



## Health Notes

A Service of the Kent County Health Department

### **October 2014 – Racial Disparities affect Health Outcomes**

Chronic illness and disease data shows that racial and ethnic populations lag behind in almost every single health indicator. Understanding these disparities and working to eliminate barriers to care could help us all live fuller, healthier lives. Here is a brief snapshot of data from Kent County:

**Infant Health:** The percentage of African American infants born at a low birth weight (5.5 lbs. or less) is twice that of White and Hispanic infants;<sup>1</sup> African American women are twice as likely to receive inadequate prenatal care as White women;<sup>1</sup> and African American infants are nearly three times more likely to die in their first year of life than White infants.<sup>2</sup>

**Physical Health:** African American adults (35%) report a significantly higher prevalence of obesity than Whites (22%).<sup>3</sup> Compared to those at the highest income level (\$75,000+), individuals with a household income less than \$20,000 are nearly twice as likely to be obese,<sup>3</sup> are greater than 3 times more likely to report no leisure time physical activity,<sup>3</sup> and are greater than 3 times more likely to smoke.<sup>3</sup>

**Mortality:** Death rates from heart disease and cancer are significantly higher among African Americans in Kent County compared to Whites.<sup>4</sup>

- Heart Disease – 250 per 100,000 among African Americans vs. 173 per 100,000 among Whites
- Cancer - 217 per 100,000 among African Americans vs. 153 per 100,000 among Whites

African Americans experience greater incidence rates for colorectal, lung and prostate cancer.<sup>5</sup>

### **What can be done?**

The staff and leadership at the Kent County Health Department wants everyone to have the opportunity to attain his or her full health potential. We have been working to eliminate disparities through a variety of programs to reach those at highest risk. For example, the Interconception Care program helps women who have delivered a baby too early, of low birth weight, or stillborn, plan and prepare for the next pregnancy, leading to increased gestation time, better birth weight and healthier outcomes. Staff has been working to adopt practices that promote diversity and inclusion, to ensure delivery of culturally and linguistically appropriate health care services, and to create local systems of care and service enhancements that support accessibility, affordability and availability of essential basic needs that contribute to improved health (food, transportation, housing, etc.) All staff of the health department take part in Health Equity and Social Justice Workshops, so we can transform and create a healthy community where people live, work, and play.

### **Learn more about what you can do to achieve Racial Equity and Social Justice at: [www.accesskent.com/healthequity](http://www.accesskent.com/healthequity)**

1. Michigan Resident Birth File, Division for Vital Records & Health Statistics, Michigan Department of Community Health
2. Michigan Resident Death Files and Michigan Resident Birth Files, Division for Vital Records & Health Statistics, Michigan Department of Community Health
3. 2008 Kent County Behavioral Risk Factor Survey
4. 2010 Michigan Death Certificate Registry. Division for Vital Records & Health Statistics, Michigan Department of Community Health
5. 2007-2009 Three Year Average. Michigan Resident Cancer Incidence File. Division for Vital Records & Health Statistics, Michigan Department of Community Health.