



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

Text4baby seeks to connect moms to free health information

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Janice Smiley
(334) 206-2928

Pregnant women and mothers of infants in Dallas and surrounding counties were treated to a lunch-and-learn event Sept. 25 at the Central Alabama Farmers Cooperative in Selma. The Alabama Department of Public Health and the Text4baby Campaign hosted the program designed to raise awareness of the free text service provided through a public-private partnership with mobile phone companies.

U.S. Rep. Terri A. Sewell joined representatives from sponsoring organizations, including Jackie Holliday, administrator of Public Health Area 7. In addition to bringing attention to the Text4baby service, the moms-to-be and mothers of infants were informed about an array of resources and tools available through local agencies in the community. These included updates on physical activity opportunities, a presentation about safe cribs from Cribs for Kids, and educational information from other partners.

The event is being held during September, National Infant Mortality Awareness Month. This month is a time designated to reflect on the thousands of families who have lost a child far too soon. The infant mortality rate in the U.S. is one of the highest among developed nations and rates are much higher within the African American community, regardless of income, educational level or location. More than twice as many black babies die compared to their white counterparts during the first year of life.

Alabama's recently announced infant mortality rate of 8.1 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2011 is the lowest ever recorded in the state. The Dallas County rate in 2011 of 5.3 was even lower, and the average rate over the past three years for the county is 6.4.

"We know that providing pregnant women and new mothers with the best possible information, such as that provided through Text4baby, and access to care can help," said Janice Smiley, director of the State Perinatal Program. "Text4 baby gives participants critical information so they can take charge of their health and the health of their babies."

Text4baby is the nation's first free text messaging service for pregnant women and mothers of infants under age 1. Mothers who register receive three text messages every week, timed to their due date or baby's birth date, throughout pregnancy and up to baby's first birthday. Moms get information on labor signs and symptoms, developmental milestones, breastfeeding, car seat and sleep safety, and many other topics. To sign up, text BABY to 511411.

In honoring Infant Mortality Awareness Month and striving to empower more mothers with Text4baby, those who sign up before Sept. 30 will be entered to win a year's supply of baby products donated by a sponsor. Learn more about the contest at www.Text4baby.org.

Text4baby is a free service of the National Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition. This month, the service is partnering with the National Healthy Start Association and Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., in tackling infant mortality through health education.

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