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JOSEPH J. ZILBER SCHOOL of
PUBLIC HEALTH



SERVE

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City of Milwaukee Continues Effort to Reduce Infant Mortality with Emphasis on Pre-Natal Care.

MILWAUKEE [January 12, 2012]— Today, Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett will announce a new “Strong Baby” ad, which highlights the importance of prenatal care and early doctor visits for pregnant women and those planning to become pregnant. The City of Milwaukee and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Zilber School of Public Health worked together to design and launch these ads, which are the fifth installment of the ongoing “Strong Baby” campaign. “In order to give our babies the best possible start in life, it is so important to get early, ongoing, high-quality prenatal care,” said Mayor Barrett. Late or no prenatal care can contribute to the loss of pregnancy, complications, and prematurity - the leading cause of infant mortality and morbidity. Milwaukee experiences infant mortality in numbers higher than many developing countries.

The ads feature Milwaukee’s own Madyson, one of the five strong baby contest winners from earlier this summer. Madyson can be seen across the city on bus shelters, bus sides, and billboards nonchalantly lifting a couch to get her beloved stuffed frog. The ad reads “Early prenatal care now for a Strong Baby later.”

The ads are part of the city’s initiative to reduce the overall infant mortality rate (IMR) by at least 10% by 2017, while simultaneously reducing infant mortality among African-Americans by at least 15%. From 2008-2010, there were more than 340 infant deaths in Milwaukee. For every 1,000 births, over 10 infants died before their first birthday. Within these statistics, there is also a startling racial disparity. African American infants are 2.6 times more likely to die than Caucasian infants.

As part of a community-wide effort, the City of Milwaukee Health Department partnered with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Zilber School of Public Health to develop and execute this campaign. Because high-quality, early prenatal care is an important component of a comprehensive infant mortality reduction strategy, the collaboration decided to focus on this issue. The Zilber School of Public Health, through funding from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), was able to conduct market research within the targeted audience—young, low-income parents—to assess the value of the “Strong Baby” campaigns in general, and the prenatal message in specific. The market research indicated that the audience viewed the ads favorably, and gave specific feedback on how the message would be better understood, which the campaign then incorporated.

Of the research, Dr. Sue Dean-Baar, interim dean of Zilber School of Public Health, said, “We are very pleased to provide research data that help make the “Strong Baby” campaign more effective, and to know that young parents watch for these messages when they are launched. That’s good social marketing.”

Of the collaboration between City of Milwaukee and UWM, Dr. Ron Cisler, primary investigator of the CDC grant, said, “This social marketing campaign is one of seven projects on which Zilber School of Public Health and Milwaukee Health Department collaborate with an aim at improving birth outcomes in Milwaukee and beyond. The CDC understands the importance of supporting Milwaukee as a target city for this issue.”

Speakers:

- Dr. Ron Cisler, Director of the Center for Urban Population Health
- Mayor Tom Barrett
- Bevan K. Baker, City of Milwaukee Health Commissioner