Fetal and Infant Mortality Review

Making a Difference in the Community
Unique among all health outcomes, the death of an infant has always been viewed as a sentinel event that serves as a measure of a community’s overall social and economic well-being as well as its health. It is also a measure of the organization and abilities of its local health and human services and the robustness of community resources. Often the causes of infant deaths leave families and communities with few answers and asking: “Can anything be done to make a difference in the future?”

FETAL AND INFANT MORTALITY REVIEW CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Fetal and Infant Mortality Review (FIMR) is a community-owned, action-oriented process that results in improved service systems and resources for women, infants and families.

The FIMR process brings a community team together to examine confidential, de-identified cases of infant deaths. The purpose of these reviews is to understand how a wide array of local social, economic, public health, educational, environmental and safety issues relate to the tragedy of infant loss.

Having gained a comprehensive understanding of these issues from the case reviews, a broad forum of interested community members-leaders, elected officials, providers, agencies, advocates and consumers-are able to reason together and act to improve services and resources.

As service systems and resources continue to improve through FIMR, the future for local women, infants and families will be better.

“FIMR is the most fulfilling, interesting, satisfying, frustrating and important work that I have engaged in. Beyond selfish self growth, I firmly believe and have seen the changes in... systems that have been directly influenced by our team.”

—John E. Wright, MD Pediatrician and FIMR Case Review Team Leader

Broward Country, Florida
KEY STEPS

- Information about the infant death is gathered. Sources include public health and medical records.
- An interview with the mother who has suffered the loss is conducted, if the mother agrees. Professionals with training in grief counseling assess the needs of the family and refer to bereavement support and community resources.
- The Case Review Team composed of health, social service and other experts from the community review the summary of case information and the interview, identify issues and make recommendations for community change, if appropriate.
- The Community Action Team, a diverse group of community leaders, review Case Review Team recommendations, prioritize identified issues, then design and implement interventions to improve service systems and resources.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Confidentiality of all information is strictly maintained. That means that names of the mother, provider and institution are removed.

“The process that brings together diverse people to learn from the story of a family that experienced a fetal or infant loss helps awaken both commitment and creativity. The stories illustrate community needs that are clearly concrete, local and significant, while the interaction among diverse community participants generates ideas for action that might lie beyond the imagination and power of an individual provider or agency.”

—Seth Foldy, MD, Milwaukee, WI
“...the FIMR structure and process...creates a setting and a set of concrete activities wherein everyone has a contribution to make and everyone learns from the process. The case study findings indicate that because the FIMR process extends beyond problem identification to promote problem solutions, observable changes in practice and programs occur; ‘things get fixed’ and participants are inspired to take further action.”

—Holly Grason and Mira Liao, FIMR National Evaluators *

The Fetal and Infant Mortality Review is

- an action-oriented process leading to creative ideas to improve community resources and service systems for women, infants and families
- a timely and valuable source of information about changing health care systems and how they affect real families trying to access them
- a community coalition that promotes volunteerism and good citizenship and will translate into local accountability and pride
- a community coalition that can represent all ethnic and cultural views in the community and becomes a model of respect and understanding
- an effective strategy to address maternal and infant health disparities with specific community action, which is culturally appropriate and championed by respected community messengers
- a cost-saving process maximizing efficient use of local services and resources
- a strategy that improves communication among health and human service providers
- a method that takes the most successful process—that continuous quality improvement—that businesses use to produce better products and applies it to produce better health care for children and families
- a voice for local families who have lost their baby
- a tool that helps local health officials achieve the core public health functions of assessment and assurance and implement policies to safeguard families
- a methodology thoroughly evaluated by Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and found to be an effective perinatal systems intervention
- a program supported by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the March of Dimes Foundation and the federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau
The National Fetal and Infant Mortality Review Program Can Help

The National Fetal and Infant Mortality Review (NFIMR) is a partnership between the federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. NFIMR serves as a national resource center - offering advice to communities wanting to implement Fetal and Infant Mortality Review (FIMR) and helping make local FIMR start-up easy and economical. Today, NFIMR publications and training materials capture the successful experiences of many hundreds of FIMR programs and explain the best ways to begin and sustain the FIMR program. NFIMR provides many materials and technical assistance tools, including but not limited to the following:

PUBLICATIONS

A practical guide, the FIMR manual offers direction that will reduce start-up time and the overall costs associated with FIMR. It will help communities with established projects move from the review to the action phase. Designed to help communities with practical issues, content includes community needs assessment, developing community teams, identifying diverse community resources, improving community systems and resources and other topics related to the FIMR process.

**FIMR: A Decade of Lessons Learned**
Developed to highlight lessons learned from nine longstanding FIMR programs drawn from a variety of regions and organizational structures, this document captures common lessons learned about FIMR operations that will be useful to new and continuing programs. This report identifies key concepts about continuous quality improvement, group process, community asset development and coalition building theory. Combining these concepts with the FIMR experience will help communities implement FIMR.
Sustaining the FIMR Program: A Toolkit
Developed to assist FIMRs in sustaining their program, this document discusses institutionalization of the program, marketing and communication, and funding development.

FIMR Educational Bulletins
Designed to augment the FIMR Manual, the Educational Bulletins are a series of concise, targeted reports that individually address critical and timely topics of interest to community FIMR programs, including:

*When an Infant Dies: Cross-Cultural Expressions of Grief and Loss (Vol. 1 – 4)* explores the unique cultural customs of Arabic, Native American, African American and Hispanic families related to infant death.

*FIMR: Addressing Health Disparities in Infant Outcomes* discusses health disparities and the role FIMR can play in identifying and addressing health disparities at the community level. Multiple FIMR models and contact people are included.

Data Abstraction Forms
NFIMR Data Abstraction Forms facilitate collection of consistent information for case review.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Training
NFIMR provides training workshops to facilitate project start-up for states wishing to implement FIMR.

Community FIMR Networking
NFIMR can link local or state FIMR coordinators to their colleagues around the country in similar circumstances: urban, rural or suburban. These linkages can facilitate learning and support.
ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

Software
Matching the NFIMR data abstraction forms, NFIMR For Windows software 2008 will manage the information collected for individual case reviews. The software generates case summaries, computes cross tabulations and creates charts depicting the findings. Exported data can be analyzed using other Windows software products.

Listserv
To provide timely information related to FIMR and maternal and child health issues, NFIMR manages a listserv. To subscribe, using e-mail, go to http://suse.acog.org/mailman/listinfo/nfimr

NFIMR Webpage
Located within the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists’ website, the NFIMR webpage posts all of the publications, useful links and reports. Check this site for the complete list of all NFIMR publications and products at www.nfimr.org
“…Americans are a peculiar people. If, in a local community, a citizen becomes aware of a need that is not met he thereupon discusses the situation with his neighbors. Suddenly a committee comes into existence. The committee thereupon begins to operate on behalf of the need, and a new community function is established. It is like watching a miracle.”

—Alexis de Tocqueville, 1840
To learn more about the fetal and infant mortality review process, please write, fax or call:

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