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DEPARTMENT INVESTS \$1.4 MILLION IN FLORIDA HEALTHY BABIES INITIATIVE



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Tallahassee, Fla.—Today, the Florida Department of Health announced \$1.4 million in funding for Florida’s Healthy Babies, a collaborative statewide initiative to positively influence social determinants and reduce racial disparity in infant mortality. This project engages the department’s 67 local health offices and numerous partners within each county to address disparities with evidence-based interventions.

“Although we have the lowest infant mortality in our history, Florida has racial and ethnic disparities that we are working to eliminate,” said State Surgeon General and Secretary of Health Dr. John Armstrong. “This funding through Florida’s Healthy Babies will help us find solutions that promote and protect the health of all babies in Florida.”

Florida’s Healthy Babies is an effort of the department’s Health Equity Program Council, which focuses on helping all Floridians achieve health equity, or the highest level of health. Though Florida has experienced declining morbidity and mortality rates, disparities persist and the department is committed to achieving health equity and eliminating these differences. The council is comprised of county health officers and leaders in the state health office and works to assist local efforts, monitor emerging research and determine how to expand best practices statewide.

The Florida’s Healthy Babies Initiative provides all 67 counties with \$10,000 to conduct an enhanced data analysis on infant mortality (including an environmental scan of existing pertinent programs) and to host a community action-planning meeting to examine disparities in infant deaths, the role of social determinants of health, and propose local action. In addition to the base funding, many counties will receive additional funding to support the following activities:

- Baby Steps to Baby Friendly: 10 practices proven to enhance hospital maternity care to support and promote exclusive breastfeeding.
- Protective Factors: evidence-based curricula to enhance parental resilience, social connections, concrete support in times of need, knowledge of parenting and child development, and social and emotional competence of children that decreases the risk of child maltreatment.

In total, 26 counties received funding to work with 45 hospitals statewide on Baby Steps to Baby Friendly and 29 counties received funding to work on protective factors.

Kim Streit, Vice President of Health Care Research and Information for the Florida Hospital Association said, “Investing in Florida’s Healthy Babies initiative is a great way to increase mothers’ access to effective prenatal care. This program is also an important step toward improving health outcomes for Florida’s babies.”

Chris Lolley, Executive Director for Prevent Child Abuse Florida said, “The announcement of new funding for Florida’s Healthy Babies reflects tremendous support for children in our state. This money will allow us to focus on critical issues so that our babies have the best chance for healthy development and long-term success.”

Douglas Sessions, Jr., President and CEO, Ounce of Prevention Fund of Florida said, “All children deserve to get the best start in life and move on to happy, healthy childhoods. This funding for Florida’s Healthy Babies will help us address our state’s most pressing infant health issues. The Ounce of Prevention Fund of Florida looks forward to collaborating with Florida Department of Health in support of this new endeavor.”

Counties working on Baby Steps to Baby Friendly received \$5,000 each and an additional \$10,000 for each hospital they are partnering with. Participating counties include:

- Bay
- Brevard
- Broward
- Charlotte
- Clay
- Collier
- Columbia
- Miami-Dade
- Duval
- Escambia
- Highlands
- Indian River
- Jackson
- Lake
- Lee
- Leon
- Nassau
- Okaloosa
- Pasco
- Pinellas
- Polk
- Putnam
- St. Johns
- Sarasota
- Volusia
- Walton

Counties working on protective factors received \$5,000 each and include:

- Bradford
- Clay
- DeSoto
- Dixie
- Flagler
- Franklin
- Gilchrist
- Glades
- Gulf
- Hamilton
- Hendry
- Hernando
- Leon
- Levy
- Marion
- Nassau
- Orange
- Osceola
- Palm Beach
- Putnam
- Saint Lucie
- Santa Rosa
- Sarasota
- Seminole
- Sumter
- Union

- Volusia
- Wakulla
- Walton

For more information about Baby Steps to Baby Friendly visit:
<http://www.healthiestweightflorida.com/activities/baby-steps.html>

About the Florida Department of Health

The department works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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