant and postpartum women.

The primary objective of Welcome Baby is to work with families to maximize the health, safety, and security of the baby and parent-child relationship and to facilitate access to support and services when needed. The Welcome Baby Program provides nine points of contact: three prenatal visits; a hospital visit; and five postpartum home visits using trained professionals to work with patients on site and in their homes. The Welcome Baby team provides individual support and information on parenting, early child development, bonding and attachment, health care, nutrition,

breastfeeding, and home safety. Mothers are seen as early as the first trimester of pregnancy and followed through the baby's first nine months. The program has three overarching goals: (1) increase breastfeeding; (2) increase access to health care; and (3) increase connections to local community resources. The caregivers help the moms make and keep all necessary pediatric or OB/GYN appointments, as well as track immunizations

and other health needs for their infants.

Through the program, new mothers are connected to other community and government resources as well, such as LINK, WIC, food banks, and educational programs.

Impact

The Welcome Baby Program was started to improve awareness of parental care, as

well as the perception of child development, benefits of exclusive breastfeeding, and value of screenings for perinatal depression for thousands of moms and their families. The program ensures timely prenatal, postpartum, well-baby visits, ongoing health care, and identification of maternal and neonatal complications. It also ensures that follow-up and treatment occur. Patients receive home safety and local food resources information, and referrals to community mental health resources are provided to women with psycho-social needs.

Since implementing the Welcome Baby Program



An Adventist Welcome Baby patient and her child get a home visit from a staff member.



Adventist staff provide information about the Welcome Baby program at a community event.

in 2013 and receiving designation as a “Baby-Friendly” facility in 2015, the hospital has seen a significant increase in the number of mothers who initiate breastfeeding in the hospital (from 67 percent in 2014 to 89 percent in 2017). Of those who initiated breastfeeding in the hospital, 75 percent continued to breastfeed months later. In addition, the Welcome Baby team works closely with many community partners, including WIC, Breastfeeding Task Force of Greater Los Angeles, First5LA, and community providers to ensure a seamless transition from clinic to hospital to home.

As a result of these efforts, AHWM received the prestigious “Baby-Friendly” designation by Baby-Friendly USA. Currently, less than 10 percent of all hospitals across the nation have achieved this designation. The Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative was developed by the World Health Organization and United Nations Children’s Fund in the early 1990s in an effort to increase breastfeeding rates and, in turn, reduce childhood illness and death.

Lessons Learned

AHWM began this effort with a different program before transitioning to Welcome Baby, explains Tina Bauer, Community Benefit Specialist.

“The Welcome Baby model worked better for us because it is very specific and gives guidelines and resources,” she said. “You also need a commitment

from your hospital. We have such a wide range of people and communities that we serve in East Los Angeles, we can’t do this sort of thing without board and leadership support. Fortunately, they saw the need for this and have been strongly behind it.”

Welcome Baby enrollees experience greater continuity of care and have a higher rate of return for critical follow-up visits. Overall, 97 percent of participants had or scheduled their first well-baby visit within two weeks of delivery. The dramatic increase in exclusive breastfeeding rates confirms that moms are seeking to improve their children’s health status, and the 2010 rates are a direct result of little to no intervention and low awareness of the benefits of breastfeeding among moms and clinicians. Unique modes for reaching the community were required, as was the need for a wide range

of resources (promotoras, collaborations with medical groups, food and clothing and shelters). A monthly Baby Basics Class was launched in 2015 to help expecting moms prepare during pregnancy to overwhelming success. Overall, it is extremely important that all team members commit to greater awareness of the make-up and needs of the multicultural population served at Adventist Health White Memorial.



A Welcome Baby program participant cuddles his child. This photo was taken by the baby’s mother, who went back to school to get a degree after participating in the Welcome Baby Program.

Future Goals

One of the program’s long-term goals is to become evidence-based, says Cynthia Camarillo-Rivera, program manager.

“We have a prescribed curriculum that we use right now, in which every mom is getting the same information,” she said. “We’ll be starting an impact study where some moms will be in a control group, so we can determine the effects of Welcome Baby and show that our program is effective across the

board, for high-risk and low-risk families, across the community and across LA County. We want to obtain the data that shows the positive impact.”

Another important goal is creating sustainability for the program. While the program is currently funded by First5LA, AHWM hopes that, with the study showing that the program’s services are effective and evidence-based, insurance companies will be willing to reimburse for them.


“At the federal and state levels, there has been more funding for home visiting programs,” says Camarillo-Rivera. “So if we continue to see that,

we’re hoping to tap into some of those funding sources. We want to provide these services to the community for a long time.”

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