

Women's Health Issues Briefing Document
Presented to the Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities
September 20, 2007

Women's health issues is listed in RCW 43.20.280 as one of the indicators of health that the Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities must address in its plan to eliminate health disparities. Women's health issues encompass mental and physical health and wellness, as well as the activities, behaviors, and other factors that influence health throughout all stages of a woman's life. Many key health issues for women were listed independently in RCW 43.20.280, including but not limited to, heart disease, stroke, and breast cancer. This briefing document highlights two additional health issues faced by women – pregnancy and birth rates among teens and intimate partner violence.

CRITERION #1: PREVALENCE / INCIDENCE

- The rate of pregnancy among Washington 15-17 year-olds has decreased from 59 pregnancies per 1,000 in 1989 to 28 per 1,000 in 2005.
- The birth rate among Washington 15-17 year-olds has declined from 33 births per 1,000 in 1992 to 15 births per 1,000 in 2005.
- In 2005, 28% of women reported experiencing physical violence or unwanted sex from an intimate partner in their lifetimes and 10% reported ever being injured by an intimate partner.

CRITERION #2: SEVERITY

- Children of teen mothers are more likely to be born prematurely, to be low birthweight and to die during their first year of life than children born to non-teen mothers.
- Teens who give birth are less likely to finish high school and therefore, more likely to have low earnings.
- Women who are victims of intimate partner violence have poorer physical and mental health and use health services more than other women.
- From 2004-2006, 48 Washington women were killed by their current or former male partners.

CRITERION #3: DISPARITY

- In Washington, for 2003-2005 combined, the birth rate for 15-17 year-olds was significantly higher among Hispanics (56 per 1,000), American Indian and Alaska Natives (35 per 1,000) and African Americans (19 per 1,000) than among whites (9 per 1,000) and Asians and Pacific Islanders (6 per 1,000).
- The Index of Disparity for birth rates among 15-17 year-olds was 366%.
- Washington data on intimate partner violence are not available. National data indicate that domestic violence rates were higher for American Indian and black women than for white women; however these differences did not persist after adjusting for income in at least one study.

The Index of Disparity is the average of the difference in rates between the racial/ethnic group with the "best" rate and all other racial/ethnic groups.

Keppel KG et al., Measuring progress in healthy people 2010. Statistical Notes, no 25. NCHS, 2004