



FIRST 5 SACRAMENTO
**Reduction
of African
American
Child Deaths**

FY 2019-2020
Executive Summary





Executive Summary

It was found that racism is the root cause of the racial disparities in safe births for both infant and mother.

BACKGROUND & GOALS

In 2011, the **Sacramento County Child Death Review Team** (CDRT) released a Twenty Year Report revealing that African American children were dying at twice the rate (102 per 100,000) of any other ethnic group in the county. The four leading causes of death amongst African American children were perinatal conditions, infant sleep-related (ISR), child abuse and neglect (CAN) homicide, and third party homicide. In response to these alarming findings, the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors created the Blue Ribbon Commission on Disproportionate African American Child Deaths, which in 2013 released a report with goals and recommendations to reduce mortality amongst African American children.

The Blue Ribbon Commission Goals Included:

- Reduce the African American child death rate by **10-20%**
- Decrease the African American infant death rate due to infant perinatal conditions by at least **23%**
- Decrease the African American infant death rate due to infant safe sleep issues by at least **33%**
- Decrease the African American child death rate due to abuse and neglect by at least **25%**
- Decrease the African American child death rate due to third party homicide by at least **48%**

Several communities were found to have the highest rates of African American child deaths: Arden-Arcade, Fruitridge/Stockton Boulevard, Meadowview, Valley Hi, North Sacramento/Del Paso Heights, North Highlands, and Oak Park. Planning efforts and coalition-building began in 2014-2015, resulting in two broad integrated initiatives across Sacramento County, with a particular focus on those neighborhoods most affected:

- **The Black Child Legacy Campaign (BCLC):** Led by the Sierra Health Foundation, this collective impact strategy involves Community Incubator Lead (CIL) organizations in each of the targeted neighborhoods who coordinate prevention and intervention efforts to reduce disproportionate African American child deaths.
- **Reduction of African American Child Deaths:** Led by First 5 Sacramento, this strategy complements and feeds in to BCLC goals. It includes four programs that focus on preventing deaths due to perinatal conditions, infant sleep-related (ISR), and child abuse and neglect causes: the Pregnancy Peer Support Program, Family Resource Centers, the Infant Safe Sleep Campaign, and a Public Education Campaign.

Achievements of First 5-Funded Components

This Report Provides a Summary of First 5 Sacramento's Efforts to Reduce Perinatal and Infant Deaths in FY 2019-2020. They Include:



Pregnancy Peer Support Program provides education, referrals and other support needed to address risks to healthy birth and promote healthy infant and maternal outcomes.



Family Resource Centers aim to serve families through intensive services, like home visitation, parenting education classes, crisis intervention, and light-touch services, such as enhanced core.



Safe Sleep Baby is an educational campaign designed to increase knowledge about infant safe sleeping practices.



Perinatal Education Campaign to raise public awareness about the fact that racism is the root cause of the racial disparities in safe births for both infant and mother.

PREGNANCY PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM



The Pregnancy Peer Support program, formerly called the Cultural Broker program, is delivered by **Her Health First's Black Mothers United (BMU)** program. BMU's efforts include outreach to identify pregnant women as early as possible in their pregnancy, and assess their health needs, risks and assets. Through weekly contacts, BMU

101 babies were born to mothers in the Pregnancy Peer Support program; 88% were born at a healthy birth weight and 83% were delivered full term. There were zero infant deaths in this cohort.

pregnancy coaches provide education, referrals and any other support needed to address risks to healthy birth and promote healthy infant and maternal outcomes.

From July 2019 to June 2020, 180 pregnant African American women were served through the BMU program, and all consented to be included in the evaluation. Almost two thirds of them (61%) resided in one of the seven high-risk target neighborhoods of Sacramento County. Most participants (55%) entered the program during their second trimester, followed by 29% who entered in their third trimester. Based on initial assessments, participants faced a variety of challenges, including unstable housing situations (22%) and lack of transportation (21%). Almost half of clients (44%) were on CalWORKs, and 65% used WIC services for nutritional support. Almost one quarter of mothers were dealing with moderate to high depression, indicated by the PhQ-9 (24%), and 18% faced nutritional deficiencies.

