

September 2022

Maternal Health and Infant Mortality in the Missouri Bootheel

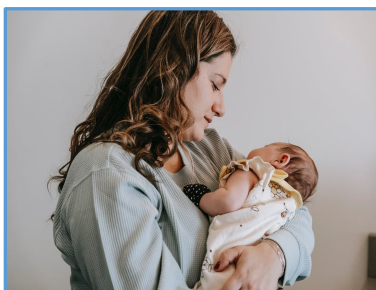
One of the many things AHEC centers do is respond to health disparities within their regions. Rates of infant and maternal mortality are higher in Southeast Missouri, especially in the Bootheel, than the rest of the State. This region of Missouri has many unique challenges that have negatively impacted the infant/maternal mortality rate in the area. According to HRSA and the Bootheel Perinatal Network “Women in the region, particularly Black women, face challenges in accessing high-quality maternal health services at all stages in the continuum of care. According to BPN staff, two major hospitals discontinued obstetrics (OB) services in 2014 and 2018, leaving many pregnant women in the region with no local services. Women either leave the state or travel more than an hour to receive services elsewhere in Missouri. Women in the Bootheel experience worse maternal and infant health outcomes than women in the state and nation overall.”



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To help combat infant and maternal mortality locally, SEMO AHEC has received two different grants to support moms, provide resource navigation, conduct research, and

host maternal health provider focus groups. Funding was received from Bootheel Babies and Families (through the Missouri Foundation for Health) and The National AHEC Organization (through the Maternal Health Learning and Innovation Center). These grants allowed the center to hire four new dedicated staff to



serve the region as case managers/navigators and to provide emergency supplies to local moms in need. Funds will also support training specific to maternal health to the entire region. “We are very proud and excited to be able to assist with this important work in our region and hope to make a difference”, says SEMO AHEC Executive Director, Megan Murray.

MAHEC is a partnership of seven locally governed organizations and three university-based health professions education programs working statewide to increase the numbers of Missouri youth entering stable, high-paying jobs as healthcare professionals and the numbers of professionals caring for underserved populations.

The MAHEC partners include:

- A.T. Still University Kirksville
- University of Missouri-Columbia
- Saint Louis University
- East Central Missouri ECMO AHEC – St. Louis
- Mid-Missouri AHEC – Rolla
- Northeast Missouri NEMO AHEC – Kirksville
- Northwest Missouri NWMO AHEC – St. Joseph
- Southeastern Missouri SEMO AHEC – Poplar Bluff
- Southwestern Missouri SWMO AHEC - Springfield
- West Central Missouri WCMO AHEC – Kansas City