

SUMMARY STATEMENT

The infant mortality rate in Tennessee decreased from 7.4 per 1,000 live births in 2016 and 2017 to 6.9 per 1,000 live births in 2018 by targeting interventions across sectors to address root causes. Successful strategies were developed during the infant mortality reduction strategic planning process led by the Tennessee Department of Health (TDH). A statewide, diverse group of stakeholders was convened to develop a plan to reduce infant deaths and specifically addressed strategies to impact preterm birth and health equity.

ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

The Infant Mortality Strategic Planning Committee looked at measures of success to reduce the rate of preterm birth and improve health equity. Some of the strategies in Tennessee include:

1. Decreasing the number of unplanned pregnancies through promotion of client-directed family planning services including Long Acting Reversible Contraceptives (LARCs) and increasing the number of providers utilizing “One Key Question” and Parenthood/Pregnancy Attitude, Timing, and How (PATH) to facilitate reproductive life planning conversation;
2. Decreasing tobacco use by increasing the number of women enrolled in Baby and Me Tobacco Free diaper incentive program;
3. Decreasing early elective delivery through promotion of the BEST (breastfeeding, early elective delivery reduction and safe sleep for Tennessee babies) award to hospitals; and
4. Increasing the number of women participating in group prenatal care. When implementing these strategies, TDH looks at data on health disparities. Areas of the state with high disparities are a focus for prevention efforts.

TDH has collaborated with March of Dimes to implement their group prenatal care model known as Supportive Pregnancy Care in Tennessee. March of Dimes has increased the number of sites and the number of women enrolled in Supportive Pregnancy Care throughout Tennessee. TDH assists clients and providers with a reproductive life plan tools to reduce unintended pregnancies. Births resulting from unintended pregnancies can have negative consequences including birth defects and low birth weight. TDH has increased the number of health departments offering Baby and Me Tobacco Free with all 95 county health departments now participating in the program. TDH has partnered with the Tennessee Hospital Association to promote the BEST award. The BEST award is presented to hospitals annually meeting set criteria around those topics. This is a way to recognize hospitals making strides to reduce infant mortality through promotion of safe sleep, breastfeeding and reduction of early elective delivery.

Tennessee’s example shows that a multifaceted approach with key leaders and stakeholders can be successful in reducing preterm birth and achieving health equity.