At intake, most (77%) did not have cribs to sleep their babies. As a result of referrals and intensive case management, mothers had fewer risk factors by the end of the program. For instance, the percentage of mothers who did not have a crib decreased from 75% at intake to 7% at follow up (statistically significant improvement).¹

Figure 1 — Birth and Perinatal Outcomes of BMU Clients

	All Infants (n=101)	Twins (n=4)	Singletons (n=97)
			
Healthy Birth	80%	0%	84%
Healthy Birth Weight	88%	0%	92%
Full Term	83%	0%	87%
Preterm Birth	17%	100%	13%
Low Birth Weight	12%	100%	8%

In FY 2019-2020, there were 101 live births in the BMU program, including 97 singletons and 4 twins. Of these, 88% were born at a healthy birth weight, 83% were born full term, and combined, 80% had a healthy birth outcome (birth that is at healthy weight and full term). The percentage of singletons with a healthy birth was 84%. Importantly, there were no stillbirths and no infant deaths prior to the mother exiting the program.

Opportunities for improvement include continuing to reach mothers as early in their pregnancy as possible. In addition, BMU should also focus on retaining current clients so they remain in the program for the duration of their pregnancy. Finally, BMU should continue to increase efforts to leverage funding to build more program capacity and serve more mothers in Sacramento County.

¹ These numbers are comprised of those who exited the program in FY 19-20. The majority of these mothers entered the program in FY 18-19, therefore the percentages differ from the intake risk factor percentages for FY 19-20.

FAMILY RESOURCE CENTERS

FRC Neighborhood Locations

- Arden Arcade
- Del Paso Heights
- Meadowview
- North Highlands
- North Sacramento
- Oak Park
- Rancho Cordova
- South Sacramento
- Valley Hi

Nine **Birth & Beyond Family Resource Centers** (FRCs) are operated by six organizations and aim to serve families through intensive services, like home visitation, parenting education classes, crisis intervention, and light-touch services, such as enhanced core.

First 5 Sacramento provides funding for Family Resource Centers with the goal of decreasing child abuse across the entire Sacramento population, with a specific effort to reach African American parents and their young children.

Birth & Beyond strategically locates their Family Resource Centers in neighborhoods that are characterized by high birth rates, low income, and above the County averages for referrals to and substantiated reports to Child Protective Services (CPS), the greatest connection of referrals to the child welfare system for child abuse and neglect. The FRCs are located in the neighborhoods [listed on the left](#).

The locations of the FRCs coincide with the neighborhoods identified by the Blue Ribbon Commission as the focal areas for the RAACD initiative. Although the focus is reducing child death across all of Sacramento County, the FRCs in South Sacramento (Meadowview, Valley Hi) were expanded, and the FRC in Arden Arcade was re-established through First 5 funding with the specific target of serving African Americans and reducing the African American child death rate. All services that FRCs provide contribute to decreasing child abuse and neglect, however in the current report, the focus was on home visitation and parenting education outcomes.

The Home Visitation program through Birth & Beyond uses the Nurturing Parenting Program (NPP), an evidence-based home visitation curriculum provided at least weekly, with a minimum of two months of visitation services. In FY 2019-20, 557 parents engaged in home visitation services funded by First 5 Sacramento. Of the parents served in the home visitation program, 21% (117/557) identified as African American. Participants in both home visitation and parenting education programs were screened using the Adult Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI), a tool that measures risk for child maltreatment. It includes five domains: Expectations of Children, Parental Empathy Towards Children's Needs, Use of Corporal Punishment, Parent-Child Role, and Children's Power. Each item is scored on a scale of 1 (high risk) to 10 (low risk).

Two hundred seventy parents had both a pre- and post- assessment after completing the NPP home visitation program; 46 of whom were African American. In the figure below, mean scores on all domains of the AAPI are displayed, separated by African Americans and All Other Races. Overall, African Americans performed similarly to those of other racial backgrounds, and in general scores on the AAPI tended to increase from pre- to post-assessment. However, for African Americans, their AAPI score on Children's Power actually decreased from pre- to post-test (although this change was not statistically significant). This demonstrates an area of potential focus for the home visitation program.

