

www.baltimoresun.com/health/bs-hs-bmore-healthy-baby-20100602,0,4753110.story

baltimoresun.com

City launches program to reduce infant deaths

By Meredith Cohn, The Baltimore Sun

2:38 PM EDT, June 2, 2010

Baltimore officials have joined with a nonprofit and a health care provider to launch a \$3 million program aimed at reducing the city's high infant mortality rate.

The city's infant death rate is among the highest in the nation. In 2009, the city lost more than 120 babies under 1 year old, and officials believe a good number of the deaths were preventable. Many of the infants were underweight and born prematurely, two major factors in mortality.

The three-year program, called B'More for Healthy Babies, is backed by the city health department, CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield and the Family League of Baltimore City Inc., among others.

The program will employ education, community outreach and a media campaign that includes radio spots, bus posters, bumper stickers and videos to show new mothers. The first initiative is to promote safe infant sleep practices. Last year, 27 babies in the city died while sleeping, and nearly all were not put to sleep safely – alone and on their backs in a crib, according to city officials.

"Every infant death in Baltimore City is a harsh reminder that we should be doing more to help mothers receive the care they need to have healthy births and care for the fragile lives they take home," said Chet Burrell, CareFirst's president and chief executive, in a statement. "Our partnership with Mayor Rawlings-Blake, the City Health Department and the Family League is part of a concerted effort to remove the social and economic barriers now preventing mothers in need from the care and support services that can save their babies' lives."

The effort will be city-wide, but will focus on Patterson Park North and East, Upton/Druid Heights and Greenmount East.

"This is the kind of public-private partnership we need to address a major public health problem," said Olivia Farrow, interim health commissioner, in a statement. "We have all the right players working on this initiative and I know we will make a positive difference in the lives of Baltimore's families."

Meredith.cohn@baltsun.com

Copyright © 2010, [The Baltimore Sun](#)