



Forsyth County
Department of Public Health

Promoting Health, Improving Lives

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Forsyth County Infant Mortality Rate Lowest in Seven Years

Forsyth County's infant mortality rate (IMR) declined significantly in 2010, reaching its lowest level in seven years. The rate, 7.7 infant deaths for every 1,000 live births, represents a 22.2 percent drop from 2009 rate of 9.9 deaths (Graph #1).

According to information released today by the North Carolina State Center for Health Statistics, there were 36 infant deaths and 4,693 live births in Forsyth County in 2010; compared to 48 infant deaths and 4,834 live births in 2009. There has been a decrease in live births in Forsyth County, North Carolina and the nation over the past four years. Forsyth County has the second highest overall infant mortality rate of the five (5) urban North Carolina counties. The State's overall infant mortality rate was 7.0 deaths per 1,000 live births; a decline of 11.4 percent from its 2009 rate of 7.9.

The five-year average of infant mortality rates, a more stable indicator of trends, shows that African American babies die at a rate almost 3 times that of white babies in Forsyth County (Graph #2). Health disparities in infant mortality are best understood by looking at the five-year average ratio of non-white to white infant deaths (Graph #3).

Forsyth County Health Director Marlon Hunter said that the health department has several programs focusing on reducing infant mortality and the elimination of health disparities in birth outcomes. Some health department programs include:

Healthy Beginnings- This case management program serves minority women and her children with an emphasis on immunizations being up to date, breastfeeding promotion, elimination of exposure to tobacco, safe sleep, folic acid, reproductive life planning, and healthy weight and exercise.

Healthy Start Baby Love Plus- This education and advocacy program is a federally funded initiative with a primary focus on reducing infant mortality, primarily in African American communities, and promoting women and children's health.

Forsyth County WIC- (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children) serves over 11,000 women, infants and children that are at nutrition risk and meet income eligibility guidelines. The WIC program provides healthy foods, nutrition counseling, and referral to health and social services. National data demonstrate that WIC prenatal care benefits reduce the rate of low birth weight babies by 25% and very low birth weight babies by 44%. One out of every two babies born in the US is served by WIC.

Teen Talk- is an Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention program that aims to reduce the rate of unintended pregnancies in Forsyth County. Teen Talk provides ongoing educational sessions throughout the year for



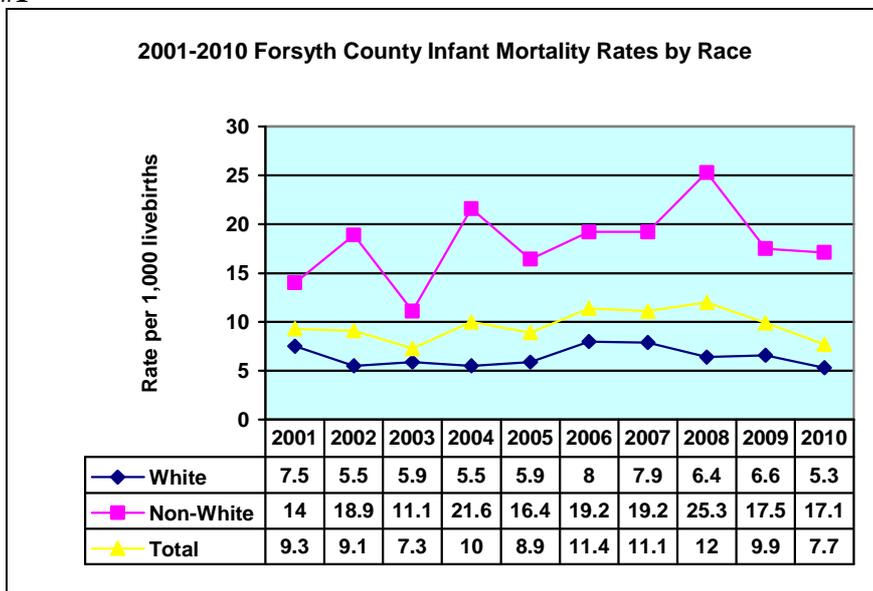
young women between the ages of 9-18. The program focuses on the well-being of each participant by addressing positive self-esteem, goal setting, decision-making, values, peer pressure, sexuality and its responsibility, communication skills, and relationships.

