



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Black infant mortality rate and rate of teen births in Alabama are lowest ever; overall infant mortality improves in 2013

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health announces that the infant mortality rate of 8.6 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2013 is lower than the 8.9 rate recorded in 2012. In 2013, there were 58,162 live births in Alabama and the infant mortality rate represents the deaths of 500 of these infants who did not reach their first birthday.

"Alabama's infant mortality rate has trended downward since 2007," Gov. Robert Bentley said. "Lowering the rate is a critical part of our efforts to improve public health in Alabama. We are encouraged by today's news, and we will work to continue efforts to reduce infant mortality in Alabama."

While disparities in pregnancy outcomes by race persist, the 2013 infant mortality rate for black infants was at its lowest level ever, 12.6. In contrast, the infant mortality rate for white infants increased from 6.6 in 2012 to 6.9 in 2013.

The percent of births to teenagers in 2013 was the lowest ever recorded, 9.3 percent, (5,420 births) and the percent of births to teens less than 18 years of age was also a record low, 2.6 percent (1,524 births). Infant mortality among babies of teen mothers was higher (12.5 per thousand live births) than among adult mothers (8.2). The infant mortality rates among teens and adults by race are as follows: white teens, 8.8; black teens, 18.6; white adults, 6.7, black adults, 11.8.

Research indicates that babies born before 37 weeks of gestation face a higher risk of health problems. The percent of births at less than 37 weeks in Alabama has been trending down steadily to 11.8 percent of all live births in 2013. This compares to 13.4 percent in 2005.

Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer, said, "Alabama hospitals and the medical community have worked diligently to decrease elective early term deliveries at 37 and 38 weeks gestation which helps produce better birth outcomes. Other factors that improve our infant mortality rate include increased levels of prenatal care and better family planning with the advent of long-acting reversible contraceptives."

The infant mortality rate for births with less than a two-year interval was 11.4 per 1,000 live births versus a rate of 6.9 for births of a two-year or greater interval between births.

Low birth weight infants, defined as those weighing less than 2,500 grams (5 pounds, 8 ounces) were almost 20 times more likely to die than infants of normal weight. Ten percent of births in 2013 were of low weight.

The lifestyle of the mother, such as smoking, has an impact on the unborn child. The percent of women smoking during pregnancy increased slightly from 10.7 percent in 2012 to 10.8 percent in 2013. The infant mortality rate of mothers who did not smoke was 7.9; for smokers the rate was 13.2.

Graphs and detailed charts are available at the Alabama Department of Public Health website at adph.org.

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