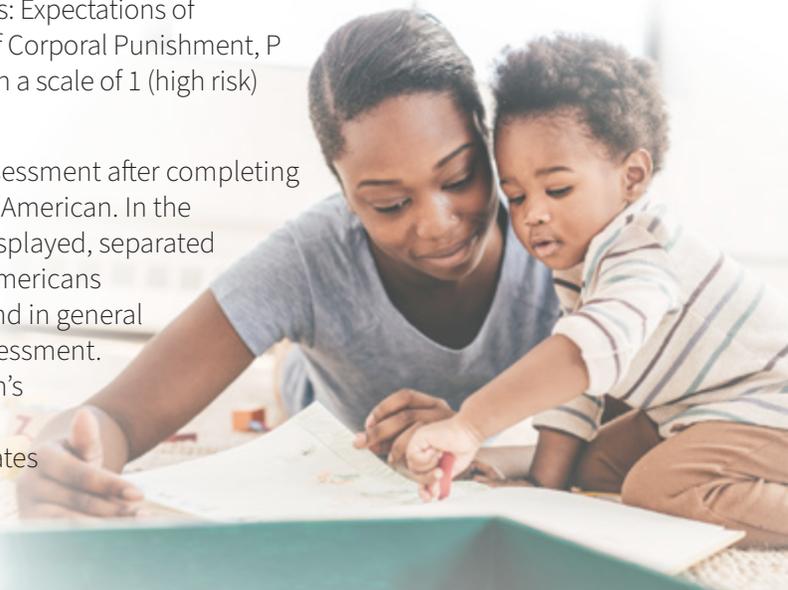
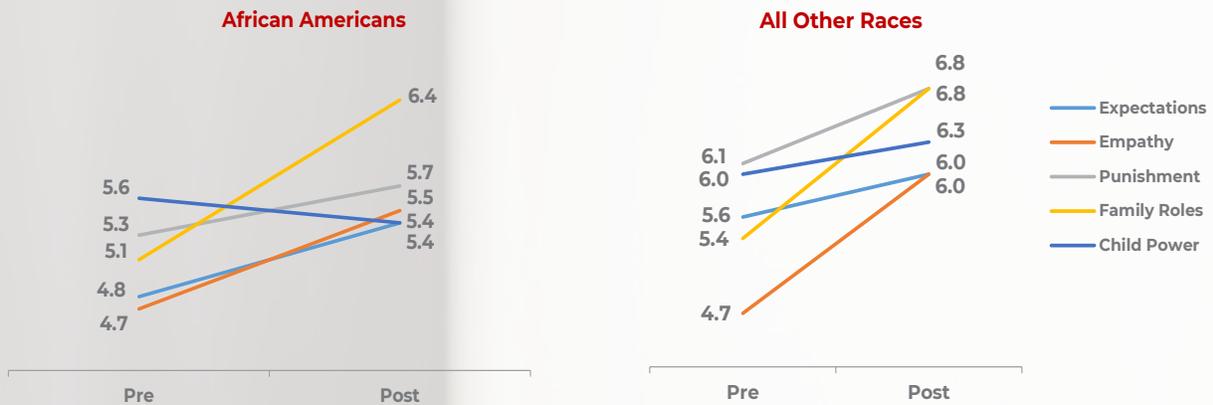


Figure 2 — Change in Mean Scores on AAPI in Pre- and Post-Test for Home Visitation Clients



Source: AAPI pre- and post-assessment scores, Birth & Beyond 2018. Note: African American N = 46. All Other Races N = 223.

One hundred thirty seven parenting education participants had both a pre- and post- test; of these, 38 were African American. Both groups displayed increases in mean score across all domains of the AAPI. However, African Americans tended to start with lower mean scores on the AAPI (see figure below). This further demonstrates the need for this racial group to be recruited for participation in services like parenting classes.

Figure 3 — Change in Mean Scores on AAPI in Pre- and Post-Test for Parenting Education Clients



Source: AAPI pre- and post-assessment scores, Birth & Beyond 2019-20. Note: African American N = 38. All Other Races N = 99.

