



Addressing Racial Disparities in Infant Mortality

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Communities Joined In Action National Conference
Marisha Frazier & Lora Gulley



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Understanding Our Community

Context: Racial Climate of St. Louis, MO

The Process of Change

“Before we go any further, let us recognize one thing:

Change is hard.

Change requires different choices, different decisions, different actions. Change requires new effort, new relationships, new habits. Change requires letting go of the known and wading through the unfamiliar found in the dark of the unknown.”

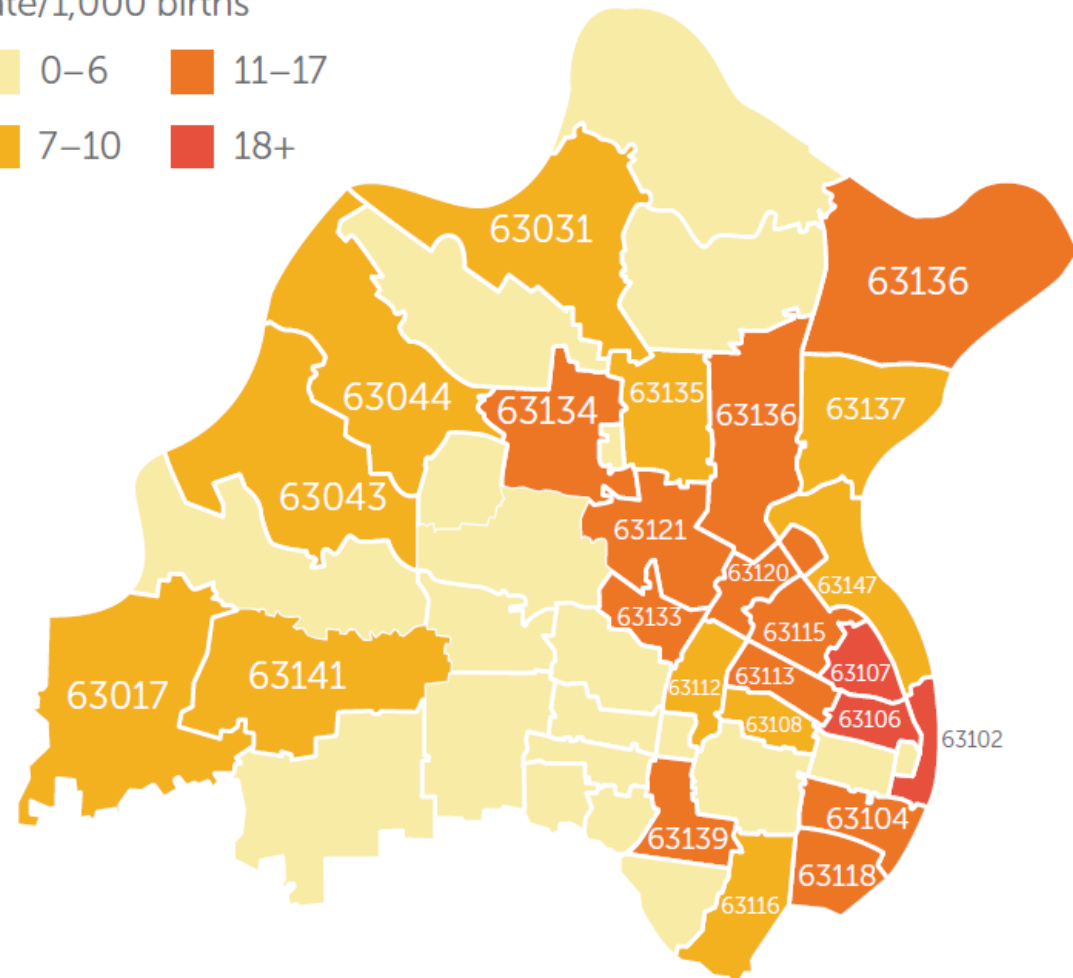
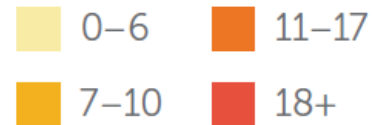
(2018, January 5). Retrieved from <https://forwardthroughferguson.org/report/executive-summary/process-of-change/>

