



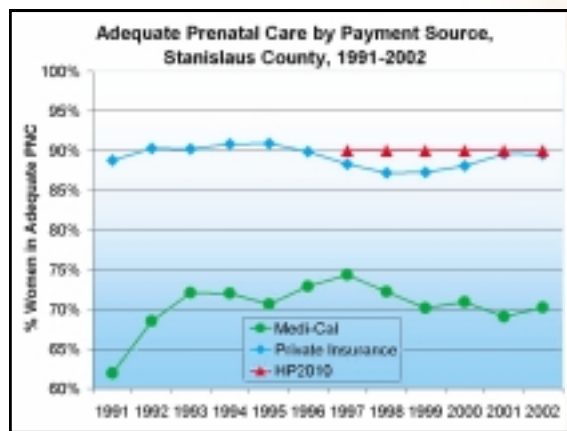
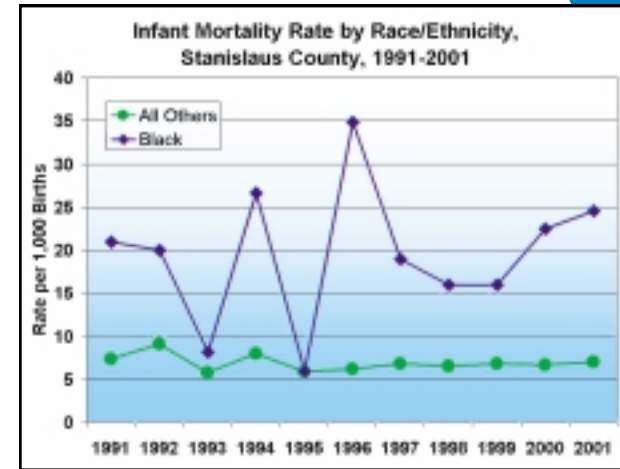
Low Birth Weight

Low birth weight is associated with higher death rates and medical problems that can lead to permanent disabilities. Nationally, low birth weight is the second leading cause of infant mortality following birth defects. Premature babies are often low birth weight, may have under-developed brains, and are at high risk for having medical problems and dying within the first year of their life. Lack of proper nutrition among pregnant women may account for 57-65% of babies born with low birth weight. Other factors that can lead to poor birth outcomes are substance abuse (smoking, alcohol, and drugs) and stress.

The Role of Prenatal Care

The best way to improve birth outcomes is to ensure and provide adequate prenatal care.

Significant evidence shows that successful childbearing begins with early (first three months of gestation) and continued prenatal care. This ensures proper monitoring to reduce the risks of the pregnant women. It is important to see a medical provider if you are planning on having children or as soon as you become pregnant. Private insurance patients are at the national objective for adequate prenatal care, but those on Medi-Cal are well below the national mark. Much collaboration between providers, health plans, and the HSA has been done to ensure improvement in this significant area, but it is obvious that much work remains.



What Is Being Done:

A coalition of physician/providers, hospital representatives, community, clergy, HSA staff and the Children and Families First Commission have partnered to provide education to providers and the community regarding the importance of prenatal care. Door-to-door community outreach helps us in identifying pregnant women and getting them into early prenatal care. Public Health Nurses (PHN) provide in-home case management for high risk and first time moms. The PHN closely monitors weight gain, ensures proper development, checks illnesses that can threaten the life of the infant, encourages breast-feeding, and makes appropriate medical referrals. These programs focus on ensuring the health of mothers, since healthy babies come from healthy mothers.

Teen Pregnancy

How big is the problem?

- Each hour nearly 100 teen girls get pregnant and 55 give birth in the nation.
- Teen birth rates in the San Joaquin Valley are more than twice as high as those in the Bay Area.
- Stanislaus County is 16th highest (worst) among the 58 counties for teen pregnancy.
- 4 out of 10 girls in this country get pregnant at least once before age 20 and most of these pregnancies are unintentional.

Why should we care about teen pregnancy and childbearing?

Teen mothers are less likely to complete high school and more likely to end up on welfare. The children of teen mothers are at significantly increased risk of low birth weight/prematurity, poor academic performance, insufficient health care, inadequate parenting, and abuse/neglect. Girls born to teen mothers are 22% more likely to become mothers as teens themselves. Sons of teen mothers are more likely to end up in jail. Each year the federal government spends about \$40 billion to help families that began with a teenage birth.

What is the SCHSA doing to reduce teen pregnancy?

- **The R.E.A.L. Project (Responsibility, Education, Attitude, Leadership)** provides prevention education curricula in our junior and senior high schools as well as in the community.
- **Adolescent Family Life and Cal-Learn Programs** case manage teens that are already pregnant or parenting. The goals of these programs are to ensure a healthy pregnancy outcome, help the young women to complete their high school education, and teach parenting skills.
- **The SHADE Teen Clinic** at the Paradise Medical Office provides confidential family planning services to sexually active teens. Its unique aspect is that trained peers provide "teen friendly" counseling.
- A similar clinic is planned for the Hughson Medical Office in the coming year.

HSA is committed to continue efforts to convince young people that it is in their own self-interest and that of future generations to avoid early pregnancy and childbearing.

