

Low Birth Weight

Healthy Beginnings

Most recent CO value (2006)	CO rank (2005)	CO value (2005)	Best state (2005)	Best state value (2005)	HP2010 target
9.0%	41/50	9.2%	Alaska, Oregon & Washington	6.1%	5%

Indicator Definition

Percent of babies born weighing less than 5 lbs., 9 oz. (2,500 grams).

Indicator Significance

Low birth weight babies are more likely to experience neurological and developmental disabilities, and even death, than are babies who weigh more at birth. Nationally, the rate of low birth weight has steadily increased, from 6.7 percent in 1984 to 8.2 percent in 2005. Multiple births increase the likelihood of low birth weight: 57 percent of twins and 94 percent of triplets are born weighing less than 5 pounds, 9 ounces. Inadequate maternal weight gain, inadequate prenatal care, incidence of induced delivery, Cesarean section, assisted reproductive technology and smoking during pregnancy can all contribute to low birth weight. With advances in technology, more premature infants and infants born small for their gestational age are able to be saved.¹

Colorado Specifics

Historically, Colorado has had a relatively high percentage of low-weight births. In 2005 it ranked 41st, with 9.2 percent of births below 5 pounds, 9 ounces—well above the 6.1 percent achieved by the top-performing states, Alaska, Oregon and Washington. Over the past seven years in Colorado, the percentage of low-weight births has increased slightly, from 8.4 percent in 2000 to 9.0 percent in 2006. Black and American Indian mothers have a substantially higher incidence of low weight births than do white and Hispanic mothers.

Factors associated with Colorado's high proportion of low-weight births include altitude, inadequate maternal weight gain, smoking during pregnancy, multiple births and various complications of pregnancy.²

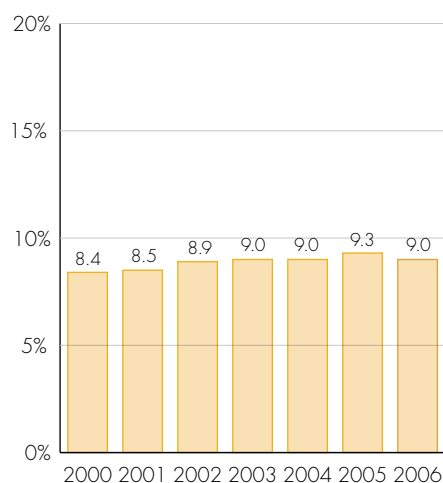
Promising Initiatives

In Colorado

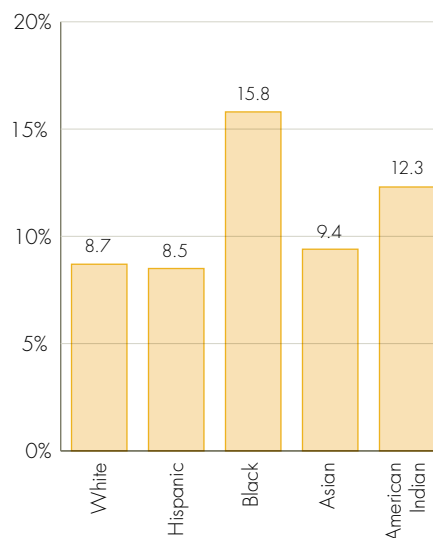
The Nurse-Family Partnership program, a 20-year-old Denver-based program, provides comprehensive prenatal care to low-income, first-time expectant parents. A nurse visits the home regularly to encourage a nurturing family environment throughout the pregnancy, as well as the first years of the infant's life. The result: Participants in Boulder reduced the number of low birth weights they reported by 8 percent.³

Additionally, Colorado's Prenatal Plus program, started in 1996, provides services to low-income women enrolled in Medicaid deemed at risk for delivering a low birth weight infant. Health care professionals target lifestyle and behavioral choices, such as smoking or maternal weight gain, that could affect the baby's health. The program

