

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Louisiana Maternal and Child Health Services  
Title V Mother and Child Health Block Grant Application  
Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2025: October 2024 – September 2025

## Program Overview

The Title V Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Block Grant is the cornerstone of maternal and child health policy and programming, serving as the core public health system for women, children, children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN), and families within the state of Louisiana. Housed within the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH), Office of Public Health (OPH), Bureau of Family Health (BFH), Title V elevates the maternal and child health needs of Louisiana to the forefront of public health action. This action, grounded in the updated Essential Public Health Services, incorporates data, policy, clinical, and educational initiatives; preventive and supportive services; and community, government, and academic partnerships to monitor and promote community health and livelihood.

In 2020, the BFH conducted a statewide Needs Assessment, examining both qualitative and quantitative data to better understand the needs and desired health outcomes of the state's MCH and CYSHCN populations. The 2020 Needs Assessment illuminated emerging Priority Needs and informed the selection of Louisiana's National Performance Measures (NPMs) and State Performance Measures (SPMs) for the 2021-2025 block grant period. Ongoing assessment of needs through routine analytics and special studies have reinforced and clarified the actions needed to address the priority needs, which are described below by Title V population domain:

### Women/Maternal Health

From 2017-2019, maternal mortality in Louisiana increased at a higher rate than that of the United States, with significant disparities by race and ethnicity. The majority (80%) of all pregnancy-related deaths were deemed preventable. To address the Priority Need to *improve birth outcomes for individuals who give birth and infants*, Title V has been supporting advanced epidemiological surveillance and state-level action bodies to further understand and address this complex issue. During the 2021-2025 cycle, BFH also has directed Title V funds to support the Louisiana Perinatal Quality Collaborative (LaPQC) - a statewide partnership of perinatal clinicians, hospitals, policy makers, governmental entities, and community members and advocates that aims, through evidence-based practice and the use of improvement science, to improve birth outcomes throughout the state. Throughout the FFY2021-2025 strategy cycle, Title V will scale hospital quality improvement initiatives to support and incentivize system-wide implementation of evidence-based practices to reduce rates of low-risk cesarean deliveries, as well as to address other drivers of maternal outcomes. Progress will be monitored through NPM 2: Low-risk Cesarean Deliveries.

## Perinatal/Infant Health

According to the 2018-2020 Louisiana Child Death Review (CDR) report, Louisiana has the second highest infant mortality rate in the country. A significant majority of injury-related infant deaths were classified as Sudden Unexpected Infant Deaths (SUIDs) and were related to the sleep environment. Reflecting the Priority Need to *reduce child injury and violence*, Louisiana selected NPM 5: Safe Sleep. During the 2021-2025 cycle, BFH has been providing leadership and programmatic support to the state and regional CDR panels that conduct case reviews for all unexpected infant and child deaths, including SUIDs, to assure continued focus and data-informed action related to improve safe sleep practices around the state. To prevent infant injury and mortality, BFH will also provide evidence-based training on safe sleep best practices to professionals who have influential touch points with families.

In relation to the Priority Needs to *improve birth outcomes for birthing persons and infants* and *ensure equitable* access to high-quality and coordinated clinical and support services, Louisiana Title V will continue to support The Gift, an evidence-based program designed to assist Louisiana birthing facilities in increasing breastfeeding rates and hospital success by improving the quality of their maternity services and enhancing patient-centered care. During the 2021-2025 cycle, The Gift has been working to implement new quality improvement strategies that aim to reduce the black-white gap in breastfeeding initiation that persists both in Louisiana and nationally. BFH will monitor NPM 4: Breastfeeding, but the primary goal of the related strategies is to build long-term capacity within birthing facilities and communities across the state to achieve better perinatal outcomes.

## Child Health

According to the 2020-2021 National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH), less than 25% of Louisiana children ages 9-35 months received a developmental screening using a parent-completed screening tool in the past year. Compared to the national averages, children in Louisiana are also less likely to receive early intervention through IDEA Part C Services or access Early Head Start. In alignment with the Priority Need to *promote healthy development and family resilience through policies and practices rooted in core principles of development*, Title V will support efforts to build capacity and coordinate across existing programs to address gaps and barriers within the state's Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) system. To increase timely identification of developmental needs, Louisiana Title V has been implementing training, resource, and provider outreach strategies to increase the number of primary health care and early childhood education providers who utilize recommended developmental screening tools and practices. Title V will monitor progress through NPM 6: Developmental Screening. BFH will also provide family coaching and support through evidence-based home visiting, a strategy that has been linked to improvements in a variety of indicators of child and family health, including promoting healthy development and preventing child injury and violence.

While childhood is a time of tremendous development, it can also be a time of vulnerability. Between 2018-2020, more than half (51%) of childhood deaths ages 1-14 in Louisiana were due to injuries. Most of these deaths are considered preventable. In alignment with the Priority Need to *reduce child injury and violence*, BFH will provide safety-focused education to all families participating in evidence-based home visiting programs. BFH will also continue to investigate and analyze trends in child injury and violence through continuous mortality surveillance, comprehensive infant and child mortality case reviews, and specialized epidemiological studies. Title V will monitor progress through NPM 7.1: Injury Hospitalizations (children ages 0-9).