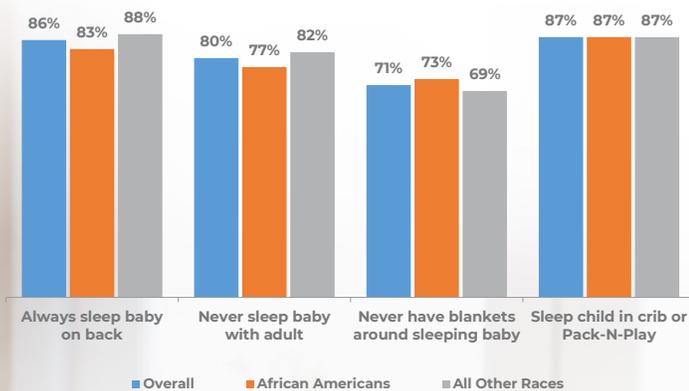
SAFE SLEEP BABY

Safe Sleep Baby (SSB) is an educational campaign conducted by the **Child Abuse Prevention Council (CAPC)** to increase knowledge about infant safe sleeping practices. Specific goals include training and educating pregnant and new parents, health professionals, and social service professionals about infant safe sleep practices. SSB provides education through home visits and hour-long workshops. In addition to education about safe sleep, CAPC provides cribs to pregnant or new mothers who do not have a safe location to sleep their baby. Although SSB is a universal program that is offered to parents of all races, there is a special focus on African American families.

From July 2019 to June 2020, there were 984 parents who received the Safe Sleep Baby training, 28% (247) of whom were African American, and 54% resided in RAACD’s targeted zip codes. Pre and post training data showed statistically significant increases in the knowledge that *babies should NOT be tightly swaddled when sleeping for the first six weeks, babies placed on their backs to sleep are NOT more likely to choke on their own spit up, and breastfeeding helps to reduce the risk of SIDS.* Within 3-4 weeks of the SSB training, 180 parents were reached with a follow-up call to understand the extent to which they were using infant safe sleep practices. The most commonly reported safe sleep behavior was *sleeping child in crib or Pack-N-Play* (87%; 156/180) followed by *always sleeping their baby on their back* (86%; 155/180), *never sleeping baby with an adult* (80%; 144/180), and *never having blankets around their sleeping baby* (71%; 127/180).

The Safe Sleep Baby campaign has consistently shown that the majority of parents trained on safe sleep practices go on to follow those practices with their infants; 87% of new parents reported they were sleeping their child in a crib or Pack-N-Play.

Figure 4 — Percent of SSB Participants Practicing Infant Safe Sleep Behaviors, by Race



Source: CAPC, SSB Follow up Survey. Overall N=180; African American N = 60; All Other Races N = 120. There were no statistically significant differences between African Americans and All Other Races.

In addition to safe sleep education for parents, the Safe Sleep Baby Campaign accomplished the following:

- **334** community-based service providers and five medical providers participated in “train-the-trainer” workshops to help them impart safe sleep knowledge to their clients and patients
- **485** cribs were provided by the Cribs4Kids program to parents and caregivers. Approximately 36% (174) of all cribs distributed were to African American parents.

Opportunities for improvement include continuing to increase reach into the 7 RAACD high-risk neighborhoods, increasing social media presence and track SSB posts on other social media pages (e.g., CAPC website, My Black Pregnancy, My Black Pregnancy Meet Up), and to continue increasing reach into medical providers offices.



PERINATAL EDUCATION CAMPAIGN

The collage features several key elements: a website header with logos for Sacramento County Public Health, First 5 Sacramento, and Unequal Birth, and navigation links for Home, About, Research, and Take Action; a billboard with the headline '861 Unequal Birth Radio Advertisements' and a sub-headline stating that Black mothers and babies are dying at alarming rates due to racial bias and discrimination; a large graphic showing '3,115,570 Social Media Impressions'; a billboard with the headline '478,526 Billboard Impressions'; a smartphone displaying an Instagram post with the text 'Black moms are 4x more likely to die during pregnancy.' and a link to 'unequalbirth.com'; and a social media graphic with the text 'Black babies are 2x more likely to die than other races.' and the website 'UnequalBirth.com'.

