

Report: Kentuckians of color have worse health outcomes than white neighbors

BY SARAH LADD
KENTUCKY LANTERN

Black babies in Kentucky are more than twice as likely to die as white babies, according to a new report that shows health outcomes and access are, in general, worse in the commonwealth than the nation.

The Commonwealth Fund 2026 State Health Disparities Report, released Wednesday, shows Kentucky is worse on average than the nation in many ways, from preventable deaths to missing teeth.

The report breaks each measure down by race, showing that white people, who account for the majority of the state's population, fare better than other ethnicities.

Kentucky's population is majority white at 81% with 7% Black population, 5% Hispanic and 2% Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander.

Black babies die at a rate of 10.4 per 1,000 live births — slightly better than the national rate of 10.9. Hispanic infant mortality is at 7.2 deaths per 1,000 live births, which is higher than the national rate of 5. White Kentuckians are at 5.5 infant deaths every 1,000 live births, worse than the national rate of 4.5.

Dr. Laurie Zephyrin, senior vice president for achieving equitable outcomes with the organization, said these disparities at birth stem from a variety of factors, including social determinants of health, structural racism and provider bias.

"Maternal mortality and the disparities we see are one of the starkest examples of the inequities, and also the one that shows, I think, the most promising opportunity to resolve," she said.

Making sure mothers have access to midwifery and doulas is an important part of the solution, she said, as they're more likely to follow the family long after birth. Ensuring health coverage for mothers to access prenatal and postpartum care is key as well, Zephyrin said.

"It's really important for health systems to be consistent around the delivery of quality of care," Zephyrin said. "We know what to do. We know how to do it. We just need to do it the same for everybody so that we can have the best outcomes for everybody."

The report includes the following findings, for 2024:

- About 42% of white Kentuckians had a recent flu shot, followed by 40% of Black Kentuckians, 29% in

the Hispanic community and 37% for AANHPP Kentuckians. Data for Asian Kentuckians' flu shots was not available.

- For every 1,000 patients 65 and older, Black Kentuckians experienced 262 potentially avoidable emergency department visits while white Kentuckians had 176. Both are higher than the national averages of 226 and 157, respectively.

- Hispanic Kentuckians are most likely to be uninsured: 34% of Hispanic adults and 11% of Hispanic children in the state are uninsured. Nationally, the rate is 23% and 10%, respectively. Other ethnicities fared better: 8% of white adults and 4% of white children in Kentucky were uninsured.

- For every 1,000 patients 65 and older, 51 Black Kentuckians are readmitted to the hospital within 30 days, much higher than the rate of 33 for white Kentuckians.

- About 17% of white adults smoke, much higher than the national 12%. About 16% of Black adults in Kentucky smoke, higher than the rate of 12% for Black Americans.

- For every 1,000 Kentuckians, white patients account for 40 preventable hospitalizations (higher than the national average of 30); Black patients are at 55, which is higher than the national average of 44.

- About 15% of Black Kentuckians between the ages of 18-65 have lost six or more teeth. For white Kentuckians, it's 16%. The national averages are 10% and 9%, respectively.

Dr. Joseph Betancourt, president of The Commonwealth Fund, said "efforts underway to limit the collection of data by race and ethnicity" will further disenfranchise vulnerable communities in the years to come.

"We know you cannot fix what you cannot measure," he said, "and without this data, we lose our ability to identify who is being left behind and then be able to direct resources where they will have the greatest impact to eliminate gaps."

Researchers said that changes to the Medicaid program and the Affordable Care Act likely will worsen disparities in the coming years.

ACA subsidies expired at the end of 2025; the U.S. House voted in January to extend the subsidies, putting further action in the Senate's hands. Meanwhile, about 89,000



Dr. Joseph Betancourt



Dr. Laurie Zephyrin

Black babies die at a rate of 10.4 per 1,000 live births — slightly better than the national rate of 10.9. Hispanic infant mortality is at 7.2 deaths per 1,000 live births, which is higher than the national rate of 5. White Kentuckians are at 5.5 infant deaths every 1,000 live births, worse than the national rate of 4.5.

