



Forsyth County Infant Mortality Reduction Coalition



10 year plan to Reduce Infant Deaths in Forsyth County

Introduction

The problem of infant deaths is a complex and, in many ways, mysterious challenge. While leading national and international researchers continue to search for answers, our community cannot wait. We must use the knowledge we do have now and take action to prevent as many infant deaths as possible.

In 2006, the United Way of Forsyth County invited the Forsyth County Infant Mortality Reduction Coalition to collaborate in a process to establish a community-wide strategic plan for reducing infant deaths. Members of the United Way Impact Council on Infant Mortality went through the very difficult process of: 1) identifying which types of infant deaths occur most frequently in our community, 2) reviewing national best practices to determine what outcomes were most likely to make a difference, and then 3) prioritizing which outcomes to focus on first if we want to change our community for the better.

This 10 year plan does not include all of the possible options for reducing all infant deaths. The Impact Council narrowed our list of outcomes down from over 30 to the 13 we believe are most important to focus on first. Each infant death is a crisis; each grieving family will never be the same. The purpose of this plan is to provide direction for Forsyth County, NC so that we can address the pieces of the problem that we *do* know how to solve - today.

Long-term (10 year) Goals for reducing infant death:

- 1. Women in Forsyth County will be healthy before they become pregnant OR pregnant again.**
Focus area = women's health before pregnancy.
- 2. Women and their partners / families / support networks will be able to provide a safe and supportive environment for their infants.**
Focus area = ending the cycle of crisis.

Key group of women to focus on first = Women of color with low-income and low education.

In our community, women of color are two to three times more likely to have an infant die than white women are.

Focus Area 1: Women's Health Before Pregnancy

Women in Forsyth County will be healthy before they become pregnant OR pregnant again.

Individual level (population-based) outcomes and measures:

- Women will have access to and will consistently and correctly use a reliable method of birth control
 - Increase the percentage of sexually active women who consistently and correctly use a reliable method of birth control
- Women who smoke and are pregnant or are trying to become pregnant will participate in a smoking cessation program.
 - decrease the number of women who smoke
- Women will avoid or will not be exposed to secondhand smoke at work or at home.
 - decrease the percentage of women who smoke or are exposed to secondhand smoke
- Women will be educated about sexually transmitted diseases, their impact on pregnancy, and prevention methods.
 - decrease the number of women who become pregnant that have STDs
- Women will space their babies at least two years apart.
 - increase the percentage of women who space their babies at least two years apart

System level (community-based) outcomes and measures:

- Women will have access to affordable exercise facilities or programs in their neighborhoods
 - increase the presence of affordable exercise facilities in low-wealth neighborhoods
- Lay health educators (health extenders) will provide women's health information to patients, community members and health care providers
 - increase the use of health extenders (non-clinical health educators) to reach both patients / community members and/or health care providers with women's health information.
- Job sites and public places will adopt smoke-free policies
 - increase the number of public places and workplaces that have smoke-free policies.

Focus Area 2: Ending the Cycle of Crisis

Women and their partners / families / support networks will be able to provide a safe and supportive environment for their infants.

Individual level (population-based) outcomes and measures:

- Women of child-bearing age have access to life-skills and financial literacy education.
 - increase life skills planning
 - increase the financial literacy and self-sufficiency of women and families
 - increase self-esteem and coping skills among girls and women, boys and men
- Fathers are positively involved in children's lives.
 - increase positive involvement of fathers in the lives of their children

System level (community-based) outcomes and measures:

- Mental health screening and treatment programs are available for pregnant women and new moms.
 - increase affordable and high-quality mental health screening and treatment services
- Pregnant women who experience domestic violence receive services that increase their safety and well-being.
 - increase the number of pregnant women seeking Domestic Violence counseling
 - increase the number of healthcare providers screening pregnant women for DV
- Pregnant women with substance abuse issues receive timely and appropriate treatment.
 - increase substance abuse treatment programs