



Leveraging Opportunities for Prevention  
Across the Life Course: *A Life Course  
Approach to Maternal and Child Health*



Padmini Parthasarathy, MPH  
Cheri Pies, MSW, DrPH

Family, Maternal and Child  
Health Programs  
Contra Costa Health Services



# Overview

- ✦ About Contra Costa County
- ✦ Life Course Initiative
- ✦ Our road map
- ✦ Where we are going
- ✦ Measuring our success



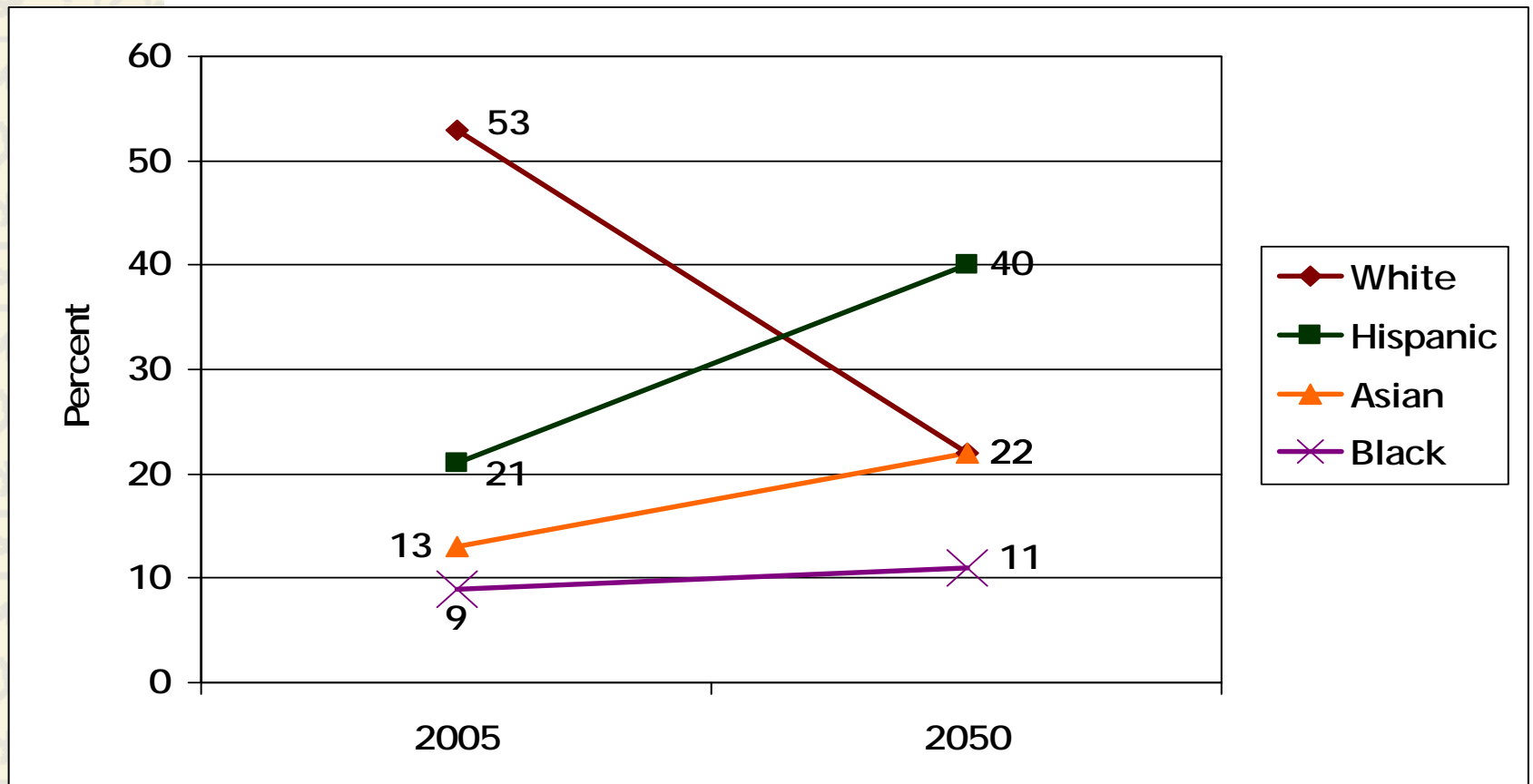
# Where is Contra Costa County?



# Contra Costa Demographics

- ✚ Population is increasing in size
  - As of January 2007: 1,042,341
  - Increase of 29.7% since 1990 and 9.9% since 2000.
  - Will increase by an additional 3.2% by 2010 and 18.7% by 2020
- ✚ 19.6% of Contra Costa residents live below 200% of the poverty line

# Racial/Ethnic Makeup of Contra Costa County, 2005 & 2050



# The Life Course Initiative



- ✦ Launched in 2005
- ✦ A 15-year initiative
- ✦ Engaging FMCH Programs and other county staff, as well as community partners

# Why are we doing this?

- ✦ To reduce health disparities overall
- ✦ To optimize reproductive potential
- ✦ To create a **paradigm shift** in MCH work
- ✦ To change the health of a generation





# Life Course Initiative Activities

- ✚ Conducting interactive educational activities at staff meetings
- ✚ Explaining Lu et. al. 12-Point Plan
- ✚ Engaging staff in identifying current and future activities that fit within 12-Point Plan
- ✚ Enabling staff to each have their own “A-ha!” moment



