

Taking Action for the Health of Our Children

Two years ago, Nationwide Children's Hospital, the Columbus Public Health Department and more than 20 community partners came together to assess the health of children in Franklin County and to generate action around key indicators to help children reach their full potential. Since the launch of our 2008 Collaborative Children's Health Report, major new community initiatives have launched around the issues of obesity and preterm births, and action is being taken around all 10 of the public health indicators identified as key barometers of children's health. Now it is time for us to again get a status check on how Franklin County's children are faring compared to the state and the nation.

The 2010-2011 Full Potential Collaborative Children's Health Report revisits all 10 of the public health indicators from the initial report, examining current data, gaining fresh insights from local experts, providing updates on some of the children and families we first met in the 2008 report, and introducing new faces to some of these vital issues. New to the 2010 report is a progress report card, which you can find on page 8. This snapshot of our findings summarizes the results and assigns two "lights" to each indicator, showing how the community was doing in the original 2008 report and whether we've seen improvement since then.

We are once again taking a more in-depth look at certain indicators. Pediatric obesity remains a local emergency, with BMI screenings revealing that 47 percent of fifth graders in Columbus City Schools are overweight or obese. The good news is that the community is taking action. In 2010, with the support of many Full Potential partners, the Healthy Choices for Healthy Children act was passed in the State of Ohio. This landmark legislation will increase fitness and nutrition in schools throughout the state.

Preterm birth remains the number one cause of infant deaths in our community, and infant mortality rates are still higher in Franklin County than Ohio or the U.S. However, the collaborative Ohio Better Birth Outcomes initiative is tackling the issue through a series of proven interventions with high risk pregnant women which are already starting to improve the numbers around prematurity.

We also still have a wide disparity in immunization rates between the urban and suburban areas of our county. To help address this, Columbus Public Health, Nationwide Children's Hospital and Columbus City Schools are holding seasonal flu vaccination clinics at every single school in the district this year. This is yet another example of the difference a community can make when committed partners come together around an issue.

As you read this report, I encourage you to consider how you can play a role in improving the well-being of the children in Franklin County. Much of the progress to date is a result of people and organizations that took a stand on one of the indicators and pledged to make a difference. Our hope is to spark action from everyone who cares about the future of our children. Together, we can help more of them reach their full potential.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Allen".

Steve Allen, MD
Chief Executive Officer
Nationwide Children's Hospital
Columbus, Ohio