

The National Children's Study in Montgomery County, MD: Lessons from the Field

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In 2008, Montgomery County, a diverse land-locked suburban area north of Washington, DC with a total population of 971,000, was selected to participate in the National Children's Study and is currently one of the 30 expanded Vanguard Study locations that make up the Alternate Recruitment Substudy. Our approach, termed "two-tiered Hi/Lo recruitment", uses direct to consumer marketing strategies which includes a combination of media campaigns, direct mailings, and outreach events to solicit a response from potential participants to contact the SC for screening.

Our population-based sampling strategy incorporated census data, race and ethnicity of births and environmental factors to identify 14 strata. Using elementary school boundaries as a foundation, we then identified secondary and tertiary sampling units. The JHU Study Center has taken novel approaches to addressing recruitment and retention within a very diverse county ethnically, with 17% Hispanic, 17% Black, 14% Asian, and geographically, with a mix of both high and low income suburban and rural areas. Through the efforts of neighborhood ambassadors and organized street teams, we have a cadre of local residents representing the NCS who have been successful in broadening the awareness of the NCS among "hard to reach populations" within the county. This along with our direct mailing to over 26,000 households, multilingual media campaign which consists of radio, print, internet, and social media marketing has proven to be a successful approach to recruiting pregnant women. We continue to use operational data from call center and outreach activities to fine-tune our recruitment and retention strategies.