Infant Mortality in Alabama: Making a Difference
Why is the Infant Mortality Rate Important?
• The Infant Mortality Rate is one of the “gold standards” in public health and maternal and child health (MCH) circles for assessing the health of a community.

• Alabama historically does poorly on this measure.

• A family can be greatly affected by the loss of an infant.
How is an Infant Mortality Rate Calculated?
Infant Mortality Rate per 1,000 Live Births

\[
\text{IMR} = \frac{\text{# of babies dying in AL aged birth to 364 days in a given year}}{\text{# of babies born in AL in a given year}} \times 1,000
\]
If the Infant Mortality Rate Is 10 Infant Deaths Per 1,000 Live Births in Alabama, What Does That Really Say?
Numerically, this rate says that for every 1,000 babies born in Alabama, 10 will die before their first birthday.
From a public health standpoint, this rate says that Alabama (e.g., health care providers, communities, government agencies) needs to do a better job of taking care of moms and their babies.
So, Where Does Alabama Stand?
A Decade in Alabama

Infant Mortality

Rate per 1,000

Year


10.9 11.2 10.5 10.3 10.1 9.8 10.5 9.5 10.2 9.8

* Data from Division of Statistical Analysis, The Center for Health Statistics, Alabama Department of Public Health

- Prematurity and Related Conditions: 35%
- Congenital Anomalies: 19%
- SIDS: 4%
- Infection: 5%
- OB Conditions: 8%
- External Causes: 10%
- Other: 19%
How Does Alabama Compare to the Nation?
* Data from Division of Statistical Analysis, The Center for Health Statistics, Alabama Department of Public Health
So, How is Our Public Health Area Doing Regarding Infant Mortality?
1996 - 1998 Infant Mortality Rate by Public Health Area

* Data from Division of Statistical Analysis, The Center for Health Statistics, Alabama Department of Public Health
Where Does Our County Fit Into All of This?
Alabama Counties by Infant Mortality Rates per 1,000 Live Births, 1996 - 1998

* Data from Division of Statistical Analysis, The Center for Health Statistics, Alabama Department of Public Health
Now That You Have Learned All of This, What Can You Do To Help Alabama's Mothers and Babies?
What Works?

• No “magic bullet” has been found to improve infant mortality
• The problem of infant mortality is multi-factorial and very complex
• Many programs/interventions have not been tested for scientific evidence of effectiveness
Possible Interventions

- **Regionalization** - a system in which program components in a geographic area are defined and coordinated to ensure that pregnant women and their newborns have access to appropriate care.

- **Folic Acid Supplementation** - a B vitamin that greatly reduces the incidence of neural tube defects such as spina bifida.

- **Access to prenatal care for non-Medicaid, low-income women.**
Possible Interventions Cont’d

- Fetal/infant mortality teams
- Birth defects monitoring
- Evidenced-based medicine
  - Universal HIV counseling in pregnancy
  - Universal prenatal education about proper infant sleep position, and evidence-based intervention that reduces deaths from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)
  - Universal adoption of evidence-based group B streptococcal prevention protocols
Breast Feeding

Breastfeeding is an important public health issue that affects the health of infants and mothers.

The CDC’s National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion has chosen breast feeding as the first of four strategies for the upcoming year for chronic disease prevention.
So, Where Do We Go From Here? What Are Some Things That We Can Do To Improve Our Infant Mortality Rate?
For additional Information about infant mortality visit:

www.alapubhealth.org

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