Kentuckians enrolled in an Affordable Care Act health plan for 2026, down from about 97,000 last year.

Those federal changes "are likely to make it even harder for people to afford and access care and risk widening the very disparities this report documents," Betancourt said.

Medicaid is the federal-state program that pays for almost 1 in 3 Kentuckians' health care. In 2025, Congress cut Medicaid spending over 10 years by \$880 billion as part of the sweeping One Big Beautiful Bill Act.

Starting in October 2028, Kentuckians covered by Medicaid will pay copays set at \$5 for health care services and \$1 for prescription drugs. The One Big Beautiful Bill Act required states to add cost sharing up to \$35.

The Kentucky House bill that set the state's copays initially set them at the maximum for inpatient hospital services and \$8 copays for prescription glasses and contacts, but the Senate lowered the benchmarks.

Sara Collins, a researcher with the Commonwealth Fund, said "the evidence really is pretty conclusive on what copays do to access to care."

"People just get less health care. And it's not something that we need to try to experiment with and prove again," she said. "We can expect growing disparities in Kentucky among people because of higher copays."

He also said cost-related barriers to care, which widen the racial disparities gaps, will likely worsen as well in the coming years.

"All of these challenges we face in healthcare are a cascade of shortcomings that range from the experiences people have in their communities to the interactions that they have with their caregivers," Betancourt said.

But, he said, disparities "are not inevitable. They are shaped by policy choices and health system decisions that can be changed."

POLICE REPORTS

The following list is compiled from reports from area law enforcement agencies:

Owensboro Police Department

- Paul R. Dillon, 44, of the 700 block of Sycamore Street was charged Thursday with trafficking in synthetic drugs and first-degree possession of a controlled substance (meth).
- Tools, home goods and decorations were reported stolen Wednesday from a storage shed in the 500 block of Salem Drive.
- A purse, keys, wallet, drivers license and medical card were reported stolen Sunday from a home in the 1000 block of West Parrish Avenue.
- Cash worth \$1,400 and debit cards were reported stolen in a Tuesday robbery in the 1400 block of West Second Street.
- A Hyundai Accent sustained vandalism

damage Wednesday in the 4100 block of McIntire Crossing.

- Merchandise sustained vandalism damage Wednesday in the 3600 block of Frederica Street.

Daviess County Sheriff's Office

- Zachary K. Maske, 24, of the 100 block of Rudy Martin Way was charged Thursday with second-degree rape (no force), first-degree sexual abuse, use of a minor in a sexual performance (victim under age 16), promoting a sexual performance by a minor (victim under age 14), procuring or promoting the use of a minor by electronic means, first-degree unlawful transaction with a minor (illegal sex act, victim under age 16) and possession of material depicting a sexual performance by a minor (victim over age 12, under age 18).

Digest

Daviess Fiscal Court

During its meeting Thursday at the Daviess County Courthouse, Daviess Fiscal Court took the following items:

- Heard a presentation of Executive Order No. 03-2026: Parks and Recreation working committee (April 20, 2026)
- Approved minutes of April 16, 2026, Daviess County Fiscal Court meeting
- Approved all claims for all departments
- Approved Resolution 11-2026 and Fiscal Year 2027 County Road Aid Cooperative Agreement
- Approved Memorandum of Agreement between the Commonwealth of Kentucky, Justice and Public Safety Cabinet, Office of the Secretary, Office of Drug Control Policy, and Daviess County Fiscal Court to establish an agreement for the Daviess County KY-ASAP local board
- Approved lease agreement with Kentucky Scholastic 3D Archery for utilization of the Mattingly Target Shooting Range
- Approved security services agreements through the Daviess County Sheriff's Office:

