



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

RSA Tower 201 Monroe Street, Suite 914 Montgomery, AL 36104

Phone 334-206-5300 Fax 334-206-5534

www.adph.org

Satellite program overviews health initiatives that address pregnant women and healthy babies

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Janice Smiley
(334) 206-2928

The Alabama Department of Public Health is offering a Satellite Conference and Webcast program that will provide an overview of infant mortality issues that have faced Alabama for many years. The program, titled "Infant Mortality: Issues and Initiatives in Alabama," is scheduled for Wednesday, Sept. 15, from 2 to 4 p.m. (Central).

September is Infant Mortality Month, and this program has been designed for discussion about state initiatives that address infant mortality, community programs, high-risk populations and pregnancy, and outreach activities to the college community.

Infant mortality is defined as death occurring before the first birthday, and is an important indicator of social, political, health care delivery and medical outcomes in a geographic area. Infant deaths are classified into neonatal (0-27 days) and post neonatal (28-365 days) periods.

The infant mortality rate in Alabama dropped from 9.5 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 2008 to 8.2 in 2009, and is the lowest rate ever recorded. The percent of pregnant women who smoked and the percent of births to teens also declined.

Alabama's State Perinatal Program and the Office of Minority Health work to reduce the health disparity of infant mortality by implementing strategies that impact the Healthy People 2010 objective for infant mortality--reduction in infant deaths to no more than 4.5 infant deaths per 1,000 live births. Factors that contribute to infant deaths include:

1. Preterm birth
2. Birth defects
3. Low birthweight
4. Births to teens
5. Smoking and drug use during pregnancy
6. No health insurance or underinsured.

A troubling indicator in infant mortality is the number of low birthweight babies. During an average week in Alabama:

- 207 babies are born preterm - less than 37 weeks gestation
- 127 babies are born low birthweight - less than 2,500 grams, 5 pounds 8 ounces

- 36 babies are born very low birthweight - less than 1,500 grams, 3 pounds 5 ounces
- 24 babies are born extremely low birthweight - less than 1,000 grams, 2 pounds 3 ounces

“Unfortunately, 513 babies died before their first birthday during 2009, and this is too many babies dying. However, we are still encouraged that the rate of infant deaths will continue to decline as Alabama initiatives and programs increasingly bring awareness to Alabama’s expectant mothers,” said Janice Smiley, director, Perinatal Program, Bureau of Family Health Services in the Alabama Department of Public Health.

A number of programs help address ways for pregnant women to achieve a healthy outcome:

- March of Dimes
- Community efforts such as the social media projects conducted by students at The University of Alabama
- Inter-agency programs that reach high risk pregnant women in the state prison system
- Medicaid Maternity Program
- Preconception health education through the Alabama Department of Public Health website and Family Planning Program
- State Perinatal Advisory Council

To find out more about the free satellite and webcast conference, go to the Alabama Public Health Training Network at www.adph.org/alphtn to view program information. To see the other programs which are now available as on demand webcasts, click on “On Demand Programs” and then select “Minority Health and Health Disparities.”

The Alabama Department of Public Health Office of Minority Health mission is to improve the health status of minority populations by improving access to quality health care services and by promoting minority presence and participation in health planning and policy formation. For additional information, go to www.adph.org/minorityhealth/.