



## NEWS RELEASE

### ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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## Alabama has fewest infant deaths and teen births on record in 2001

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health announces that the 567 infant deaths in 2001 was the lowest number ever recorded. Twenty-seven fewer infant deaths occurred in 2001 than in 2000, and infant deaths declined from 3,004 in 1950 to a low of 567 in 2001.

The infant mortality rate for 2001 matched the rate (9.4 per 1,000 live births) for 2000 and was tied for the lowest in the history of the state. In fact, the three-year rate of 9.5 per 1,000 live births was the lowest ever three-year rate in Alabama.

Teen births declined from 9,916 in 2000 to 8,993 in 2001. This was also the least number of births to teenagers in Alabama. In 1960, teens bore 15,608 infants, compared to the 8,993 births in 2001.

Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer, said, "There has been significant progress in lowering the number of infant deaths and in the number of teens having children. Alabamians should be proud of the programs we have implemented to address our traditionally high infant mortality rate."

Especially high infant mortality rates were found for some groups. For example, the infant mortality rate for black infants (15.2 per 1,000 live births) was more than twice as high as the rate for white infants (6.8).

The infant mortality rate was higher for infants of teen mothers (14.1), for mothers who smoked (12.7), and for mothers with less than adequate prenatal care (12.3). Low weight babies, those born at less than 5 pounds 8 ounces, had an infant mortality rate of 65.5 per 1,000 live births.

Infants born in multiple deliveries died at a rate of 45.3 per 1,000 live births, compared to a rate of 8.1 for infants in single deliveries.

Among the programs which help reduce the infant mortality rate are the following:

- the WIC program (which is designed to provide nutrition education and nutritious food to low income mothers and children),
- *Planfirst* (which is a program which helps low income women plan their pregnancies),
- tobacco prevention programs,
- teen pregnancy and unwed pregnancy prevention programs

- programs to encourage mothers to put their infants to sleep on their backs to prevent Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS),
- programs to encourage women to take folic acid to prevent birth defects when they become pregnant.

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