

# PROJECT NAF



*Nurturing  
Asheville &  
Area Families*

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*Western NC Community Health Center*  
ZaKiya Bell-Rogers,  
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Project NAF's Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) provides technical support to the Project NAF Program. Meetings are held on the first Monday of even months (February, April, June, August, October, and December) at 9 a.m. Meetings are held at the office of Mount Zion Community Development, Inc. located in the Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church, 47 Eagle St., Asheville, NC.

If you are interested in making a difference in the lives of African American pregnant and post-partum women by serving on Project NAF's Planning Advisory Committee, please contact Belinda K. Grant at (828) 350-9821 or Shari Smith at (828) 225-8155.

### Contact Us

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## What is Infant Mortality?

### Minority Infant Mortality Overview & Statistics

Infant mortality is the death of a baby before its first birthday. Infant mortality rates are the number of infant deaths for every 1,000 live births within a given timeframe (usually a year). Infant mortality is thought to be a social problem with medical consequences and is often considered a measure of the general health of a community.

In 2010, North Carolina's infant mortality rate was the lowest in the state's history. 7.0 babies died in 2010 for every 1,000 born alive. This is down 11.4% from 2009 (7.9 deaths/1,000 live births) and 45 percent since 1988 when North Carolina had the highest infant mortality rate in the nation. However, North Carolina continues to exceed the national average. Infant mortality in the United States ranked 41st in the world in 2007, (this is the most recent year that worldwide data has been available).

### Did You Know?

The 2010 infant mortality rate for Buncombe County was 6.2 with the White infant death rate at 5.5 and the African American rate at 14.0. Infant Mortality in North Carolina.

In 2010 the state's overall infant mortality rate was 7.0 deaths per 1,000 live births. This represents a decline of 11.4 percent from the 2009 rate. The largest decline in infant mortality in 2010 was among African American infants, a reduction of 19.6 percent from the previous year. Despite these encouraging numbers, African American

infants in NC continue to experience a disparity of more than 2.1 in the area of infant mortality. The African American infant mortality rate in NC for 2010 was 12.7 and the white rate was 5.3

Infant mortality rates in counties are subject to annual variability due to small numbers of infant deaths and therefore not necessarily reflecting statewide trends. (*HealthCare Providers*).

### The Three Major Causes of Infant Death

- Prematurity and low birth-weight. Prematurity (born too early) and low birth-weight (born too small) continue to increase in North Carolina, as it does in the country.
- Birth defects and Sudden
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Of increasing concern is the difference in death rates between babies of different races and ethnicities. The death rate for African American non-Hispanic babies is 2.3 times higher than for White non-Hispanic. Latino babies in North Carolina tend to have lower infant mortality rates.

While advances in medicine and technology, case management services, educational programs and local community programs have all contributed to reducing the state's infant mortality rate over the years, there is more work to be done. Currently, a major effort is underway to improve the health of all women of childbearing age because healthier women are more likely to have healthy babies.



Belinda Grant, Executive Director of NAF.  
Photo: Urban News

### Nutrition and Portion Sizes

Project NAF's Empowerment Session was held on September 11, 2012 at the Office of Mount Zion Community Development, Inc. The focus of the session was on Nutrition and Portion sizes. Guest speakers were Sarah Brown, Nutritionist, WIC Department, Buncombe County Department of Health, and Margaret Ruff, program assistant with the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), NC Agricultural Extension. Program participants, their babies, and family members received education on nutrition, healthy eating, the Eating Smart and Moving More Program, and making better beverage choices.

During the past ten years the infant death rate in N.C. has decreased from 8.6 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2000 to 7.0 deaths in 2010.

## Initiatives to Impact Minority Infant Mortality

North Carolina's Healthy Beginnings program is a notable initiative contributing to the state's progress. The program supports 12 communities working to improve birth outcomes in minority families, with an emphasis on breastfeeding, consumption of multivitamins with folic acid, infant safe sleep practices, women's healthy weight, reproductive life planning and elimination of tobacco use.

The state also has four federally

funded Healthy Start projects (Baby Love Plus and Healthy Start Corps) in 15 counties that focus on improving birth outcomes primarily within African American and American Indian communities. This long-term investment has resulted in the vast majority of those counties showing an improvement in 2010 in birth outcomes among minority families.



Of significance, the report noted a 46 percent reduction in reported cases of SIDS – down from 98 deaths in 2009 to 53 in 2010. Sustained efforts to promote infant safe sleep practices have allowed for expansion of the state's bilingual Infant Safe Sleep Campaign.

The campaign emphasizes best practices such as: a safe sleep environment, breastfeeding, appropriate room temperature, back sleep positioning, and elimination of tobacco

smoke exposure.

State and federal funds continue to support outreach and training for health care providers to promote folic acid consumption, healthy weight and reproductive life planning for young men and women through the N.C. Preconception Health Campaign.

The North Carolina Healthy Start Foundation provides leadership in developing educational materials and increases public awareness of behaviors and resources that promote healthy families through the use of media, social media and electronic messaging.

The evidence-based Nurse Family Partnership initiative promotes healthy births as well as improved child health. These and other ongoing collaborations are essential in order to continue to reduce infant deaths in North Carolina.