



BERRIEN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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For Immediate Release

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Berrien County Health Department Hosts Educational Event in Recognition of Infant Mortality Awareness Month

(Benton Harbor, Michigan) -- In recognition of National Infant Mortality Awareness Month, the Berrien County Health Department is hosting a free educational event open to all community members. The event will be held on Thursday, September 23 at Carronde Park, located at 2650 Riverbend Drive, Benton Harbor from 4-7 p.m., and will highlight the five leading causes to infant mortality, as well as solutions and preventative measures, including information on the Berrien County Health Department's programs and resources.

Infant Mortality Awareness Month is recognized nationally in the month of September to raise awareness of the high infant mortality rate in the United States and the need to reduce it. Infant mortality is when a baby dies before its first birthday, usually due to birth defects, preterm birth and low birth weight, sudden infant death syndrome, maternal pregnancy complications or injuries. The infant mortality rate is an important measure that is often used to compare of the well-being of infants, children and pregnant women across the globe; while the infant mortality rate in the United States has gone down over the years, it is still higher than many other developed countries.

In 2019, Berrien County had a 3-year average infant mortality rate of 7.4 deaths for every 1,000 live births. This was higher than the State of Michigan's 3-year average infant mortality rate of 6.6 deaths for every 1,000 live births. In an effort to lower this alarming statistic, the Berrien County Health Department promotes community-based maternal and child health programs that focus on the reduction of infant mortality, racial disparities and low birth weight.

According to the National Healthy Start Association, there are six strategic areas that parents, guardians and loved ones should focus on to improve birth outcomes:

- Practicing safe sleep
- Eliminating smoking
- Learning about prenatal and postnatal health care
- Understanding root causes of the inequalities in the social determinants of health
- Preventing preterm and early births
- Receiving risk-appropriate perinatal care

"The Berrien County Health Department provides programs and services for current and parents-to-be, giving them the resources needed to help their baby grow into a healthy toddler and beyond," said Family Health Programs Manager Kyna King. "We encourage all residents to taking the opportunity to become more educated on infant mortality and its contributing factors, which can drastically lower and directly address the mortality rate we're seeing in our community and nation."

To learn more about the Berrien County Health Department's programs that support healthy children, visit bchdmi.org. In the case of rain, the event will be held at the Berrien County Health Department (2149 E. Napier Ave, Benton Harbor).

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