

Fetal and Infant Mortality Review (FIMR) in Brief

In recent years, efforts have increasingly focused on examining the larger social, economic and environmental context of infant mortality, and on engaging communities in public health problem solving. One such venue, Fetal and Infant Mortality Review (FIMR), is a process used to determine the community-level factors associated with individual cases of fetal and infant death. FIMR goes beyond biomedical causes to place infant mortality in the larger context of systems factors, with the ultimate goals of improving community resources and health service delivery systems for women, infants, and families. FIMR can thus be seen as a vehicle for implementing the public health functions of assessment, quality assurance, and policy development at the community level.

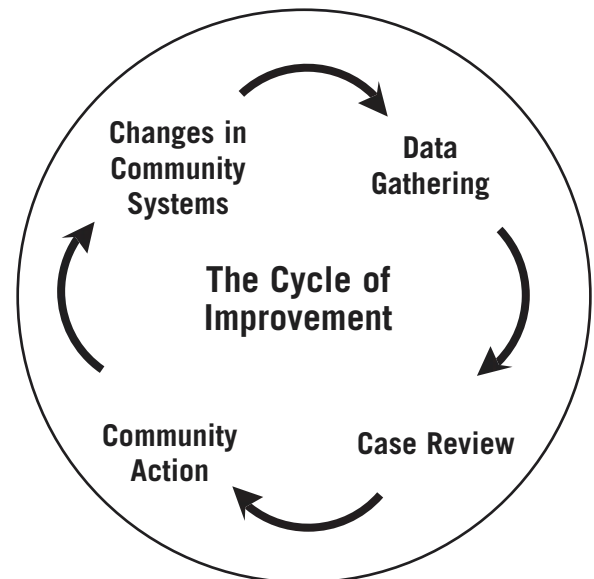
The death of an infant can be viewed as a sentinel event that is a measure of a community's overall social and economic well-being. FIMR information complements local population-based fetal and infant mortality data. It identifies critical community strengths and weaknesses as well as unique health/social issues associated with poor outcomes.

- The FIMR process brings a multi-disciplinary community team together to review de-identified infant and fetal deaths.
- Composed of health, social service and other experts, the FIMR case review team examines the case summary, identifies issues and makes recommendations for community change, if appropriate.
- Community leaders representing government, consumers, key institutions, and health and human services organizations serve on the community action team, which takes recommendations to action. This team reviews recommendations, prioritizes identified issues, and designs and implements interventions that may improve outcomes for future families.

The FIMR process can best be described as a “cycle of improvement.” The cycle is supported throughout with data gathering and problem solving by members of the community.

As new policies, practices, and/or programs to effect improvements in the community systems are put in place, data are continually gathered and new cases reviewed to identify emerging or persistent problems.

THE FIMR PROCESS



Source: Buckley, K.A., Koontz, A.M. & Casey, S. (1998). Fetal and Infant Mortality Review (FIMR) Manual: A Guide for Communities. Washington, DC: National Fetal and Infant Mortality Review Program.

The National Fetal and Infant Mortality Review (NFIMR) Program is a collaboration between the federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists that addresses FIMR issues and includes a resource center providing information and advice about implementing the fetal and infant mortality review methods. Topics include confidentiality, liability, data collection, home interview techniques, coalition building, taking recommendations to action, coordinating with other local mortality reviews, and using local FIMR information for regional/state assessment and planning. Referrals to expert consultants are available.

NFIMR can be reached by calling (202) 863-2587 or via their website: www.acog.org/goto/nfimr.

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Publications from NFIMR

Fetal and Infant Mortality Review Manual: A Guide for Communities. (July, 1998) — The basic reference for new and existing FIMR projects.

FIMR: A Decade of Lessons Learned. — Reviews nine long-standing FIMR programs.

Making a Difference in the Community. (1997) — An information/marketing brochure describing the FIMR process.

NFIMR Educational Bulletins

- *FIMR: A Tool Communities Can Use To Address Issues Related to Health Disparities in Infant Outcomes.* This bulletin highlights FIMR initiatives addressing disparities in infant outcomes.
- *Fetal and Infant Mortality Review and Child Fatality Review: Opportunities for Local Collaboration.* This bulletin spells out useful suggestions for local community collaboration, compares and contrasts both types of review, and provides population-based data related to infant and child mortality.

Sustaining the FIMR Program: A Toolkit — Provides an overview of strategies to sustain a FIMR program, includes chapters on marketing/communications, funding development, FIMR models, and changing data to information.

Academic Publications Related to FIMR

Grason HA, Misra D. (1999). Assessment of Healthy Start FIMR recommendations. *Maternal and Child Health Journal.* 3(3):151-57.

Baltay M, McCormick MC, and Wise PH. (1999). Implementation of Fetal and Infant Mortality Review (FIMR): Experience from the national Healthy Start program. *Maternal and Child Health Journal.* 3(3):141-50.

Davidson EC. (1991). A strategy to reduce infant mortality. *Obstetrics and Gynecology.* 77(1):1-5.

Garber RM, Carroll-Pankhurst C, Woods-Erwin K, and Marimer ED. 1995. The university/public health link in reducing infant mortality in a high-risk population. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine.* 11(3)Suppl.:34-38.

Klerman LV, Cleckley DC, Sinsky RJ, and Sams SH. (2000). Infant mortality review as a vehicle for quality improvement in a local health department. *The Joint Commission Journal on Quality Improvement.* 26(3):147-59

McCloskey L, Plough AL, Power KL, Higgins CA, Cruz AN, and Brown ER. (1999). A community-wide infant mortality review: Findings and implications. *Public Health Reports.* 114(2):165-77.

Keely DF 3rd, McElwee YF, Bale CS, Gates AD, Melvin CL, and Sappenfield WM. (1991). Infant death review: A new way to understand your county's infant mortality. *The Journal of the South Carolina Medical Association.* 87(2):90-3.