



Infant Mortality Awareness Month Calls Attention To Complex Issue

Jacksonville, Fla. (Sept. 6, 2023) – A baby’s first birthday is such a wonderful milestone and fortunately more families in Northeast Florida are celebrating such an occasion. In fact, in 2021, 12 more babies in the Greater Jacksonville area lived to experience their 366th day than the year before.

It’s our mission to reduce the tragic loss of our community’s babies, especially since the majority of these deaths are preventable. The good news is we’ve seen a decrease of 20.2 percent in our five county service area and a 28.9 percent decrease in Duval County over the past four years (2018-2021). Although we’re starting to bend the curve, there’s still so much more that needs to be done.

September is National Infant Mortality Awareness Month, a campaign sponsored by the National Healthy Start Association and supported by national, statewide and local organizations. Today and every day, the Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition (NEFHSC) works to drive awareness of infant mortality in Baker, Clay, Duval, Nassau and St. Johns counties, with a particular focus on addressing racial equity in birth outcomes.

“Obviously this is an issue every day, one that has a profound impact on the overall health and well being of children, families and our communities,” said Faye Johnson, CEO of the NEFHSC. “Thanks to the diligence of many civic, nonprofit and community efforts, more babies and their families are celebrating their first birthdays. We must keep going upstream to continue this promising increase so that more babies and families reach this important milestone.”

Recently Mayor Donna Deegan appointed a health committee to develop solutions related to public policy, workplace practices and health care access with a special focus on maternal and infant mortality. This effort is a continuation of the work led by Jacksonville City Council members who issued a proclamation declaring the importance of lowering infant mortality and have funded many initiatives helping to drive the infant mortality decrease locally.

“But Black infants are still dying at more than three times the rate of other groups,” said Johnson. “This tells us we still have much, much work to do. We’re losing too many babies and too many mamas from mostly preventable causes. This is a highly complex issue involving many factors including social determinants of health that cause toxic stress. However, we do know that the health of the mother before, during and after pregnancy is critically important as are the siloed medical and social services. This isn’t just germane to Northeast Florida but we’re working hard to be an exception.”

The NEFHSC, with support from the Kids Hope Alliance, is hosting several special events this month in recognition of National Infant Mortality Awareness Month including the [Root Causes of Infant Mortality Annual Summit](#) on Sept. 20 at Florida Blue as well as our annual [Baby Buggy Walk](#) and [community baby shower](#), sponsored by Sen. Tracie Davis, on Sept. 30 at The Magnolia Project.



About the Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition

The NEFHSC leads the community effort to reduce infant death and improve the health of children, childbearing women, fathers and their families in Northeast Florida. For more information, view [our media kit](#) or contact Erin Addington at eaddington@nefhsc.org or 904.447.9853. Visit the [Florida Association of Healthy Start Coalitions](#) for statewide information or the [National Healthy Start Association](#) for national data.

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