

The Healthy Births Initiative



Creating a Healthier Future
for Newborns and their Families



A Healthy Beginning

Giving a newborn a healthy start in life begins even before a baby is conceived. Quality perinatal care, which begins 3 months before pregnancy and continues to 1 year after birth, helps women and families prepare for a healthy pregnancy that will give their baby the best possible chance for a healthy life.

Too Small, Too Soon, Too Often

Babies whose mothers lack quality perinatal care and community resources to assist them in achieving a healthy pregnancy are often born too soon or too small. These babies are more likely to experience serious and costly complications throughout their lives. Some may become ill and die before their first birthday. Others may suffer from life-long health problems, developmental delays and learning disabilities. Later in life, they have a higher risk of developing chronic conditions such as diabetes and heart disease. Without appropriate care, women who give birth to a premature infant are up to 30% more likely to have a premature infant in the future.

Births in LA County

Every year in Los Angeles County, more than 15,000 babies are born prematurely, and more than 10,000 are born weighing 5.5 pounds or less.

While most cases of prematurity and low birthweight are preventable, LA County's vast size, ethnic diversity and large number of low-income residents present significant challenges to addressing the complex factors contributing to unhealthy births. Consider the facts:

- LA County is the most populated county in the nation, with approximately 10 million residents.
- Nearly 1.8 million individuals and families in LA County live below the poverty level.
- One out of every 27 babies born in the U.S. is born in LA County.
- African-Americans have the highest rates of both infant mortality and babies with low birthweight of all ethnic groups countywide.
- Over half the infants who die in the county are Latino.



The Healthy Births Initiative:

A Multiplying Force

The size and scope of challenges facing LA County's families — and those who provide care for them — are unprecedented. LA County's "safety net" that provides medical care for the most vulnerable members of our community — our children — has been weakened by decreasing government funding, rising healthcare costs and the growing need for public health programs. Individuals and organizations passionate about helping newborns and families are now coming together to ensure that high-quality perinatal care is readily available to all women throughout LA County.

The Healthy Births Initiative, a \$28 million effort of First 5 LA, provides the opportunity to enhance perinatal and interconception care (care between births) by investing in a strong, community-based network of caregivers and advocates dedicated to preventing low birthweight and premature deliveries. Using a grassroots approach, the Healthy Births Initiative is uniting perinatal providers across LA County in a collaborative way that serves as a model for communities nationwide.

By working together, this vital network of people and programs is pooling together their expertise and resources to achieve more than they could have on their own. To coordinate these efforts to improve pregnancies and births, First 5 LA launched the LA Best Babies Network, an organization dedicated to improving the health of mothers and babies in LA County.

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per·i·na·tal *adjective*

occurring in, concerned with, or being in the months before pregnancy and one year after

Five Strategies

to Ensure a Brighter Future for

The Healthy Births Initiative encompasses five

Caring for Mothers-To-Be

The Healthy Births Initiative encourages caregivers to identify women at-risk and provide coordinated perinatal and interconception care (care between births) to ensure the best possible outcome for mother and child. Caring for women who have experienced an unhealthy pregnancy or delivery is especially important because these women have the highest risk of having an unhealthy birth in the future.

Improving the Quality of Perinatal Care

The Initiative strives to create a new standard of comprehensive perinatal care that is respectful of every family's cultural background. It funds programs that both adopt the most effective methods of care available, and refer families to community resources that help them with issues such as breast-feeding, diabetes management, postpartum depression, domestic violence and substance abuse.

period around the time of childbirth, including three birth.



All Families

interrelated strategies:

Advancing Policies that Advance Healthy Births

Caregivers and advocates work together to identify and implement policy changes in public and private spheres that promote the health and well-being of pregnant women, their babies and the communities in which they live.

Sharing Knowledge and Resources

The Healthy Births Initiative strengthens each organization's ability to provide timely and seamless care. It empowers providers and advocates by giving them access to the latest research, educational materials, Web-based data sharing, program planning services and training.



Creating a Network of Caregivers and Advocates

The Initiative supports the creation of long-lasting networks among perinatal caregivers and advocates, enabling them to develop solutions that address the specific needs of their communities.

Since its inception in 2000, the Healthy Births Initiative has united perinatal caregivers and advocates across LA County in a collaborative way to improve the lives of babies and their families.

For information on how you or your organization can help give all babies a healthy start in life and the opportunity to reach their full potential, please contact:

LA BEST BABIES NETWORK



Healthy Babies. Our Future.

Presented by First 5 LA

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LA Best Babies Network is dedicated to achieving healthy pregnancies and births in Los Angeles County by providing the infrastructure, programs, advocacy and support to increase the capacity of community partners to succeed in these efforts.



Champions For Our Children

First 5 LA is a unique child-advocacy organization created by California voters to invest tobacco tax revenues in programs for improving the lives of children in Los Angeles County, from prenatal through age 5. First 5 LA champions health, education and safety causes concerning young children and families.