



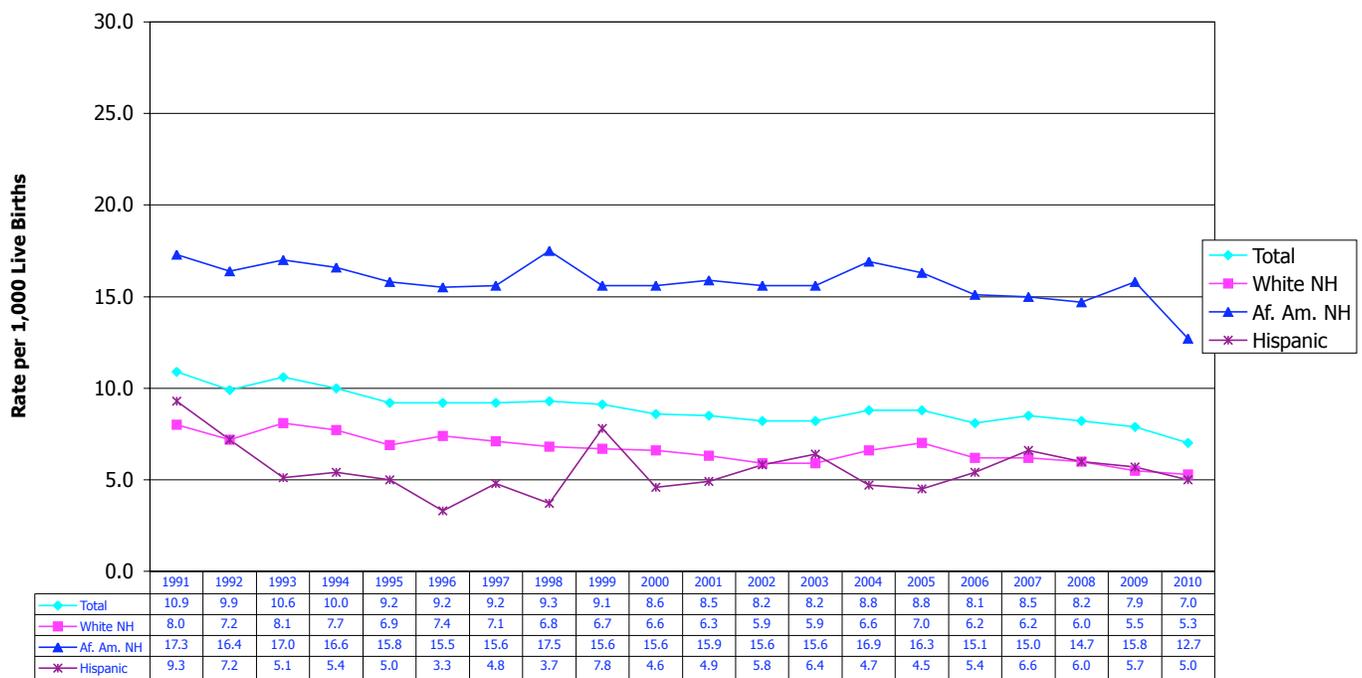
# UPDATE

March 2012 | Maternal and Infant Health

North Carolina's infant mortality rate declined sharply in 2010, reaching its lowest level in state history. The rate, seven infant deaths for every 1,000 live births, represents an 11.4 percent drop from the state's 2009 rate of 7.9 deaths. The largest decline in infant mortality in 2010 was among African American infants, a reduction of 19.6 percent from the previous year. Over the past 20 years, the infant death rate has fallen from 10.9 per 1,000 in 1991, a decrease of 36 percent.

Our state's success in lowering the infant mortality rate comes after many years of hard work and innovative programs across North Carolina. An example is the Pregnancy Medical Home program, a partnership between Community Care of North Carolina and the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services. These agencies are working together to improve birth outcomes in the Medicaid population through coordinated, evidence-based maternity care management for women at risk for poor birth outcomes with a focus on quality improvement.

**Figure 1: NC Resident Infant Mortality Rates, 1991-2010**



HNC 2020 Objective	Baseline	Current	Target
Reduce the infant mortality racial disparity between whites and African Americans	2.45 (2008)	2.40 (2010)	1.92
Reduce the infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	8.2 (2008)	7.0 (2010)	6.3

- ❑ North Carolina has led the nation in promoting a medication known as 17 alpha hydroxyprogesterone caporate (17P) to reduce recurring preterm birth. The NC 17P Initiative has been funded by the General Assembly for almost five years, ensuring that all women have access to this important treatment option.
- ❑ The NC SIDS Law 2003-407 (Infant/Toddler Safe Sleep & Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) Risk Reduction in Child Care) mandated that child care centers have written safe sleep policies, inform parents about the policy, train staff, and monitor sleeping babies. Prior to 2003, SIDS was the primary cause of deaths in N.C. child care. Since the law was passed in 2003, annual SIDS deaths in N.C. licensed childcare facilities have been minimal to none.
- ❑ The N.C. Infant Safe Sleep Campaign, a bilingual public education and awareness initiative, reaches out to parents to increase understanding about SIDS and ways to reduce risk, particularly in African American babies. Sustained efforts to promote infant safe sleep practices have been funded since 2007 with four one-time appropriations from the N.C. General Assembly.
- ❑ Family First of Granville and Vance Counties have used Healthy Beginnings funds to help reduce the infant mortality rate in their communities by promoting best practices to address breastfeeding, smoking, and other health topics to ensure a healthy pregnancy. The program works from pregnancy beyond birth, helping families create healthy environments and positive parent-child relationships.

### SPOTLIGHT: Lee County

The Healthy Beginnings funded Sister Love program in Lee County is an infant mortality prevention program aimed at African American women. In addition to receiving support to have a healthy baby, each child is entered into the coalition's Parents As Teachers program to ensure the parent is equipped with the appropriate skills to support their child's developmental growth. Both programs include home visitation and group meetings. Danielle Jennings became involved with Sister Love when she was pregnant with her second child. Through the program, she learned healthy behaviors including nutrition and physical activity. She has remained involved with the program as a Health Ambassador.

*As a larger woman, I was very concerned about my weight and how it would affect my pregnancy. My outreach worker started sharing with me ways to eat healthier and got me to participate in a Sister Love walking program called Walk to Win. The person who walked the most miles received a prize, which I won two years in a row.*



Danielle Jennings with her children Dylan, Delmaz, D'Zahrey and Dayreon.