### Adolescent Health

Louisiana has seen a steady increase in suicide, self-harm thoughts and behaviors, and mental health disorders among adolescents. Suicide attempts among high school students in Louisiana remain significantly higher than the average for the US, and self-harm is the second leading cause of injury hospitalizations for adolescents in Louisiana. The 2020 Needs Assessment demonstrated a need to address the toxic stressors and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) of Louisiana's adolescents that can precipitate mental health issues, including those that are linked to various forms of violence and injury. To address the Priority Needs to *improve adolescent mental health* and *reduce child injury and violence*, Louisiana has been implementing strategies in relation to NPM 7: Injury Hospitalizations (adolescents ages 10-19). Title V will continue to build community awareness around ACEs, trauma, and resilience science across Louisiana via a robust network of trained ACE Educators. Furthermore, Title V is supporting state- and local-level efforts to integrate trauma-informed strategies into child- and family-serving systems, including through the development of a state plan to strengthen the ability of systems to prevent, recognize and respond to trauma and to promote resilience. In partnership with the BFH injury prevention program, Title V has supported several collaborative initiatives targeting adolescent mental health outcomes with an emphasis on shared risk and protective factors related to injury and violence prevention, especially self-harm. Louisiana Title V will also continue to employ strategies to advance the quality, relevance, and uptake of available services at school-based health centers, with an emphasis on behavioral health supports and screening for risk behaviors impacting health, well-being, and academic success in youth.

### Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs

One of the most significant areas of transformation within Louisiana's Title V program during the 2021-2025 cycle has been within the CYSHCN domain. The historical Louisiana CYSHCN services focused on provision of gap-filling services, but the Needs Assessment encouraged Louisiana Title V to look "down the MCH pyramid" towards more population-level strategies to meet the Priority Need to *ensure all CYSHCN receive care in a well-functioning system*. The National Standards for Systems of Care for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs highlights quality medical home and care coordination as central components of a well-functioning system, so Louisiana Title V has been maintaining a focus on improving access to quality coordinated care and building medical home capacity around the state. Through expanded provider

trainings, widespread resource dissemination led by regional non-profit, family-driven resource centers, and ongoing systems-level collaboration with Louisiana Medicaid, Louisiana Title V has been developing tools and trainings and other strategies to increase the number of providers who offer care coordination and to ensure providers and families are aware of available community resources. Progress will be monitored through NPM 11: Medical Home.

## MCH Success Story

Louisiana ranks 49th in overall child well-being in the United States, with one of the highest rates of children per capita experiencing two or more adverse childhood experiences<sup>1</sup>. In response to this public health priority, the Louisiana Bureau of Family Health launched the [Whole Health Louisiana Initiative](#) to coordinate development of the state's first-ever multi-sector plan to integrate trauma-informed and healing-centered approaches in our state's systems of care and support for children and families. Aligned with the national Title V program's commitment to family and community engagement, over 600 people and 100 organizations from across Louisiana participated in at least one of the three phases of the development of Whole Health Louisiana's (WHL) State Plan.

<b>Discovery Process</b> <i>(September 2021 - August 2022)</i>	Implemented in partnership with the Louisiana First Foundation, the first phase of the initiative was an 11-month, statewide process of evidence collection to learn about the current state of childhood adversity in Louisiana, how it is being addressed, and what barriers exist to implementing change.
<b>High Level Convening</b> <i>(November 2022)</i>	The second phase of the initiative was a convening of state leaders, experts, and advocates to review the findings from the discovery process and launch the development of a State Plan.
<b>A Community Engagement Process</b> <i>(January 2023 - November 2023)</i>	The third phase of the initiative was a yearlong collaborative process to draft the WHL State Plan. The process included community conversations across all nine public health regions of the state, was guided by a Steering Committee and supported by cross-sector working groups, and informed by multiple advisory bodies focused on centering youth and family voices alongside the voices of subject matter experts.

The Whole Health Louisiana State Plan was released on November 30, 2023. The state plan will guide multi-sectoral systems change efforts to address childhood adversity and trauma. The State Plan includes an overview of trauma-informed and adversity-related concepts to promote standardization of language around the challenge, presents an implementation approach that has buy-in from youth and family serving systems across the state, and defines key objectives and measurable indicators to support progress monitoring. Implementation of the plan will be led by a public-private partnership between the Bureau of Family Health and the University of Louisiana at Lafayette's



Kathleen Babineaux Blanco Public Policy Center. A dedicated Steering Committee, as well as the broader Whole Health Louisiana Coalition, will provide guidance and oversight to ensure the successful implementation of the plan, which will require continued coordination of partners including community members, government agencies, non-profits, community organizations, and youth and parent-led advisory bodies. This unified, trauma-informed, State Plan will invest in the full potential of our young people, those who care for them, and the workforce that serves them to improve health and safety outcomes for all Louisianans.

