

PRESS RELEASE

Local initiative works to improve black infant mortality rates in Putnam County

GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA, March 17, 2008—Putnam County has the highest infant mortality rate in the state. Black babies are 2.7 times more likely to die than white babies in the county. Black babies in Putnam County are 2 times more likely to die than black babies throughout Florida.

As a result of these startling statistics, Putnam County was one of eight counties selected to participate in a project to create local initiatives to reduce the rate of black infant mortality. The Putnam County Black Infant Health Initiative is tasked with determining factors associated with racial disparities in infant mortality, developing recommendations for improving health outcomes for black infants in Putnam County and ultimately to implement community-based interventions and policies that address these racial disparities.

House Bill 1269 appropriated \$1 million to fund the project in urban and rural areas throughout the state. The other counties identified to participate include: Miami-Dade, Broward, Duval, Hillsborough, Palm Beach, Orange and Gadsden. Counties selected to participate had average nonwhite infant mortality rates of at least 1.75 times greater than the white infant mortality rate. The infant mortality rate is the number of babies who die before their first birthday for every 1,000 live births.

The Putnam County Black Infant Health Initiative, Healthy Start of North Central Florida Coalition, WellFlorida Council and community members will be conducting focus groups in Putnam County from late March through April. The focus groups will primarily target black women of childbearing age, whose responses will help shed light on the problem and possible solutions.

The group will also be hosting a community event in Palatka on May 31, which will help build public awareness of the issue. There will be speakers, educational materials and displays, and childcare available.

The Putnam County Black Infant Health Initiative will discuss their preliminary findings on black infant mortality in Putnam County at a presentation at 5:30 p.m. on April 14, 2008 at Mt. Taber Baptist Church in Palatka. The public is invited to attend.

Results of the focus groups, research and recommendations for interventions will be available in early August 2008. For more information, contact Lindsey Michaels of WellFlorida Council at 352-313-6500 x 114.

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