

Lifecourse Initiative for Healthy Families: Highlights Infant Mortality Awareness Month

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MILWAUKEE, Wis. – September is National Infant Mortality Awareness Month. This month, the Lifecourse Initiative for Healthy Families (LIHF) is drawing Wisconsin's attention to the unacceptable disparities in infant mortality in the state.

Throughout September, LIHF is hosting several local activities in Kenosha, Milwaukee and Racine to highlight community-based resources related to infant and community health. During Infant Mortality Awareness Month, LIHF is also asking all Wisconsin residents to make a commitment to learn more about infant mortality, be a spokesperson when there is an opportunity to speak out on this issue, and educate local and state elected officials about policies that can improve birth outcomes and reduce health disparities.

In 2015, 384 infants in Wisconsin died before their first birthday. Prematurity and low birthweight are the leading cause of infant deaths. Wisconsin's infant mortality rates show that babies born to African American mothers are nearly three times more likely to die before their first birthday than babies born to white mothers – one of the worst black/white disparities in infant mortality in the nation. LIHF is working to change this.

“These statistics continue to be alarming and of great concern,” says Gina Green-

Harris, Director of the LIHF Program Office. “Knowing the statistics is not enough. We must continue our work toward building solutions to address this inequity. LIHF cannot do this alone – we are looking to our colleagues at all levels to work together with us to reduce inequities and improve health outcomes for all babies in Wisconsin.”

LIHF, which is funded by the Wisconsin Partnership Program at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, is a collaborative effort to address the root causes of racial disparities in infant mortality. Knowing that the cost of infant mortality and poor birth outcomes impact the entire state’s resources, LIHF collaborates across sectors to advocate for babies, mothers and families to have access to quality health care and physical, social and economic environments that promote health throughout their lifetimes.