



A Call To Action for Infant Mortality Awareness Month

Jacksonville, Fla. (Sept. 4, 2024) – In observance of Infant Mortality Awareness Month, the Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition (NEFHSC) continues leading our community-wide initiative to shed light on the critical issue of infant mortality across our five county service area. Despite advances in medical care, infant mortality remains a significant concern, with too many families affected by the loss of their babies each year.

“It’s our mission to reduce poor birth outcomes, especially given that so many of these deaths are preventable,” says Faye Johnson, CEO of NEFHSC. “Although we saw a 20 percent decrease in infant deaths locally from 2018-2022, the provisional infant mortality rate for 2023¹ shows a 14.5 percent increase, driven largely by the growing number of babies being born prematurely. Our community needs to focus more of our efforts on the health of mothers long before they become pregnant. Research shows there’s a very strong correlation between maternal health and prematurity.”

The 2023 provisional statistics² released by the Florida Department of Health also showed that sleep-related deaths are on the decline by 44 percent in our area thanks to concerted efforts by our Healthy Start teams, hospitals, health care providers, nonprofits and other community partners who work diligently in ensuring new parents and caregivers use safe sleep practices.

The month-long awareness campaign is sponsored by the National Healthy Start Association and supported by many national, statewide and local organizations. NEFHSC will leverage this month to continue educating, advocating and mobilizing our community’s efforts toward addressing the root cause issues contributing to fetal and infant deaths. Special programs and events throughout Infant Mortality Awareness Month include:

- **Sept. 6:** An invitation to our community partners to pick up free safe sleep materials from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at 751 Oak St.
- **Sept. 14:** Our *Weathering the Storm of Womanhood* sessions are open to women who want to foster a healthier lifestyle; the next workshop will be noon to 2 p.m. at the Emmett Reed Community Center at 1093 W. 6th St.
- **Sept. 21-25:** Florida Blue’s downtown building on Riverside Ave. will be displaying purple lights, the color of infant mortality awareness.
- **Sept. 30:** Our annual community baby shower, sponsored by Sen. Tracie Davis, from 9 a.m. to noon at 6024 Merrill Rd.

“We know we still have significant work to do and we’re grateful for the support we’ve received from the city of Jacksonville as well as state and federal entities,” continues Johnson. “There are no quick fixes as the contributing factors are complex and more often than not are tied to social determinants of health. We know the challenges in our community are similar to issues across the U.S. but we’re committed to making Northeast Florida the exception instead of the rule.”



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 Markale Ford at mford@nefhsc.org or 904.933.1320. Visit the [Florida Association of Healthy Start Coalitions](#) for statewide information or the [National Healthy Start Association](#) for national data.

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¹²Source: Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics; all 2023 data is provisional as of May 31, 2024 and not considered final until released by the Florida Department of Health.