Infant Mortality in St. Louis

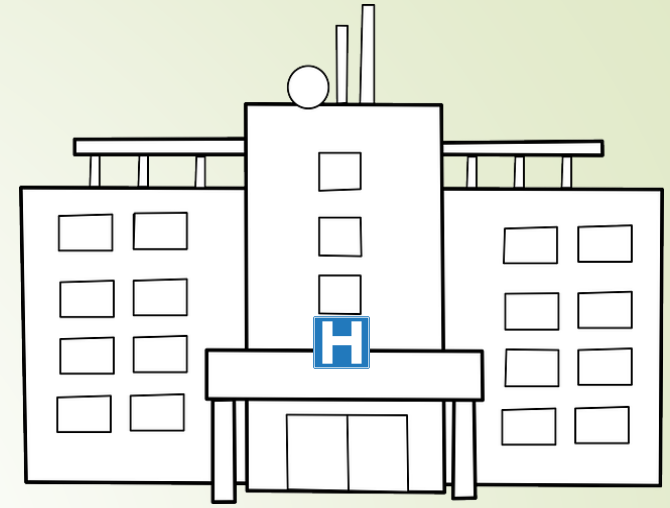
- Zip codes in our region have infant mortality rates 3 times worse than the national average.
- Black babies in St. Louis are 3.5 times more likely to die than White babies.

St. Louis infant mortality rates by zip code

Rate/1,000 births



The Disconnect



Why Are Black Babies Dying at Higher Rates?

Racism and racial inequities across every area create toxic stress leading to premature birth, the leading cause of infant death.

ACCESS TO TRANSPORTATION

80% of public transit riders are Black, but only 1 in 4 jobs are reachable by a 90-minute or less public transit trip

HOUSING CONDITIONS

25% of Black people in St. Louis face severe housing problems

STRESS

ACCESS TO JOBS

1 in 5 Black adults in St. Louis are unemployed.

ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Black students are **4x** more likely to be suspended than White students, as early as in preschool

ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOODS

25% of Black people are food insecure in the city of St. Louis

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

More than **1 in 3** Black women in the city of St. Louis receive inadequate prenatal care

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Generate Health STL

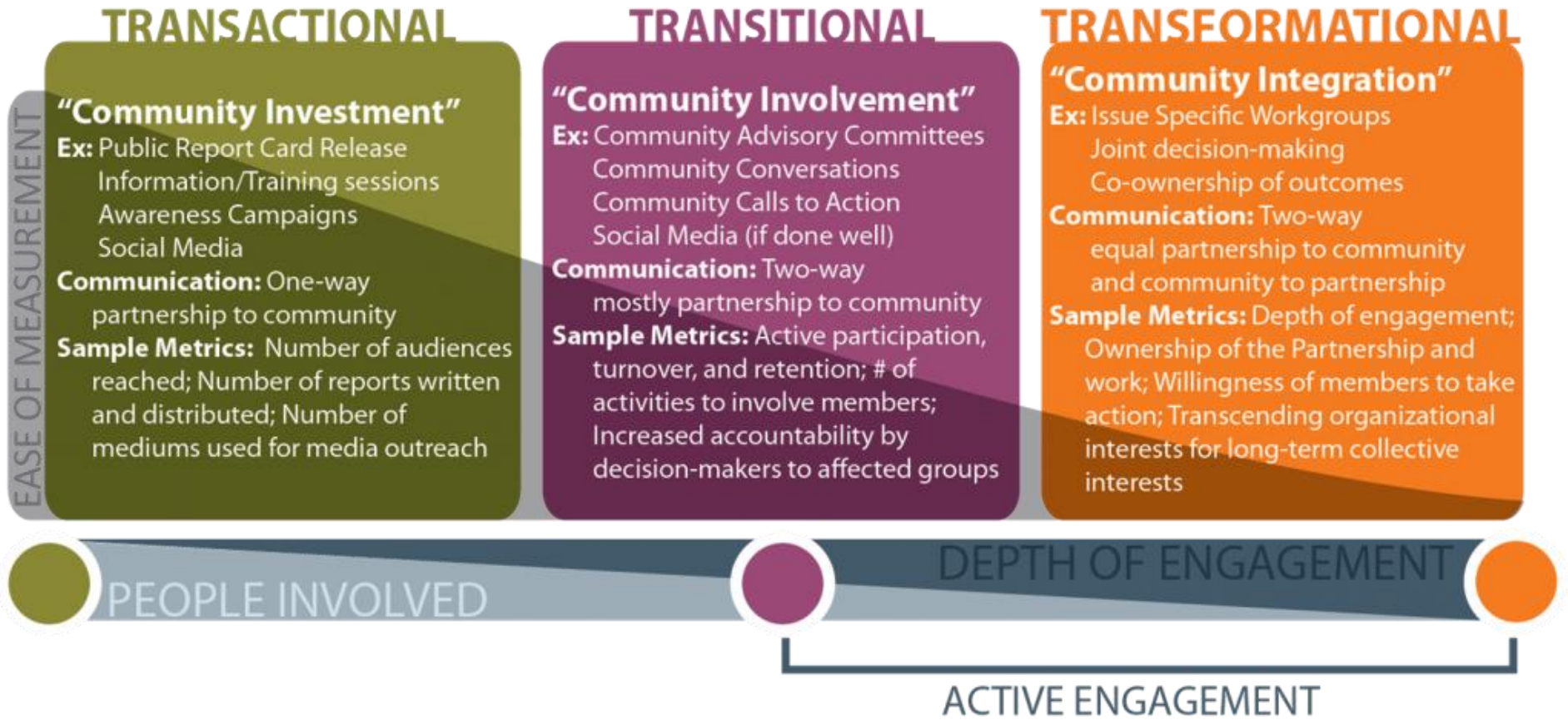
Increasing infant vitality in the
St. Louis Region

