# Study on health and well-being of African Americans in St. Louis releases first policy brief

28 August 2013, by Leslie Gibson Mccarthy

The first of five policy briefs—the hallmark of an ongoing, multi-disciplinary study titled "For the Sake of All: A Report on the Health and Well-Being of African Americans in St. Louis"—has been released to coincide with the Aug. 28 50th anniversary of the March on Washington.

Titled "How Can We Save Lives—and Save Money—in St. Louis? Invest in Economic and Educational Opportunity," the brief focuses on the need for a multidisciplinary approach to improve health by focusing on education and economic opportunities for African Americans in St. Louis. The brief notes that educational and economic factors are closely related to health outcomes but many do not think of them as linked.
Using local data and a formula derived from decades of studies on social factors and mortality, it estimates that one in six deaths among African-American adults in 2011 was due to poverty or low levels of education. The cost to the region of this loss of life is estimated at $3.3 billion.

"On a day when we stop to reflect on the great progress we have made as a nation since Dr. King first articulated his dream and the considerable work yet to be done, it seemed appropriate to add

this information to the conversation here in St. Louis," said Jason Q. Purnell, PhD, assistant professor at the Brown School at Washington University in St. Louis and lead researcher on the project.

"Access to quality medical care is essential to improving the health and well-being of African Americans," the brief notes, "but the health sector cannot do it alone."

The report offers two concrete, evidence-based suggestions for improvement—and examples of what is already working—that were informed by engaging key stakeholders in the community:

- Invest in quality early childhood development for all children.
- Help low- to moderate-income families create economic opportunities.

The project team hopes that members of the community will use the opportunity of the brief's release to add their own perspectives through a commenting feature on the project website. They will use comments and input from additional community engagement efforts to craft the final set of recommendations to be included in a final report.

"For the Sake of All" is funded by the Missouri Foundation for Health and includes faculty from Washington University in St. Louis and from Saint Louis University. WUSTL's Institute for Public Health, the Brown School's Policy Forum, the The St. Louis American newspaper and the online news site St. Louis Beacon are partners as well.

"This is incredibly important work for this region," said Donald M. Suggs, DDS, publisher of The St. Louis American. "It is vital that this information about the relationship between health and key

[social factors](#) is in the hands of policymakers and members of the community so that we can work together to address lingering disparities."

The next brief, scheduled for release this fall, will center on high school dropouts and health. The project's entire research findings will culminate in a community conference in the spring of 2014, the year of the 60th anniversary of the landmark Supreme Court decision Brown v. Board of Education and the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The project team of African-American scholars cuts across disciplines and institutions.

To read the first full brief, as well as learn more about "For the Sake of All," visit [forthesakeofall.org/](http://forthesakeofall.org/) .

Provided by Washington University in St. Louis

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