Low-weight births in Colorado^{5}*



Low-weight births by race in Colorado⁶



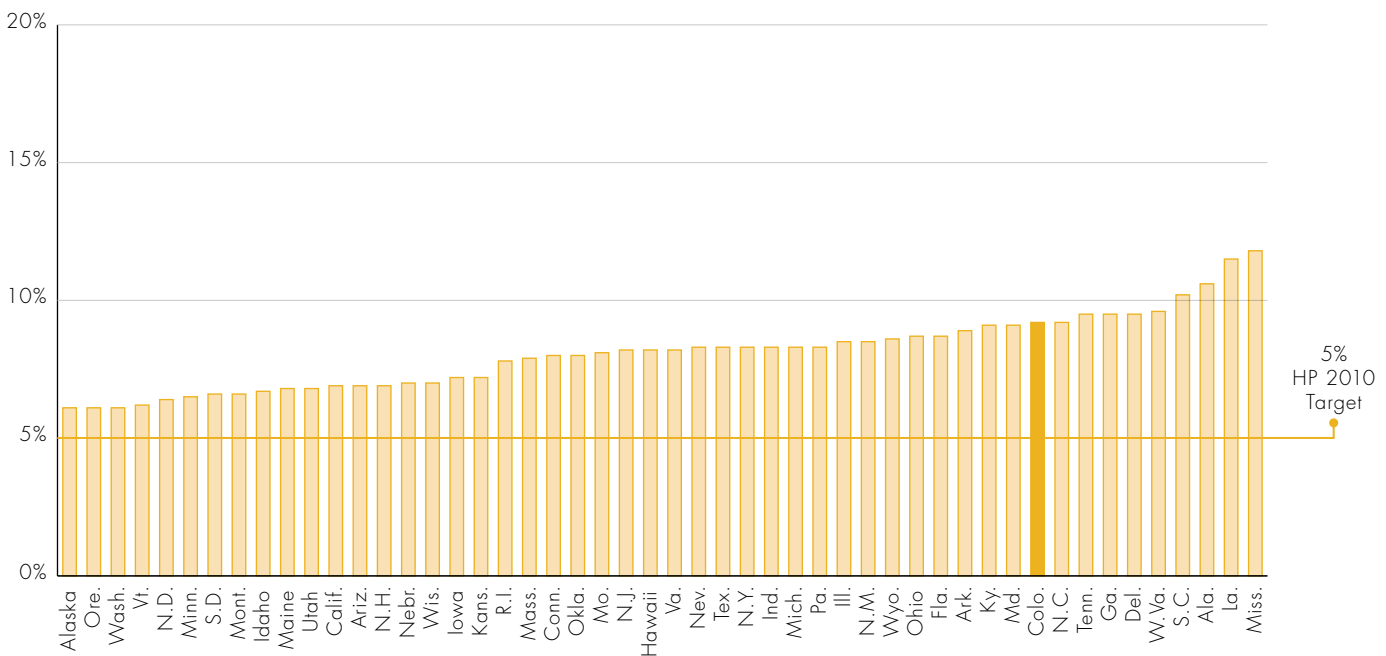
Low Birth Weight (continued)

has successfully decreased the number of low birth weight babies whose families receive Medicaid assistance. A 2002 cost study by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment showed that for every \$1 spent on Prenatal Plus services, \$2.48 is saved in Medicaid costs during the first year of the infant's life. The program is administered jointly by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing.

Elsewhere

Montana's Initiative for the Abatement of Mortality in Infants (MIAMI) is a comprehensive plan to decrease low birth weight by providing adequate prenatal care. Public Health Home Visiting is a part of this initiative that involves connecting with high-risk pregnant women and infants identified with special health needs by directly visiting them in their homes. MIAMI was created to ensure access to maternal health care and to prevent pre-term deliveries with low birth weight.⁴

Low-weight births⁷



Text

1. Forum on Child and Family Statistics.
2. Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. "Tipping the Scales: Weighing in on Solutions to the Low Birth Weight Problem in Colorado"; 2000.
3. Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. "The Effects of the Prenatal Plus Program on Infant Birth Weight and Medicaid Costs"; December 2002.
4. Montana Department of Public Health & Human Services.

Charts

5. **Source:** Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Vital Statistics, 2000 – 2006.
*** Note:** Low birth weight rates from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) differ slightly from rates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) used to rank states.
6. **Source:** Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Vital Statistics, 2006.
7. **Source:** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Vital Statistics System, 2005.

