



## CHCHD News

*Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department*

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### **Every Baby Deserves a 1<sup>st</sup> Birthday**

September is National Infant Mortality Awareness Month, a campaign sponsored by the National Healthy Start Association (NHSA). In honor of this recognition, individuals across the country will be Celebrating Day 366 because every baby deserves a chance to live beyond their first birthday. In Hamilton County, we will be celebrating 9 less lives lost before their 1st birthday. In 2009, we lost 33 babies before the age of 1; that is 9 less deaths than in 2008.

Infant mortality is the death of an infant before his or her first birthday. Hamilton County has the second highest infant mortality rate in Tennessee, behind Shelby County. Recent data shows a racial disparity among our rates. The infant mortality rate for Caucasian infants in Hamilton County is 5.3 per thousand births, while the rate for African American infants is 14.7 per thousand births.

"Infant mortality prevention is a priority for our county as well as for the entire state of Tennessee. That's why this initiative is so vital," said Becky Barnes, administrator of the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department.

The IRIS Umbrella Project-Core Leadership Group is charged with guiding the infant mortality reduction efforts in Hamilton County. The group consists of local agencies and individuals working to identify trends and address factors for infant mortality. "It takes a collaborative community effort in order to make a positive and lasting impact on the prevention and reduction of infant mortality," said Christina Featherstone, program coordinator of the IRIS Umbrella Project-Infant Mortality Prevention Initiative.

One of the key goals of the IRIS-Core Leadership Group is to educate and mobilize the community around factors that lead to poor birth outcomes. "Education and interventions for women and families before, during, and between pregnancies, provides us with the best opportunities to reduce poor birth outcomes," stated Judith Miller, chairperson of the IRIS-CLG.

Community leaders, partners and individuals all play a part in reducing poor birth outcomes in Hamilton County. It is our responsibility to do all we can to assure that every baby is born healthy and celebrates a 1<sup>st</sup> birthday.

For more information about infant mortality or the IRIS Umbrella Project, please call 423-209-8135, or visit <http://health.hamiltontn.org/ClinicalServices/InfantMortality.aspx>.

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