



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Alabama records lowest number of infant deaths in 2004; infant mortality rate is tied with 2003

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health announces that the infant mortality rate of 8.7 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2004 tied the lowest ever recorded in Alabama, and the 515 infant deaths were the least ever recorded, according to the department's Center for Health Statistics. In 2003 there were 519 infant deaths in the state.

The infant mortality rate for black infants of 13.3 per 1,000 live births is the lowest ever recorded in Alabama. While no national data are yet available for 2004 comparison, this rate is lower than the 14.1 rate for blacks in the U.S. in 2003. The infant mortality rate for white infants of 6.7 is above the national average for whites which was 5.8 per 1,000 live births in 2003. The infant mortality rate for Hispanic infants in Alabama was 6.5 in 2004.

Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer, said, "We are pleased that Alabama's health care system is working and progress is being made in reducing infant mortality, especially that the rate for black infants decreased to the lowest rate ever. The down side is that black infant mortality is still twice the white rate and that white infant mortality appears to be higher than the national average."

The percent of births to teens was 14.0 percent, and the rate appears to have leveled off since 2000. The percent of low weight births in Alabama was 10.5, the highest in the past decade. Low weight births had a much higher infant mortality rate (54.8) than normal weight births (3.1).

Multiple births represented 3.5 percent of all live births, the highest percent ever. The infant mortality rate for multiple births was 36.8, as compared with a rate for single births of 7.7.

An increase was noted in the percent of mothers smoking to 11.2 percent of all live births which is a change from the improvement Alabama has seen for the past 10 years.

Programs that have had a positive effect on this downward trend in Alabama's infant mortality include the following:

- Plan *First* family planning services to help low-income women plan their pregnancies
- Tobacco prevention programs
- Teen pregnancy prevention programs
- The Alabama Unwed Pregnancy Prevention Program

- The WIC program which provides nutrition education and nutritious food to low- income mothers and children
- The Back to Sleep Campaign to encourage mothers to put their infants to sleep on their backs to prevent Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- The Folic Acid Campaign to encourage women of childbearing age to take folic acid to prevent birth defects
- Child death review
- Fetal and infant death review

Graphs and charts are available at the Alabama Department of Public Health Web site at <http://ph.state.al.us/chs/index.htm>.

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