



# PRESS RELEASE

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## **NATIONAL HEALTHY START ASSOCIATION SPONSORS SECOND ANNUAL NATIONAL INFANT MORTALITY AWARENESS MONTH**

**Washington, DC:** September is National Infant Mortality Awareness Month, an observance that is sponsored by the National Healthy Start Association (NHSA). In 2007, The U.S. rate was 6.43 deaths for every 1,000 live births, while Singapore had the lowest rate at 2.3 deaths per 1,000 live births. Some of the countries with better rates include the Czech Republic, South Korea, Cuba and Slovenia.

Infant Mortality Awareness Month was created by a resolution of the U.S. House of Representatives in 2006. Said Representative Michael Burgess (TX-26), sponsor of the resolution, "Infant mortality rates are appalling." The U.S. ranks 30th in the world in infant mortality rates. The goals of Infant Mortality Awareness Month are to increase national awareness of infant mortality contributing factors, and to urge community leaders to assist in efforts to meet the objective of reducing the rate of infant mortality in this country by 2010.

The NHSA has long stated that the U.S. has an infant mortality crisis that must be addressed. With the Infant Mortality Awareness Month campaign, the NHSA seeks to raise awareness about the importance and effectiveness of community-based programs such as Healthy Start to reduce infant mortality, low birthweight and racial disparities in perinatal outcomes.

"Although America's infant mortality rate has declined since 1960, when it was 26.0 per 1,000 live births, it is still too high," said Cynthia Dean, current president of the NHSA. "We saw the creation of National Infant Mortality Awareness Month as a chance to help local communities get the word out about this public health crisis." Dean noted that the 99 federally funded Healthy Start Projects throughout the country have actively supported National Infant Mortality Awareness Month, holding awareness events and bringing attention to this issue last year and with plans for activities again in 2008, including memorials for babies who died in the last year in the local communities.

The NHSA has released a toolkit of materials local communities can use to promote awareness of the United States' high infant mortality rate and the need to reduce it. The toolkit is available on the NHSA's web site at [www.healthystartassoc.org](http://www.healthystartassoc.org) > Announcements. The 2008 theme for NIMAM is *A September to Remember*. The toolkit, while designed primarily for the federally funded Healthy Start projects throughout the nation, can easily be adapted by other communities, local public health departments and other organizations dedicated to reducing this statistic. The toolkit contains ideas for friend raising/fundraising activities, advocacy, useful statistics, promotional items, working with the media, public relations and marketing. Contact the NHSA at 202-296-2195 for more information.

The Association's mission is to promote the development of community based maternal and child health programs, particularly those addressing the reduction of low birthweight, infant mortality and racial disparities in perinatal outcomes.

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The federal Healthy Start Initiative receives \$100,000,000 in funding from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service's Health Resources and Services Administration. Established in 1991, Healthy Start is comprised of approximately 100 community-based programs that respond to the medical, social, cultural and social service needs of women and their infants. The NHSA supports the expansion of efforts that are rooted in the community and actively involve community members in their design and implementation. For information, visit our website, [www.healthystartassoc.org](http://www.healthystartassoc.org), or contact the NHSA at 202-296-2195.

***Providing leadership in developing comprehensive community-based perinatal systems of care***

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