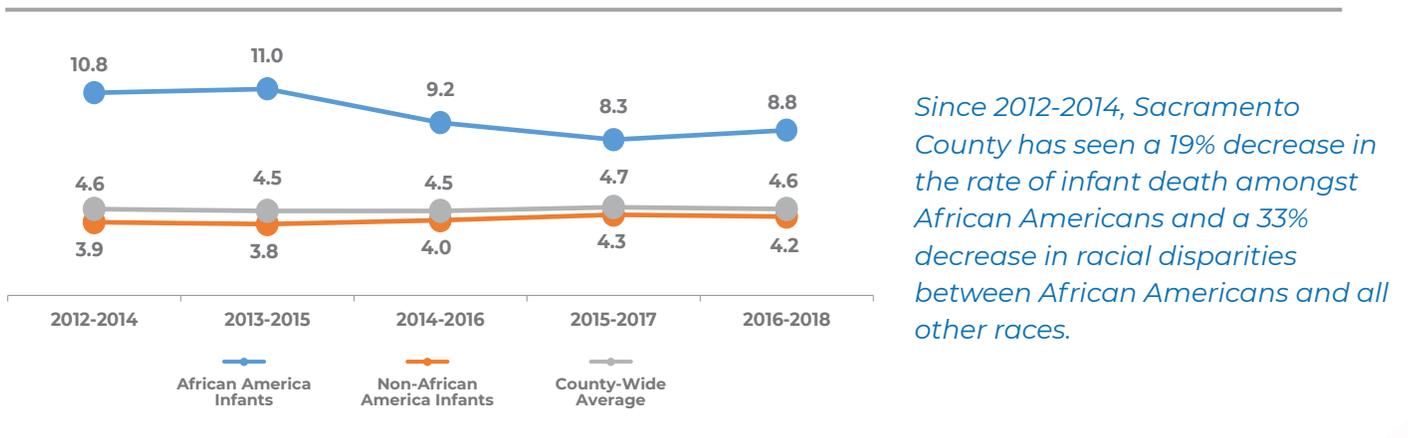
The fourth strategy funded by First 5 Sacramento to reduce African American infant deaths was a public education campaign. In a groundbreaking partnership with **Sacramento County Public Health Department**, the purpose of the Unequal Birth campaign was to raise public awareness about the fact that racism is the root cause of the racial disparities in safe births for both infant and mother. This campaign, including radio and social media advertisements, LED Billboards, and the creation of a website, was managed by Runyon Saltzman, Inc. (RSE). There was a total of 861 radio advertisements, 3,115,570 impressions from social media advertisements, and 478,526 billboard impressions from the start of the campaign (February 2020) to June 30, 2020.

Opportunities for improvement include having pre-drafted responses for negative social media comments, increasing the use of short video content for paid social media posts to increase engagement, and providing text or call options, instead of solely a website, for those who do not have access to Internet.

COUNTYWIDE TREND DATA

In order to measure the impact of RAACD efforts, data from Sacramento County's Department of Public Health and the Child Death Review Team (CDRT) were utilized. Public Health defines infant death as any death that occurs before one year of age. During the baseline period of 2012-2014, African American infants died at a rate of 10.8 per 1,000 births, but this rate was reduced by 19% to 8.8 per 1,000 births in 2016-2018. Additionally, these data show a 33% reduction in the disparity between African American infant death and all other races in Sacramento County.