# Life Course Initiative Activities

- ✦ Focusing on what this paradigm shift means in concrete terms for staff in their specific jobs and programs - making it personal
- ✦ Laying the groundwork with higher level management in our organization about the importance of the Life Course Perspective in order to make change happen



# Life Course Initiative Activities

## ✚ Evaluation:

- Meeting regularly with Life Course Initiative Data Team
- Identifying “intermediate outcomes” as measurements of success of Life Course-related activities (vs. long-term perinatal outcomes)
- Conducted survey of Family, Maternal and Child Health Programs staff



# Our Road Map: A 12-Point Plan...

- ✦ To close the Black-White gap in birth outcomes
- ✦ Developed by Michael Lu, M.D., MPH, et al.
- ✦ Goals:
  - Improve healthcare for African American women
  - Strengthen African American families
  - Reduce allostatic load on African American women over the life course

# Our Road Map: A 12-Point Plan...

*How is this different from current approaches?*

- ✦ Goes beyond prenatal care
- ✦ Goes beyond individual-level interventions
- ✦ Goes beyond the medical model





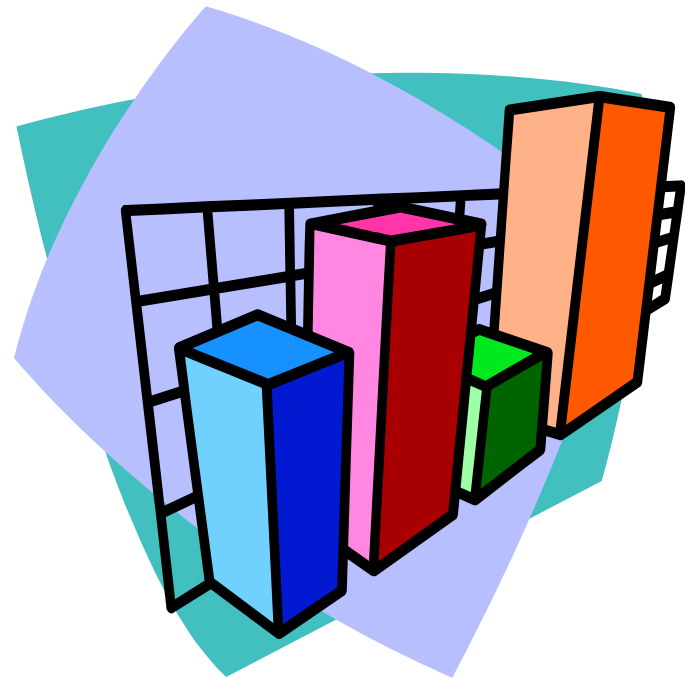
# Our Road Map: A 12-Point Plan...

## Main categories:

- ✦ Improving Health Care Services
- ✦ Strengthening Families and Communities
- ✦ Addressing Social and Economic Inequities

# Staff Survey

- ✦ Evaluated staff understanding of Life Course Perspective (LCP)
- ✦ Gathered ideas from staff about incorporating the LCP into their work
- ✦ Survey sent to 107 FMCH Programs staff
- ✦ 68 staff (64%) responded



# Summary of Staff Survey Results

- ✦ 72% reported that they changed something about their work as a result of learning about the LCP
- ✦ Based on open-ended questions, we found that in general, staff:
  - understood the theory of the LCP;
  - were able to relate their work to elements of the 12-Point Plan; and
  - had incorporated the LCP into their work in a variety of ways

## Examples of Intermediate Outcomes (For Clients)

- ✦ Improved life skills/coping skills
- ✦ Improved sense of well-being, empowerment, resiliency, self-efficacy
- ✦ Increased bonding response to infants
- ✦ Decreased stress
- ✦ *Increase in financial security and stability and improved financial status*

# Building Economic Security Today (BEST)

- ✦ With Life Course Data Team, developed logic model for a **financial education pilot project: BEST**
- ✦ Hosting Family Economic Success and Security training for 40 home visiting and WIC staff in October 2008
- ✦ Training for 40 staff from other programs will be in February 2009
- ✦ Applying for grant funding for training and project from various sources



# Building Economic Security Today (BEST)

- ✦ Specific strategies will vary based on program and client population (i.e. home visiting with pregnant women, WIC, youth development)
- ✦ Partnering with:
  - Contra Costa Family Economic Security Partnership (FESP)
  - Community Financial Resources (CFR)
    - Debit card



# BEST: Measuring Outcomes

## Staff:

- Increased knowledge and awareness of asset development strategies and resources
- Improved skills in engaging clients to adopt asset development strategies
- New practices to implement their knowledge and skills about asset development

# BEST: Measuring Outcomes

## ✦ Clients:

- Increased knowledge and awareness of asset development
- Improved sense of self-efficacy and ability to adopt an asset development strategy
- Each client will adopt at least one asset development strategy to improve his or her financial security, such as reducing debt, starting a savings account, and utilizing a debit card



# BEST: Measuring Outcomes

## System:

- Changes will be made to help better support clients in utilizing asset development strategies
  - resource and referral materials
  - case management documentation systems
  - financial education protocols and training guidelines

# How does BEST fit into the 12-Point Plan?

9. *Reduce poverty*
10. *Support working mothers and families*





# Lessons Learned

- ✦ Start with staff where they are
- ✦ Recognize and acknowledge staff's existing work related to the LCP and build on this
- ✦ Utilize the imagination and experience of staff to project where they could go with future programming

# What will success look like?

