

Abstract Only

State Health Department and University Evaluation of North Carolina's Maternal Outreach Worker Program

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Introduction

The Maternal Outreach Worker (MOW) Program is a social support intervention using lay helpers to provide support, health education, and outreach to Medicaid-eligible women at risk for poor pregnancy and parenting outcomes. State Health Department and University collaborators designed a two-pronged evaluation comprised of programwide and interview study components to assess the impact of the program on pregnancy outcomes, health behaviors, and infant health status.

Methods

Programwide evaluation data are based on 1992-1995 N.C. birth files for the original 24 participating counties and include 1,726 MOW participant births and 12,988 comparison births whose records were linked to birth files and met the study criteria. For the interview study 373 MOW participants and 332 comparison women were personally interviewed three times: during pregnancy, one month postpartum, and one year after delivery.

Results

Risk factors associated with poor pregnancy and parenting outcomes were greater among MOW participants than comparisons in both the programwide and intensive study components. Caucasian MOW participants had slightly higher rates of adequate prenatal care. African Americans were found to have less adequate prenatal care. Fewer than expected LBW and VLBW births were observed for African-American MOW participants. MOW Program participation did not affect the utilization of health and social services for infants. African Americans, regardless of whether they received MOW services, fared better than Caucasians in terms of having their pregnancy needs fulfilled.

Conclusions

Findings show the need to further explore appropriate measures of maternity support program outcomes and indicate inconsistent program benefit among subpopulations.

Medical Subject Headings (MeSH)

Social support, pregnancy, program evaluation. [Am J Prev Med 1997; 13 (Suppl 2):38-44]

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