Figure 5 — Three-Year Rolling Average Rate of Infant Death in Sacramento County

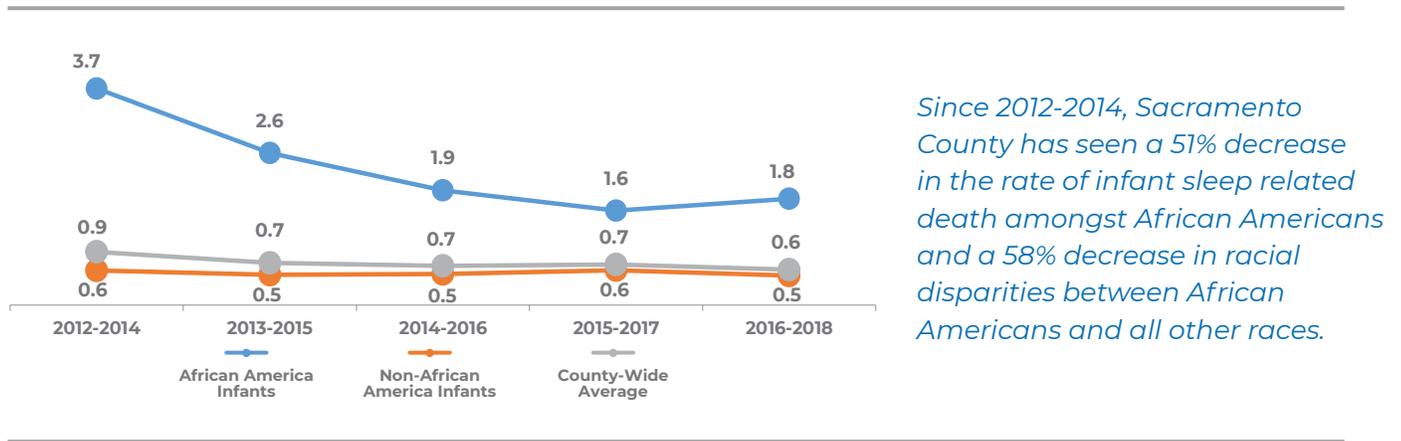


Source: Sacramento County, Department of Health Services, Public Health Division, Epidemiology Program, Birth Statistical Master Files. Rate is per 1,000 infants.



From 2012-2014 to 2016-2018, there was also a 51% decline in the rate of African American child deaths due to infant safe sleep issues, exceeding the Blue Ribbon Commission’s targeted reduction of 33% by 2020. Additionally, there was a decline in the discrepancy between infant sleep related deaths between African American and all other races by 58%.

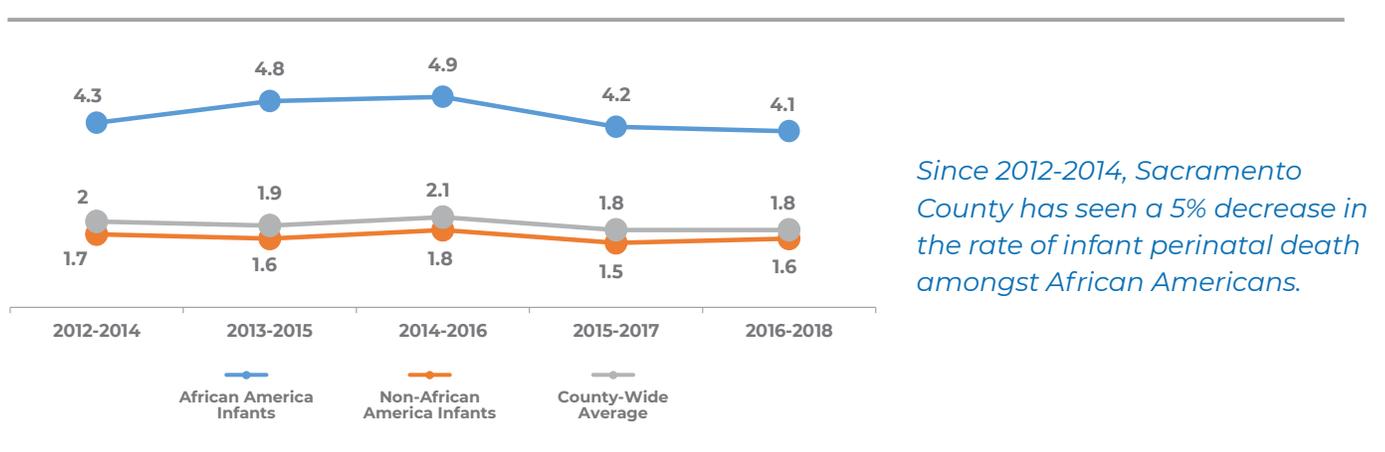
Figure 6 — Three-Year Rolling Average Rates of Infant Sleep Related Deaths in Sacramento County



Source: Sacramento County Child Death Review Team Report 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018. Rate is per 1,000 infants.

