

National Infant Mortality Awareness Month: Book Shares How One Community Cut Infant Mortality in Half

In their book Jill Haubner Miller and Dr. Meredith C. Smith share how the Greater Cincinnati community successfully reduced infant mortality.

CINCINNATI, OH, UNITED STATES, September 22, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Each September, National Infant Mortality Awareness Month calls attention to a heartbreaking public health crisis: Too many babies in the U.S. don't live to see their first birthday (Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/maternal-infant-health/infant-mortality/index.html>). The issue is especially dire for Black infants, who continue to die at far higher rates than their white peers.

Fourteen years ago, Hamilton County, Ohio, was a stark example of this crisis, with one of the worst infant mortality rates in the country. For every 1,000 live births, 10.8 babies died in their first year of life. Black babies were three times more likely to die than white infants. It was a “wicked problem”—complex, multilayered, and seemingly unsolvable—that had been lurking beneath the surface for decades.

Today, there's hope. Hamilton County's infant mortality rate is on par with the national average. The Black infant mortality rate has been cut in half.

So, what changed? Nearly everything. Healthcare providers, social service agencies, nonprofits, funders, and—most importantly—the community came together to rethink systems from the ground up. For the first time, stakeholders shared data, challenged assumptions, aligned goals, and co-created solutions with mothers and families most affected by the crisis.

The best news? Others can achieve similar results.

“The process we used to tackle our wicked problem isn't unique to Hamilton County—it's a flexible framework any community can use to drive systems change,” says Jill Haubner Miller, coauthor along with Dr. Meredith C. Smith of the new book *Infant Mortality and Other Wicked Problems: A Community-Driven Approach to Creating Change* (bi3 Publishing, 2025, ISBN: 979-8-9922242-0-7, \$19.99). “It all comes down to uniting stakeholders around a common goal, drilling down to the root of the problem, and tackling it step by step with an emphasis on building trust, enabling access, and co-designing solutions with those closest to the problem.”

In their book, Miller and Smith describe how Hamilton County made progress by putting the needs of moms and babies at the center, then scaling interventions that worked. Through the lens of their inspiring story, they share lessons and strategies other communities can use to address not just infant mortality, but any wicked problem. Readers will learn:

- How to capture and use data to challenge assumptions, uncover inequities, and identify root causes
- How to connect with stakeholders and unify them around a shared “North Star” goal
- How to build trust and co-create solutions with the people most affected
- How to create a shareable and compelling narrative that helps build your movement
- Strategies for designing replicable, sustainable programs
- The crucial roles of policy advocacy and funding alignment
- ...and more

“In the face of major challenges, people can feel powerless,” Miller concludes. “But in Hamilton County alone, our collective efforts have saved over 220 babies and counting. That’s eight classrooms of bright, curious, and valuable children who are with us today because of this work.”

This September, as the nation reflects on infant mortality, Hamilton County’s story serves as a reminder: Change is possible. When communities come together, shift their mindsets, and leverage their resources, we can create healthier futures for all children.

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About the Authors:

Jill Haubner Miller is a coauthor of *Infant Mortality and Other Wicked Problems: A Community-Driven Approach to Creating Change*. She is president and CEO of Bethesda Inc. and the bi3 Fund, a grantmaker in health. Jill is proud of the fact that over 220 babies are alive today due to the collaborative efforts bi3 has helped fund to reduce infant mortality in Hamilton County. She is passionate about leading the way to a day when every person has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible—when a person’s health can no longer be predicted by race, ethnicity, ability, or zip code.

Jill is a national leader and sought-after speaker on health equity and the practice of trust-based philanthropy. Under Jill’s leadership, bi3 has fueled efforts and fostered partnerships to help reduce infant mortality and spark new solutions to old problems. Jill lives in Cincinnati, Ohio, with her husband and two daughters.

Dr. Meredith C. Smith is a coauthor of *Infant Mortality and Other Wicked Problems: A Community-Driven Approach to Creating Change*. She is the executive director of Cradle Cincinnati, a network of partners working to improve Hamilton County, Ohio’s infant mortality rate. She also serves as an assistant field professor at the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine. Dr. Smith has a relentless commitment to addressing health disparities, particularly

among Black women and babies, and actively participates in Ohio's Eliminating Racial Disparities in Infant Mortality Task Force and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Task Force on Maternal Mental Health.

Dr. Smith also founded Queens Village, a safe space for Black mothers to support and be supported by their peers while working toward maternal and birth equity, which has grown to 12 chapters nationwide. Dr. Smith lives in Cincinnati, Ohio, and is the devoted mother to two brilliant Black women.

About the Book:

Infant Mortality and Other Wicked Problems: A Community-Driven Approach to Creating Change (bi3 Publishing, 2025, ISBN: 979-8-9922242-0-7, \$19.99) is available at Amazon and tacklingwickedproblems.com.

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