



2023-2024 Grant Finalist Summary

Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies | Basics4Babies Emergency Pantry

Impact Focus Area: Health & Wellness/Family

The Organization

Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition of Palm Beach County's (HMHB) mission is to nurture healthy births and families by meeting the physical, emotional, economic, and social challenges of pregnancy and infant wellness. HMHB was established in 1986, when Palm Beach County experienced a tragic increase in poor birth outcomes from a lack of available prenatal care, especially for low-income women. Begun as a volunteer-driven agency, HMHB grew through the decades and now boasts 67 professionals on staff serving more than 10,000 expectant women each year. The organization's 38-year history is packed with leading edge initiatives to prevent and eliminate health disparities for diverse pregnant women, infants, and families in Palm Beach County.

The Program

In 1986, HMHB created the Basics4Babies Emergency Pantry for food insecure families in Palm Beach County. In 2016, the agency realigned the focus of the pantry solely on baby basics, and it is currently the only infant focused pantry in Palm Beach County. Whether battling food insecurity or facing financial challenges stemming from job loss, illness, or foreclosure, HMHB offers local families support by providing diapers, baby food and formula. The agency has brick and mortar locations in Belle Glade and its soon-to-open new office in West Palm Beach. They also have a mobile pantry that distributes in underserved parts of Palm Beach County. Three languages are spoken collectively between pantry staff. Through the pantry model, families receive 7-10 days of basic needs and may access pantry services once every 30 days. Distribution includes up to 1 container of formula, 1 infant food pack containing 6 fruits, 6 vegetables and 1 container of rice cereal/oatmeal, and 1 pack of diapers. Driven by inventory shortages of baby essentials as well as rising costs, HMHB has seen an increase in need for pantry services. In 2016, the pantry was serving an estimated 300 clients per month and now the agency is serving 800-1,100 clients per month. In 2023, the pantry served over 15,000 babies, distributed nearly half a million diapers and over 13,500 containers of formula – exceeding the prior year by 34% in number served – the highest in its 38-year history.

The impact grant will be invested in overall pantry needs, including inventory purchases (diapers, formula, baby food), staff to operate the program, and overhead/vehicle costs. The agency anticipates these purchases will be provided to approximately 22,000 children ages 0-3 during the 2-year grant period.

How will this program impact Palm Beach County?

While food banks serve food insecure populations, they do not specifically focus on infant food insecurity. Additionally, the cost of diapers is not covered by state/federal child safety-net programs. Basics4Babies supports infants in the community whose essential needs are not being met. According to Feeding America, 37,530 children in Palm Beach County are food insecure or 13.2%; however, 34% are likely ineligible for federal nutrition programs. Breastfeeding continues to be the preferred method of feeding for new moms; however, many new moms do not produce enough milk to feed their infants and supplement with formula. Many clients water down formula or reuse diapers due to product cost, which can lead to health-related issues. Breast milk/formula form the cornerstone of nutrition during the first year of life, enabling babies to develop strong immune systems and brain/tissue. Through Basics4Babies, HMHB helps ensure Palm Beach County children are well nourished to meet developmental milestones.

Measurable Outcomes (over 2-year grant period)

Babies/toddlers have clean and hygienic diapers – 700,000 diapers distributed
Babies/toddlers receive nourishing food – 2,000 food packs distributed
Babies receive life-sustaining formula – 12,000 canisters of formula distributed
Overall health of vulnerable babies/toddlers is boosted – 22,000 total children served

How will Impact Palm Beaches grant be used?

\$92,048 of the grant would be to purchase infant formula, baby food, and diapers; \$7,952 for existing staff salaries