What is Generate Health STL?

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Generate Health is committed to building a community where moms and babies thrive by ***inspiring*** and ***mobilizing*** the St. Louis region to ***advance racial equity*** in pregnancy outcomes, family well-being and community health.





© Strive 2012
Content adapted from Bowen et al, *When Suits Meet Roots*. 2010
Sample Metrics adapted from Pastor et al, *TRANSACTIONS, TRANSFORMATIONS, TRANSLATIONS: Metrics That Matter for Building, Scaling, and Funding Social Movements*. 2011

Initiatives and Programs

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- Fetal and Infant Mortality Review
- Social Determinants of Health Tour
- Perinatal Behavioral Health Initiative
- Immunizations Initiative
- FLOURISH STL
- Making Change Happen Leadership Academy
- Build Health Challenge (Transportation)
- Safe Sleep Initiative
- FLOURISH M.O.R.E (Housing)



UNDERSTAND THE ISSUES

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MCH is building a network of impacted families and empowered leaders to drive social change



“Before MCH, I was just a woman with kids, now I am parent leader.”

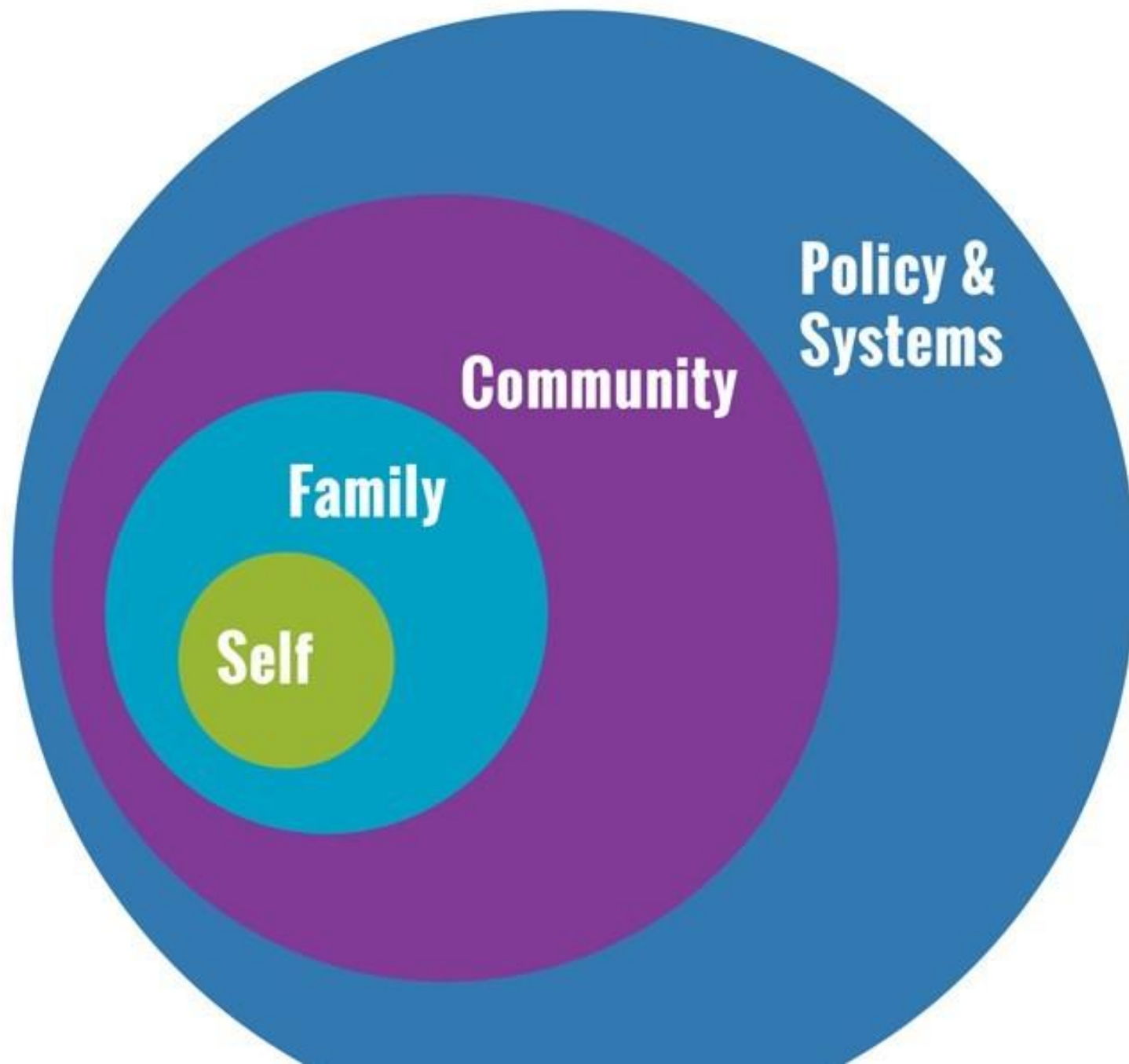
Myzonja Jenkins Scott
MCH Leader

COFI

MCH: Making Change Happen Leadership Academy

What is COFI?

- Systematic and proven model of how people who are far outside the centers of power, become leaders, build organizations, and win. Here's how it works



What is COFI?

- COFI strengthens the power and voice of low-income and working families at all levels of civic life—from local institutions and communities to local, state, and federal policy arenas.

- **BUILDS PEOPLE POWER!**

- **Three Phases of COFI:**

- Phase I: Self, Family & Team focus
- Phase II: Community Outreach and Action
- Phase III: Policy and Systems Change



How we adapted COFI

Training session format (capacity consideration)

MCH parent leaders trained in COFI were determined to mentor and coach other parents

Became more intimately involved in community building efforts Including FLOURISH

Add relevant training topics to help understand toxic stress and trauma

Address Team conflict & Accountability

Self-selected Committee work outside group

MCH Leaders...

Responded to possible funding cuts to Healthy Start - wrote letters to Congress, the President and held an in-district meeting with Congressional delegation



Activities & Accomplishments

- Participated in training sessions on how to share their stories
- Invited to speak publicly including radio shows, press conferences and community conferences



