

Proclamation declaring September as  
Infant Mortality Awareness Month

Presented to the  
Sedgwick County Board of County Commission  
September 5, 2007

**Whereas,**

The Infant Mortality Awareness campaign has been designed by the National Healthy Start Association to increase the community's awareness of the high rates of infant deaths; and,

**Whereas,**

The month of September 2007 marks the first annual Infant Mortality Awareness Campaign; and,

**Whereas,**

The Healthy Babies Home Visitation Program in Sedgwick County, Kansas, is one of nearly 100 federal Healthy Start projects nationwide; and,

**Whereas,**

Since 1991, the National Healthy Start program has been dedicated to reducing the incidence of infant deaths that are prevalent in many communities with large minority populations, high rates of unemployment and poverty, and limited access to safe housing and medical providers; and,

**Whereas,**

Our Healthy Babies Program has helped to reduce the incidence of preterm and low birth weight births among high-risk moms, both of which are leading contributors of infant death. In grant year 2006, Healthy Babies provided 5,483 prenatal and postpartum home visits to 719 moms and babies who did not experience any infant deaths; and,

**Whereas;**

The Infant Mortality Awareness campaign offers the opportunity for the community to be educated about the role they can play in ensuring we have Healthy Mommies, Healthy Babies and Healthy Families; and,

**NOW THEREFORE,** be it resolved that the Sedgwick County Board of County Commissions do hereby proclaim September 2007 as Infant Mortality Awareness Month.

Signed this day of the month, 2007

Signature

September is **National Infant Mortality Awareness Month**.

Claudia - Why do we care about infant deaths? The infant death rate, like the childhood immunization rate, are not only important for what they directly represent, but are surrogate markers for the health of our children. When a child 0-12 months of age dies, it often represents a number of issues, health, economic and social, that could have been addressed and prevented. Here to tell you about one of the health dept. programs that works hard to prevent infant deaths is Susan Wilson, Healthy Babies Program Director.

Susan - The goal of the **Healthy Babies Home Visitation Program** is to educate Sedgwick County residents on how they can play a part in reducing the number of babies in our community who die before their first birthday.

Based on 2005 three-year averages, the county Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) of **7.82 infant deaths per 1,000 live births** remained steady and in close proximity to the Kansas rate of 7.13 and the national rate of 6.75. However, for that same period, the county Infant Mortality Rate for **African American babies was 19.08 infant deaths per 1,000 live births**, which is almost three times the national average.

A mother's medical problems and lifestyle choices prior to and during pregnancy influence the weight of her baby. Babies who weigh less than 5.5 lbs. at birth are considered Low Birth Weight (LBW) and are more likely to die before their first birthday. African American babies are more likely than any other race to die due from complications related to their low birth weight.

We urge all county residents and businesses to take a moment to think about how they can help improve birth outcomes in our community. That help could be a neighbor's offer to take an expectant mom to her prenatal visits or to take care of her other children while she goes. Or, it could be an understanding employer who ensures that the expectant mom is given time off work, without penalty, to attend prenatal appointments.

Reducing risks for high-risk pregnancies is beneficial for the physical and emotional health of the community, and it also makes good fiscal sense in terms of lost dollars and time from work. The costs of health care alone for a significantly premature and LBW infant can exceed \$1 million in the first few months of life and those babies who survive can experience life-long health and cognitive problems that can have a profound impact on school performance.

In the fall of 2006, Healthy Babies embarked on a multi-faceted, bilingual outreach plan designed to educate the community on how to have Healthy Babies by promoting early prenatal care and breastfeeding and educating about the risk factors associated with poor prenatal nutrition, smoking,

drinking and using drugs. To date, outreach initiatives have included:

The distribution of 25,000 informational door hangers in three federally-funded Healthy Start zip codes in northeast Wichita (67208, 14 and 19) that have high rates of premature and low birth weight births and infant deaths. This project will be completed by the end of 2007.

The distribution of over 200,000 educational inserts in the Eagle coupon section during National Women's Health Week in May.

The placement of Healthy Mommies, Healthy Babies bus ads on six city buses.

The partnership with Office of Minority Health in Rockville, MD, to kick-off their "A Healthy Baby begins with You" campaign during a large community health and wellness fair on August 4 with over 260 people in attendance

The placement of Office of Minority Health Public Service Announcements on all local radio stations.

The collaboration with the New Communities Initiative partners to reach high-risk moms.

Thank you for your continued support of the Healthy Babies program as we work to ensure Healthy Mommies, Healthy Babies and Healthy Families in our community.