

Maternal and Child Health Research



At RTI International, our experts in health research recognize that mothers and children have special health needs. For more than 15 years, we have been working intensively to find effective ways to meet those needs.

The goal of every RTI study is to yield the objective results necessary to support sound policy. Our work supports decision making not only by the federal agencies that develop and implement healthcare programs, but also by insurers, employers, and individuals.

Understanding Health Issues Affecting Women, Children, and Families

RTI researchers study pressing issues that influence the physical, social, and emotional well-being of women, children, and families, including

- Social, economic, and institutional barriers to healthcare services
- Health disparities and minority health issues
- Sexual and reproductive health and fertility/infertility
- Family formation
- Management of preterm labor
- Efforts to reduce infant mortality
- Stillbirths, birth defects, and developmental disabilities
- Neonatal care
- Early child development and preschool, elementary, and secondary education
- Adolescent health.

Based on our in-depth understanding of these issues, RTI is able to design studies that produce high-quality data, using proven management procedures, efficient scientific methods, and a large network of research personnel. Our staff have the skills and knowledge needed to support research in emerging areas of interest.

Uniquely Broad Expertise, Record of Success

RTI conducts and supports all phases of health research, including data coordination and management, survey design and implementation, and program evaluation. We combine the intellectual talents of experts in more than 130 disciplines to form world-class research teams that provide creative ideas and cost-effective services to meet client needs.

To augment our expertise, RTI has established a collaboration with the Children's National Medical Center in Washington, DC. A leader in developing innovative treatments for childhood diseases, this pediatric hospital is home to the Children's Research Institute (CRI). By combining our strengths with CRI expertise in translational medicine, obstetrics, and pediatrics, RTI will be better able to support clinical trials—particularly in areas such as autism and rare diseases.



Data Coordinating Center

As a data coordinating center (DCC), RTI supports national and international multisite studies, providing a full range of support. Over the past three decades, we have served as the DCC for more than 25 multisite studies that include a strong portfolio in maternal and child health.

NIH-DC Initiative to Reduce Infant Mortality in Minority Populations

RTI has served as the DCC for this National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) initiative since 1993. This community-based, multisite project seeks to better understand the reasons for the high rate of infant mortality and morbidity in Washington, DC, and to reduce the number of infants at increased risk of dying in their first year of life. To date, RTI has supported 17 studies and interventions, collaborating with NICHD investigators and with universities, government, schools, medical centers, hospitals, and clinics across the DC area. Our project staff have co-authored 40 articles in peer-reviewed journals and more than 100 presentations at scientific meetings and conferences.

RTI DCC Services

- Organizing and facilitating meetings and site visits
- Providing study design and statistical leadership
- Helping develop primary and secondary study protocols
- Designing and implementing data entry systems
- Training study investigators and field staff
- Developing PC- and Web-based data management systems that allow authorized users to communicate and access up-to-date information
- Designing, implementing, and monitoring quality control procedures
- Conducting routine and ad hoc reporting and data analysis
- Preparing journal articles and other publications to communicate study results

Neonatal Research Network (NRN)

Funded by NICHD, the NRN conducts multicenter clinical trials and observational studies in neonatal medicine, with a view toward evaluating the safety and efficacy of treatment and management strategies for newborns. Over the course of RTI's 9 years of service as the DCC, we have provided statistical and data leadership on 22 different types of primary studies and more than 50 secondary studies and analyses. In addition, RTI project team members have co-authored 123 peer-reviewed publications and 168 presentations.

Global Network for Women's and Children's Health Research

Since 2001, RTI has served as the DCC for NICHD's international effort to reduce premature morbidity and mortality among reproductive-age women and young children in developing countries. Under this effort, RTI has supported study protocols for the prevention and treatment of neonatal sepsis, pre-eclampsia, birth defects such as oral clefts, postpartum hemorrhage, and perinatal asphyxia. We coordinate and monitor six project sites in countries in Asia, Central and South America, and Africa.

