

Fulfilling the Promise of Healthy Births: Los Angeles County as a Model
The Development of a Comprehensive Surveillance System for Reproductive Health
Outcomes

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Supporting the early development of Angelenos is a critical strategy to optimize the health as well as the economic growth and vitality of Los Angeles County. The large amounts of population data are already collected at local, county, and state levels are virtually dis-integrated and do not allow best practices for efficient linkage and translation of information into useful knowledge. With current technologic advances, the ability to share and link data from disparate sources has never been easier. Unfortunately, previous efforts have been undercut and current programs are underfunded, preventing useful collaboration and linkage of data. It is time to develop a Comprehensive Surveillance System for reproductive health outcomes (CSS) to counter these shortcomings.

Development of the CSS will involve a phased approach. Current data experts most familiar with the fragmented reproductive health information must first collaborate to develop the standards for prospective data management. Compelling project goals must be defined and a stable financial support network to support those goals must then be developed. In addition, public efforts to mobilize political will of residents, community stakeholders, and elected officials must be elevated to a point that sustains the project into the future. Open access data with appropriate privacy protections allows researchers and policy makers of various disciplines to promptly identify patterns and risks associated with poor birth outcomes. With more timely dissemination of results key stakeholders can then raise awareness in response and generate political involvement to promote the health of the county's constituents.

The compelling need for promoting the health of future Angelenos will help us to overcome the challenges of creating a Comprehensive Surveillance System for reproductive health outcomes. Over time, an accessible, ever-growing, robust research data repository will decrease expense and time for researchers and policy makers to make the most efficient use of available data.