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Lessons Learned from Exceptional Washington Local Health Departments in Maternal and Child Health
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Local health departments (LHDs) are under increasing pressure to improve performance with limited resources. While research has found that financial resources may be associated with better health outcomes, there are some LHDs that maintain exceptional performance, even with limited budgets. Our goal was to identify and learn from high performing local health jurisdictions in maternal and child health in Washington State.

**METHODS**

Using data from the Public Health Activities and Services Tracking (PHAST) database as a resource for identifying Positive Deviant LHDs in MCH outcomes in terms of 4 areas:
- Teen Births
- Late or No Prenatal Care
- Infant Mortality
- Percent of Low Weight Births

**FINDINGS**

**Themes**
Positive Deviant LHDs focus on assuring their communities have access to needed services, even when that means changing their roles and responsibilities.

Importance of Community Partnerships:
- Community Based Organizations
- Schools
- Internal

Importance of Clearly Defined Goals:
- Coordination and Administration
- Population Based
- Data-Define

**Challenges**

Funding

Variations in Data Collection

Staff Turnover

**IMPLICATIONS**

LHDs can establish and maintain strong partnerships by providing:
- Technical Expertise
- Data Analysis
- Referral and Administrative Services for Community Agencies

Many LHDs have shifted their focus to data-driven basic public health activities and population-based services to cast the widest net with limited resources. Other LHDs can use many of the practices described here to improve their practice and health outcomes.

**PARTNERSHIPS**

“Build community partnerships! Not advocates for your programs which is what public health does. Partnership is where peers come together and develop strategies to reach specific goals.”

**DATA**

“The opportunities in a local health department for data driven decision making are the exception rather than rule. There’s been an upsurge of interest in assessment and it’s getting more notice.”

“We look at the data. Track the data. When we see a problem in the data, we go for it.”

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