



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
10.01.2024

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Fetal and Infant Mortality Review Team Focuses on Prevention and Equity

KALAMAZOO, Mich. – In observance of “Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Awareness Month,” the Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department is proud to highlight the ongoing efforts of the Fetal and Infant Mortality Review (FIMR) team, a community-driven initiative dedicated to reducing infant mortality rates and addressing health disparities in our region.

The rate of infant mortality, or the number of infants who die per 1,000 births, is a strong indicator of community health. In Kalamazoo County, black babies still die at three-to-four times the rate of white babies, making disparity reduction a key focus for the FIMR team.

“The Fetal and Infant Mortality Review team is at the forefront of our efforts to ensure that every infant in Kalamazoo County has the best chance at a healthy start,” said Brenda O’Rourke, Maternal & Child Health Division Manager. “By examining each case in detail and listening to the stories of families, we can make meaningful recommendations that drive systemic change to create a community where every baby celebrates their first birthday.”

FIMR is a nationally recognized program that employs a comprehensive, data-driven approach to evaluate the circumstances surrounding each infant death under one year old. This collaborative process is designed to identify system strengths and weaknesses, generate preventative recommendations, and mobilize the community to take actionable steps toward improvement. The review process ensures that no identifying information, such as names of families, hospitals, or providers, is shared, maintaining a focus on systemic issues rather than individual cases.

Comprised of doctors, nurses, social workers, doulas, public health workers, stakeholders, and more, the Kalamazoo County FIMR team meets monthly to review and discuss cases of infant loss within the county. By analyzing medical records and engaging with families who have experienced the loss of an infant, the team seeks to uncover insights that might not be apparent through medical data alone. This holistic approach not only enhances the team’s understanding of factors contributing to infant mortality, but also provides families with a supportive space to share their experiences and connect with grief and bereavement resources.

To reduce a baby’s risk of SIDS and other sleep-related infant death, the FIMR team stresses the importance of [prevention measures](#), including:

- **Don’t Smoke:** Don’t expose your baby to cigarette smoke before or after birth.
- **Don’t Bed-Share:** Never fall asleep with your baby in your bed or in a chair or sofa.

- **Place Baby in a Bare Crib:** The baby should be placed in a crib with no cover, pillows, bumper pads, or positioning devices.
- **Place Baby on the Back to Sleep:** Always place your baby on his or her back to sleep, for naps or bedtime, day or night.

For more information about FIMR or to learn how you can get involved, please contact Brenda O'Rourke at 269-373-5010 or brorou@kalcounty.com.

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