Efforts have been made by **Forsyth County Child Fatality Prevention Team** to promote infant safe sleep practices, funded by the County. The campaign emphasizes safe sleep environment and back sleep positioning.

“When discussing infant mortality it is important to note that the health of a woman is important long before she becomes pregnant. Being at a healthy weight, being tobacco free, eating a healthy diet, taking a multivitamin with folic acid, and getting regular physical activity all contribute to healthy birth outcomes,” Hunter said. He further states that, “healthy women are more likely to have healthy babies and healthy families make a healthy community.”

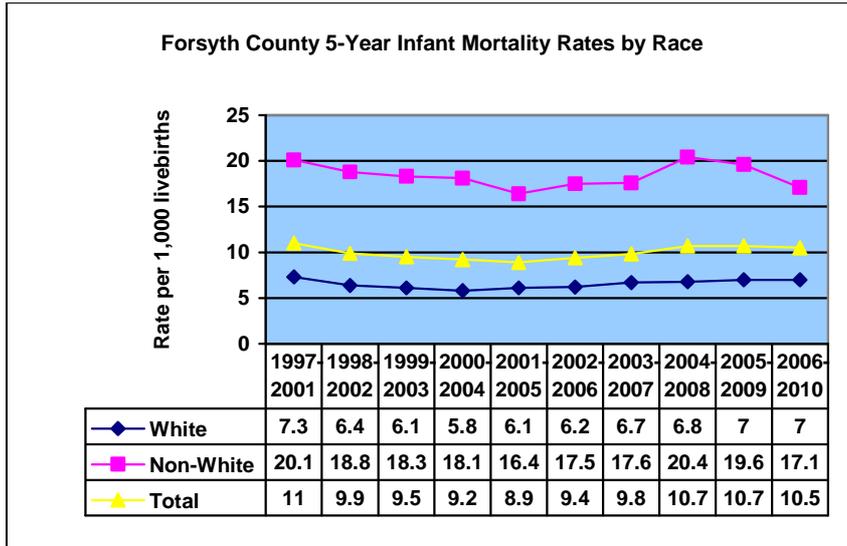
Achieving good health involves all sectors of the community and reaches beyond access to quality health care. Non-health factors that influence health, including the health of women, include education, having convenient access to healthy foods, being free of violence and abuse, having good paying jobs, lack of support from family or friends, poverty, stress and quality, affordable housing.

Graph #1

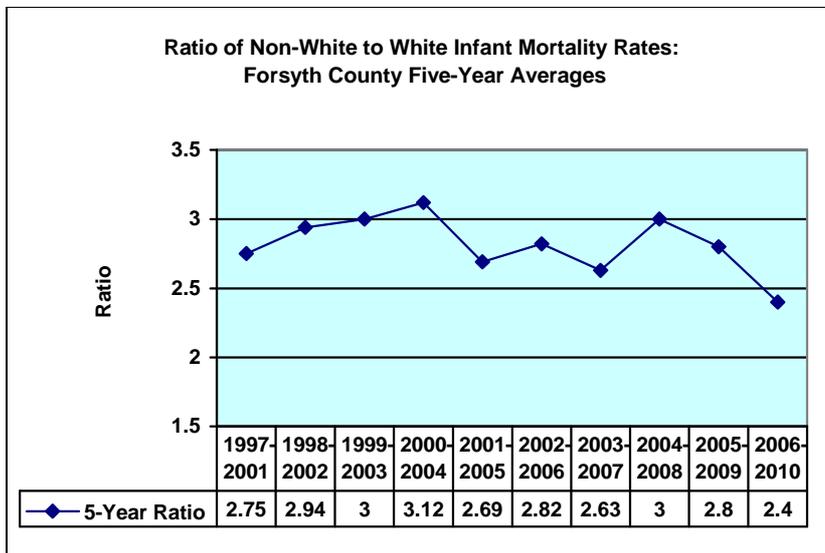




Graph #2



Graph #3



**The non-white population includes all racial groups other than white, and in Forsyth County and North Carolina, it is made up of over 80% African Americans.*