

# Power U – Miami (Miami-Dade County), FL

# SNAPSHOT

## Overview

Power U is a grassroots organization formed in 1998 focusing on community self-determination, economic justice, black and women's liberation, equality, and youth empowerment in Miami-Dade county.

## Mission

*"We envision a society free from all forms of oppression in which decisions are made democratically and resources are utilized for the collective benefit of everyone. We are organizing and developing the leadership of Black and Brown youth and Black women in South Florida so that they may help lead the struggle to liberate all oppressed people."* – PU website



## Constituency

- Black & Brown Youth
- Black Women in South Florida

## Local Conditions & Critical Issues Impacting 0-5 Childhood Health in Miami-Dade County

### Lack of Meaningful Opportunities and Supports

Including a lack of youth programs, quality education and other academic supports, jobs, etc. for young people, which contributes to neighborhood and community violence.

*"People in our community are concerned about quality education or the lack of quality education, lack of meaningful programs, and supports for young people.... related to [the lack of youth programming] are concerns and fears around community violence...in the last year or so there have been some really high profile incidents of community violence where kids...one toddler, a six-year old in particular have been hit in crossfire...so the issue of community safety is really at the top of people's mind"*

### Low Wages & Lack of Jobs

Coupled with the high cost of living, has left many families with children living in unhealthy & unsafe environments (slum conditions).

### Inadequate Options for Child Care

Child care providers are either too expensive or not certified forcing parents to rely on their family members.

*"If you can't afford a quality certified child care provider, then your options are either to go with one of these almost like underground child care providers which means you know there's very little accountability [and] there's a greater danger of something happening to your child or people not being trained properly or whatever the case may be. Then other thing that I know people do is they just rely on family members. So, you know having a lot of grandmothers watch kids or aunts or uncles that sort of thing."*

### Social Services Infrastructure Is Difficult to Navigate

Which makes it hard for families to access child health care programs including Healthy Start, food stamps, health screenings, etc.

*"... I think it's something like 4,000 or 5,000 different social service non-profits in Miami-Dade County but the communication [and] coordination between all these different service providers is really poor. So, it takes a lot and I know that it causes a lot of stress on families you know when they're trying to get their kids signed up for Healthy Start and get the food stamps and get, you know, the health screenings and all of that stuff is really taxing."*

*"The other thing that's just always an issue in Miami is the lack of affordable housing...how hard it is for parents, families to kind of maintain, like, a safe, healthy environment for their kids because a lot of people can't afford anything better than slum conditions because the quality of housing stock is so poor and overpriced. People just don't have the income to maintain quality housing [or enough] food to eat."*

## Local Conditions, Cont'd

### Healthy Start Service Challenges

In Miami-Dade County, there is an elevated and increasing rate of low-income children who are obese or overweight. Low consumption of fruits and vegetables is particularly common among Latino children. High levels of pediatric asthma hospitalizations impose challenges in community level pediatric asthma management. For Healthy Start's Black Infant Health Practice Initiative, each of the participating communities had a number of health facilities to choose from, and at least one facility within their neighborhood that provided affordable health care. Yet many of the participants complained about perceived discrimination towards them on the part of clinics, and in some cases this impacted willingness to seek care.<sup>4</sup>

### Allies/Partnerships Working on Children's Health

- Miami Children's Initiative – Miami, FL  
<http://www.iamlibertycity.org/>

## Key Indicators of Childhood Health in Miami-Dade County

12.8%

the percentage of low birth weight births for African American babies, which is higher than any other race/ethnic group.<sup>2</sup>



Haitian (27.1%) and Black (22.3%) mothers were more likely than other racial/ethnic groups to receive inadequate prenatal care.<sup>1</sup>



More school-aged children in Miami-Dade County are overweight (18.2%) and obese (25.2%), compared to the rest of the state (16.8% and 17.4%, respectively).<sup>2</sup>



Despite declines in asthma hospitalization for children under 18, Miami-Dade still ranks among the worst counties in the state for this issue. The highest rate of hospitalizations occurred in children under age 5.<sup>2</sup>

10.2

per 1,000: the chance of being a victim of violent crime, compared to 4.6 for the state of Florida and 3.8 for the United States.<sup>3</sup>



## Community Defined "Best Practices" to Improve Childhood Health

### Emphasis on Leadership Development

Identifying strategic allies and taking time to build and maintain relationships – identifying different areas of resources, for example research capacity, institutional understanding of how school districts work, and knowledge and expertise of local policy.

## Current Wellness & Safety Efforts

### Educational & Reproductive Justice that Focuses on Young People Ages 14-2

Currently building out voter engagement that works toward building a broader community of support around young activists. This program works with teens, young parents and their children, shaping young activists with a reproductive justice framework to direct action campaigns. As a service to the youth and young parent volunteers, PU provides child care services during meetings so that young parents can attend. Part of PU's organizing strategy is built around not only young parents' attendance in meetings, but their children, the siblings, and often times nieces and nephews also being in attendance in hopes that they will eventually become future activists.

## Power U Accomplishments in Wellness & Safety

- **Political Leadership Development**

This has helped to develop young people that go on to become activists or engaged in social issues even after they graduate from high school and eventually be on Power U's membership. Some people are still active in movements and have gone on to become activists and organizers.

- **Restorative Justice Campaigns**

Have moved Miami public schools away from zero-tolerance and punitive discipline practices and helped shift the debate on school discipline in Miami-Dade Public Schools. The campaign's long term goal is to try to shift the school-to-prison pipeline by transforming school climate within Miami-Dade Public Schools impacting children from PK-12.

- Worked in coalition with advocacy groups and individual advocates around expanding breast feeding awareness and support and the impact that it has on decreasing infant mortality and highlighting the racial justice and public health implications.



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