

March 2011

Mayor Tom Barrett announces drop in Milwaukee's infant mortality rate, calls for more work to improve infant health in city

Milwaukee's infant mortality rate remains significantly higher than national average, despite a drop in 2010.

During a meeting of the Statewide Advisory Committee on Eliminating Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Birth Outcomes on March 17, Mayor Tom Barrett announced that preliminary data show that 96 infants died in Milwaukee during 2010, compared to 121 in 2009. As a result, Milwaukee's estimated infant mortality rate decreased about 14%, from 11.0 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2009 to 9.44 in 2010.

However, the numbers released are preliminary estimates, and could change somewhat once the Wisconsin Department of Health Services completes its analysis, he said.

"While I am pleased to report this apparent improvement in our 2010 numbers, we have a long, long way to go in improving infant health in this city and in our state," Mayor Barrett said.

Because the annual infant mortality rate tends to fluctuate from year to year, the City of Milwaukee Health Department relies on 3-year rolling averages to determine trends. The 2006-2008 average of 10.9 dropped to an estimated 10.4 in 2007-2009, but is projected to remain essentially flat in 2008-2010.

The Mayor also encouraged participation in the 2nd Annual Infant Mortality Summit on May 11, 2011, which will focus on prematurity prevention. Prematurity is the number one driver of infant mortality in Milwaukee, and the summit will highlight ways in which physicians and other healthcare providers can help reduce the prematurity rate.

The summit will focus on three actionable steps that providers can take to address prematurity:

- Special steps needed for women who had had a previous preterm birth (such as the medication 17P)
- Smoking cessation amongst pregnant clients (as well as avoidance of second-hand smoke)
- Detecting and treating chronic diseases and infections during pregnancy