05-2026 effective April 23, 2026; 06-2026 effective April 27, 2026

- Approved deed of easement on Lamplite Circle for siren pole and tornado warning siren
- Approved contract with Daviess County Public Schools for the transportation of non-public school students
- Approved contract with Axiom Architecture for St. Joseph VFD overhead door design services
- Approved rate schedule for Daviess County Fiscal Court
- Awarded Bid No. 2526-55: Pickleball courts project (Parks)
- Awarded Bid No. 2526-64: Crushed limestone (Annual)
- Awarded RFQ 2526-71: Athletic courts repair (Parks)
- Approved Resolution 08-2026 — Establishing a Daviess County Drainage Advisory Board
- Appointed Janie Mahoney (Carlin Gregory S2T) to the Ohio County Water Board effective May 1, 2026 through April 30, 2030

FOSTER

FROM PAGE A1

It's fun for the owners, but for the trainer and the people in the barn it's pretty stressful. There's so many things with these horses, so many unknowns they are just like a kid. You know, the Oaks and Derby horses they're 3 years old."

Foster won his first training title at Turfway Park in 2024 with 15 wins from 86 starters at the Florence track. Among his winners was Everland, who took the \$300,000 Bourbonette Oaks, which qualified her for a start in the 2024 Longines Kentucky Oaks.

The last five years have seen a lot of growth for Foster. Foster works with owners from Owensboro, other places in Kentucky, at least eight other states and Canada.

Foster's horses have \$914,742 in winnings so far in 2026 alone with 17% wins. He's had 21 winners in 127 starts this year. Foster's horses have earned between \$1.39 million (2023) and \$2.36 million (2024), including \$1.899 million with 36 winners in 260 starts in 2025. Foster's horses lifetime earnings are \$9,448,833 with him training full time since 2014.

Foster has had five winners at Oaklawn Park

in Arkansas, and the rest of his 21 wins this year have been in Kentucky. Foster has trained horses that also race at Keeneland, Ellis Park, Kentucky Downs, among others.

Foster kept 18 horses at Churchill in 2025.

Got 55 horses in training, some in Utica, 35 at Keeneland, 10 at Hot Springs, Arkansas.

"We've got horses in Utica training," Foster said. "We go up and down quite a bit in terms of babies, horses getting claimed and sold, we're between 35 to 50 most of the time."

"This year we've had five winners at Oaklawn; the rest of them have been in Kentucky this year. We've won 21 races, that's pretty good. The percentages have held pretty steady, when you get more horses you should win more."

"When you add horses you have to add people too. We've got quite the crew, probably 18 full-time people, my wife and I."

Add to that veterinarians, blacksmiths, temp help, people hauling horses,

which Foster does a lot of himself.

The successful years have increased the profiles of Foster Family Racing.

"Probably a little bit higher class of horses, a few more of them, I think we've gotten more attention from other owners," Foster said.

"We've gone on our success, let people call us; we really haven't gone after people to come to us. Horse racing isn't like another business, the people that do well with horses are the ones who love it to start with. This is more a game of love."

"We own the better part of 32 to 33 horses. When we started we mainly did our own horses. Our first owners-partners that invested with us are still here. If we get a new one it's an add on. I guess we've been lucky and we've kept them happy."

Eric and Brooklyn Foster have invested a lot of time, long hours, and money to build and grow their thoroughbred horse training business.

"If we're not sleeping we're doing something with the horses," Eric Foster said. "We take one trip a year, me and her, and we go to a horse sale. We don't go on vacation, we're not going to watch football games. We're living our passion and our lifestyle. I got up at 4 this morning (Tuesday) and I'll probably go to bed at 9 o'clock. It's a lifestyle for us."

Elect **WILL MATTINGLY** DISTRICT COURT DIVISION 1

PAID FOR BY COMMITTEES TO ELECT WIL C. MATTINGLY DISTRICT COURT JUDGE

Spring CERTIFICATE SPECIALS!

• 8-Month • 4.00% APY

• 14-Month • 3.85% APY

Liberty FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

libertyfcu.org/certificates

Rates accurate as of 03/18/2026. Rates shown in Annual Percentage Yield (APY) and are fixed until first maturity. \$1,000 minimum balance. Substantial penalty for failure to comply with requirements. Certificates rates are subject to change without notice. You will be paid this rate until first maturity. A penalty may be imposed for withdrawals before maturity. Rates are subject to change weekly. Federally Insured by NCUA. IRA funds separately insured.