



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: José A. Álvarez (619) 515-6635
Maria Bitanga (619) 685-2239

ELIMINATING HEALTH DISPARITIES ONE “BABY” AT A TIME *Infant Mortality Rates Decrease in County*

September is National Infant Mortality Awareness Month and the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) has significant news to report. For the first time in San Diego County history, the infant mortality rate for African Americans has decreased to a single digit, further narrowing health disparities among different population groups.

“This is great news for San Diego County residents,” said Chairwoman Dianne Jacob, County of San Diego Board of Supervisors. “Every child should have the chance at a healthy start in life. We are encouraged to see this health disparity disappearing.”

According to a recent report on the key health indicators for San Diego County, the infant mortality rate among African American children dropped from 14 deaths per every 1,000 live births in 2002 to an all-time low of 8.7 deaths in 2006. The mortality rate for White infants was 4.6 in 2006, 4.9 for Hispanics, and 3.2 for Asians.

“The gap is narrowing – the number of infant deaths among African American women in our community is now more closely aligned with other population groups. This is something we have never seen in San Diego County,” said Wilma Wooten, M.D., M.P.H., County of San Diego Public Health Officer. “This news is encouraging and reaffirms the importance of prenatal care.”

African American women have always experienced the highest rate of infant mortality due to their increased risk of delivering low-birth weight babies. Contributing factors include genetics, environment, behavioral patterns, social circumstances, and access to health care.

Infant mortality prevention efforts from HHSA and its many partners have improved access to prenatal and overall care. Nearly 90% of pregnant women in San Diego County report receiving prenatal care during their first trimester. This has resulted in fewer low-weight births, especially among African American women.

The current overall infant mortality rate (4.6) for the region brings the County closer to the federal government goal of 4.5 deaths for every 1,000 live births.

“This is a milestone and a big achievement for the County of San Diego, especially the African American community,” added Wooten. “We’ll continue to monitor the situation closely to determine if this trend holds.”

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