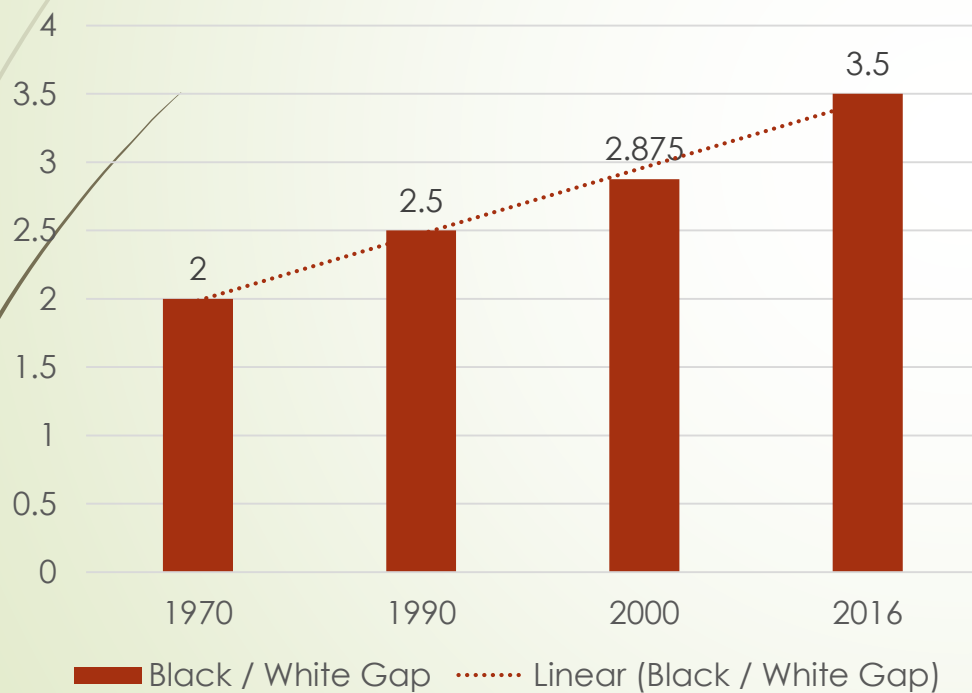
MCH Value & Impact

- Social support and the feeling of family
- Helped to become better parents
- More confident
- Strengthened sense of pride and power to change conditions
- Positively affecting those in their communities
- Looked to by others for answers/solutions
- Provides a network of community resources



Infant Mortality Disparity Gap Widened

Disparity between Black and White Infant Mortality in St. Louis City



Community Based Participatory Budgeting

What is FLOURISH STL?

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FLOURISH St. Louis is a movement that brings together our region in new ways, to make this a place where babies thrive and families flourish.



GenerateHealth
Champions of Family and Community



Where We Started

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- Persistent socio-economic disparities in infant mortality
- Incremental improvement in infant mortality over the past 50 years but advances did not close Black/White gap
- Infant mortality considered a medical/health care issue rather than an indicator of complex social, economic, environment, education, societal conditions.
- Individuals most impacted by infant death were not part of decision making



Our North Star

► *Achieve zero racial disparities in infant mortality by 2033*

► This means **81 more Black babies** will celebrate their first birthday each year





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Powering the North Star

- People Power
- Promote systems and Policy change
- Narrative change

California Endowment, Building Healthy Communities

FLOURISH STL Network 2.0

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FLOURISH 2.0 Decision Making Process





FLOURISH adopted core principles that will guide our transition:

- Recognize the **power of the community** to make change
- Be **accountable** to the community
- Create **sustainable systems change**
- Manifest **shared resources** across the FLOURISH network
- Practice **equity** at all levels
- Insist on authentic **relationship building**
- Reinforce **trauma-informed/ responsive** practices

Community-led Funding Decision Making

Community decides priorities

Community decides where the money goes

Invitation to join the Community Cabinet and become a part of making funding decisions



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Community Engagement

Lessons Learned and Helpful
Tips

1. Meet people where they are

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- Multiple Places to plug in
- Different formats
- Different Time commitments
- Different skill sets
- Be Flexible



2. Location

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- ▶ Hold events in the communities you serve
- ▶ Collaborate with local residents on appropriate venue within the specific community



3. Reducing Barriers

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- ▶ Childcare
- ▶ Transportation
- ▶ Food
- ▶ Stipends



4. Valuing Marginalized Voice

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- Stipend Structure
- Maternal Interview Appreciation Gifts
- Trust Community for Answers/Solutions



Accomplishments & Activities

Participated in a press conference in a state House Committee hearing on Medicaid Expansion



Activities & Accomplishments

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Hosted a resource fair @
Community College - Forest
Park with over 50 vendors to
address the individual and
collective needs of the
community



Accomplishments & Activities

Leaders attended Missouri Child Advocacy Day (Jefferson City) lobbying on issues such as Medicaid Expansion and legislation impacting child care and early education.

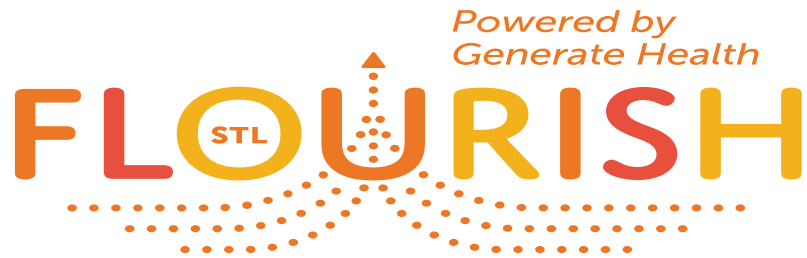
Many met their elected officials for the first time.

-Changed the mind of one legislator voting against the interests of child care safety





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Champions of Family and Community



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Twitter: @FlourishStLouis

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/flourishstlouis/>