

EXEMPLARY ACADEMIC-PRACTICE PARTNERSHIP AWARD

The partnership between the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Nursing (UABSON) and the Jefferson County Department of Health (JCDH) grew out of long-standing concern in our community and state regarding infant mortality rates and maternal health inequities that were some of the highest in the nation and the desire of both parties to substantively change these outcomes. Our partnership highlights the positive impact for individuals, families, workforce, systems, and policy that are possible when academic and clinical entities commit to work together on a complex challenge.

UABSON has a very successful history of developing and leading collaborative care teams. The Office of Clinical and Global Partnerships (OCGP) at the UABSON works with others in the community to address areas of need for healthcare improvement and then obtains resources to support care initiatives. Since 2011, seven nurse-led clinics have been developed by the UABSON and their collaborative partners. These clinics have improved access to primary care, diabetes care, heart failure care, and behavioral health services for Alabama's most vulnerable patients, the uninsured or underinsured.

JCDH is the largest county health department in the state of Alabama with three campuses and clinics for maternity, pediatric, dentistry, optometry, family planning and sexual health, and other specialties. Serving the most populous county in Alabama, JCDH is self-governing, unlike other county health departments in the state, with an independent Health Officer. The JCDH values, *compassion, respect, collaboration, integrity, and innovation*, are demonstrated in the practice partnership with the UABSON to promote health and equitable outcomes in the maternity and pediatric populations.

As part of the work of the OCGP at the UABSON and the strategic priorities of the JCDH, key leaders from UABSON and JCDH met with other stakeholders regarding birth outcomes in the region. The conversation led to a commitment for the funding and administration of a local implementation of the national evidence-based model of care, Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) between JCDH and UABSON with goals of preventing infant mortality, improving pregnancy and birth outcomes among underserved pregnant and parenting families, and providing clinical opportunities for students. The 40-year history of proven success in improving outcomes for families struggling with economic and social inequities and the use of BSN prepared nurses as the key intervention made NFP an ideal model to implement.

The Nurse-Family Partnership of Central Alabama (NFPCA) was initiated in the fall of 2017 with generous funding from the JCDH donor advised fund and four other philanthropic partners for a three-year pilot. NFPCA offices provided by JCDH were co-located at one of the JCDH clinics enabling easy access to the target population. Within the first 2 years of implementation, NFPCA demonstrated positive impact on several key outcomes. Preterm birth averages for the whole county remained over 12%, while at-risk mothers enrolled in the NFPCA program in Jefferson County had a preterm birth rate of less than 9%, which is even lower than the national rate. This outcome is particularly remarkable because the mothers served by NFPCA in Jefferson County are predominantly Black (75%) and are known to have a preterm birth rate two to three times higher than White and Hispanic mothers. Additionally, 85% of NFPCA mothers in Jefferson County breastfeed, compared to a rate of 69% for all mothers in Alabama. Early in our implementation, we determined that compromised mental health was a primary barrier to care in our community and state. Through increased funding from JCDH, we layered a highly impactful innovation onto the traditional NFP model by integrating behavioral health using a psychiatric-mental health nurse practitioner to better support clients. Following this innovative partnership, reductions in depression and anxiety screening scores have been achieved for over 75% of women receiving mental health services through NFPCA. The tremendous outcomes produced from this partnership led to NFPCA expansion across eight counties with a team of 13 nurse home visitors, serving a caseload of 300 clients and sustained funding of \$6.1 million. Alabama Medicaid recently began reimbursing NFP services throughout the state due to the demonstration of impact, making NFP available throughout the state. NFPCA has served as a maternal child clinical site for over 1,000 UAB nursing students since 2018 and internship or project site for multiple health related professions including social work, medicine, and dentistry. The leading-edge intervention of NFPCA unites our community, practice partners, and students and raises the bar for schools of nursing to educate, inspire, and impact where we live, work, and play.