During the baseline period of 2012-2014, African American infants died from perinatal causes at a rate of 4.2 per 1,000 births. Unfortunately, there was a small increase in the rate of death in the time periods of 2013-2015 and 2014-2016. However, the rates decreased in both 2015-2017 and 2016-2018, now below the original baseline rate (a 7% decrease). This represents a promising downward trend and needs to be further tracked.

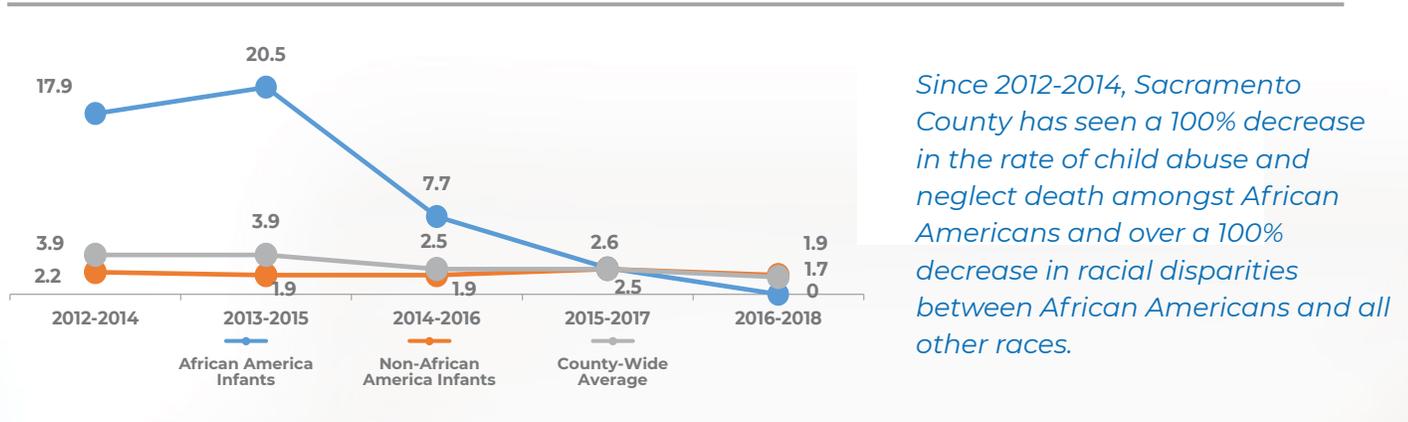
Figure 7 — Three-Year Rolling Average Rates of Infant Death Due to Perinatal Causes in Sacramento County



Source: Sacramento County Child Death Review Team Report 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018. Rate is per 1,000 infants.

During the baseline period of 2012-2014, African American children (0-5) died from Child Abuse and Neglect at a rate of 17.9. Due in part to the efforts of the Family Resource Centers, this rate has drastically declined to 0 in 2016-2018. This represents a 100% overall decrease and an over 100% decrease in disparities compared to the baseline year.

Figure 8 — Three-Year Rolling Average Rates of Child (0-5) Death Due to Child Abuse and Neglect in Sacramento County



Source: Sacramento County Child Death Review Team Report 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018. Rate is per 100,000 children.



Photo Credits

All photographs in this Executive Summary are stock photos that are posed by models.

RAACD Resources

If you would like to learn more about the Reduction of African American Child Deaths initiative, please contact one of the following partners:

First 5 Sacramento
(916) 876-5865

Black Mothers United
Her Health First
(916) 558-4812

Safe Sleep Baby and Birth & Beyond
Child Abuse and Prevention Council
(916) 244-1900

Public Education Campaign
Runyon Saltzman, Inc.
(916) 446-9900

Black Child Legacy Campaign
(916) 993-7701