Stillbirth Collaborative Research Network

RTI is serving as the data collection and analysis center for NICHD's study of stillbirth in the United States. In this role, we help network investigators at five university-affiliated clinical sites design studies to determine the causes of stillbirth. We are also supporting efforts to develop research guidelines for reporting and investigating stillbirths, including a standardized postmortem exam.

Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development

Since 1995, RTI has been the data coordinating and analysis center for what is the largest, longest running, and most comprehensive study of child care in the United States. Under this NICHD effort, we manage data collected from the 10 sites involved in the study, which tracks the development of more than 1,000 children through observations of their behavior and characteristics of their homes and classrooms.



Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS)

On behalf of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, RTI is supporting surveillance of maternal and child health in the United States by improving PRAMS. We are developing systems for state-based data collection, as well as for online data dissemination and analysis. These efforts will enable states to collect and disseminate data more efficiently, reduce the time required to produce new questionnaires, and lower states' support and maintenance costs.

Program Evaluation and Surveys

Federal, state, and local agencies come to RTI for evaluations of programs and interventions designed to improve the lives of women, children, and families. Our rigorous, objective research is aimed at finding out what works—and what doesn't—through economic analyses and surveys of program participants and other stakeholders.

RTI has the personnel and technical resources to undertake surveys of any size and of any cohort while controlling cost and ensuring data quality. We apply sophisticated survey methods and technologies, several of which were originally pioneered by RTI.

We are proud of our reputation for designing and conducting surveys that deliver the high-quality data our clients need to support sound public policy.

National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW)

NSCAW is the first national study that examines child and family well-being outcomes in detail and relates those outcomes to their experience with the child welfare system. As survey contractor, RTI examined records of child welfare agencies in 97 counties across 36 states. We collected data in four annual waves from 6,228 children and adolescents, their biological mothers or primary caregivers, caseworkers, teachers, and agency administrative records. To improve data collection and ensure data security, we applied innovative technologies such as computer audio-recorded interviewing and paperless data collection.

Welfare, Children, and Families: A Three-City Study

To help policymakers assess the effectiveness of the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, NICHD examined the impact of changes in public assistance on the physical health, cognitive and emotional development, and school achievement of low-income children and their families in Boston, Chicago, and San Antonio.

In support of this 5-year study, RTI conducted all sample design and selection, three rounds of data collection, data processing and management, and reporting activities. Our staff screened more than 40,000 households before conducting more than 2,400 interviews and assessments with children and caregivers.

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Vendor Management Study

On behalf of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service, RTI sent undercover data collectors, posing as WIC participants, to 1,600 nationally representative vendors to determine whether they charge the correct prices, sell only the prescribed foods, and observe all WIC program rules and regulations. Our staff screened more than 40,000 households before conducting more than 2,400 interviews and assessments with children and caregivers.

RTI Survey Services

- Study design and implementation
- Sample design and selection
- Instrument development and evaluation
- Recruitment, training, and supervision of data collectors
- Subject recruitment and retention strategies
- Pretests and pilot studies
- Mail, telephone, and face-to-face field surveys
- Focus groups and cognitive interviews
- Records abstraction
- Collection of biological specimens
- Data processing and management, and database construction
- Health registries

National Survey of Family Growth

Under contract to the National Center for Health Statistics, RTI implemented the ninth in a series of nationally representative studies that sought to obtain information about the factors influencing childbearing among American women. In all, RTI surveyed more than 10,000 women across the United States to provide information on childbearing, family planning, and related aspects of maternal and child health.

Maternal and Child Health Research Clients

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Administration for Children, Youth, and Families
Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation
Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau
National Center for Health Statistics
Department of Education
Office of Population Affairs
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

Racial Disparities in Health Services Among Medicaid Pregnant Women

In support of a national goal to eliminate long-standing racial disparities in infant mortality, RTI investigated health service use, expenditures, and outcomes among Medicaid pregnant women in four racially diverse states. We examined records related to episodes of care for more than 260,000 women. RTI compiled the results into short summaries across eight topics, including racial/ethnic differences in patterns of pregnancy-related care, urban and rural differences in care, differences in care for disabled women, and Medicaid payments for prenatal care by source of care.

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