



## NEWS RELEASE

### ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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## Alabama's infant mortality rate increases in 2005

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Alabama's infant mortality rate of 9.3 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2005 showed an increase over the rates from the past three years. Alabama recorded 561 infant deaths in the year, according to the Alabama Department of Public Health's Center for Health Statistics. In 2004 there were 516 infant deaths in the state.

The 2005 infant mortality rate was 14.4 deaths per 1,000 live births for black infants, 8.4 for Hispanic infants, and 7.2 for white infants.

Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer, said, "We do not fully understand these very troubling rates. Infant mortality is heading in the wrong direction, and not for reasons we would usually ascribe, such as teen pregnancy. The babies of adult women are dying, and we will explore the reasons and develop ideas to help lower infant deaths."

The percent of births to teens was 13.1 percent, a record low in the past decade. The percent of births to young teens, those less than 18 years old, was a record low 4.4 in 2005.

The percent of low weight births (babies weighing less than 2,500 grams or under 5 pounds, 8 ounces) in Alabama, however, increased to 10.7, the highest rate in the past 10 years. Low weight births had a much higher infant mortality rate (61.4) than normal weight births (2.8). Half of Alabama's increase in infant mortality is among the very smallest infants, those born weighing less than 500 grams or 1 pound, 1 1/2 ounce.

Traditionally Hispanic mothers have had the lowest rates of infant mortality in Alabama, but with Alabama's changing population one of every 15 births is to a Hispanic mother. For the first time, the Hispanic rate was higher than the white rate.

Multiple births represented 3.5 percent of all live births. The infant mortality rates for multiple births was 46.1, as compared with a rate for single births of 8.0. Approximately 40 percent of the increase in Alabama's infant mortality is attributed to multiple births.

Programs that have had a positive effect on 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 and abstinence programs
- 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://www.adph.org>.

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