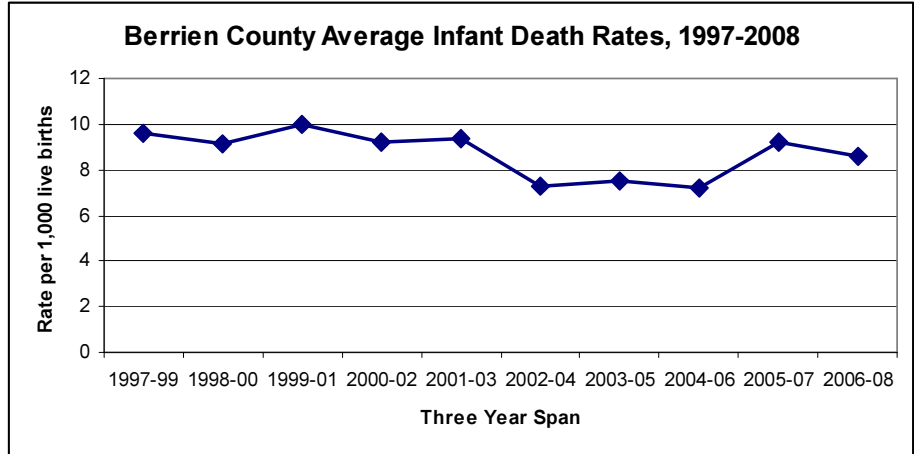


Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies

Infant mortality is the death of an infant before his or her first birthday. It is often described as a rate of deaths per 1,000 live births. Additionally, the infant mortality rate is often used as a barometer to measure the general health of a community.

About 10 years ago, Berrien County had one of the worst infant mortality rates in Michigan. This figure was particularly high due to the deaths of infants born to African American women. Fortunately the infant mortality rate is going down and more babies are growing up healthy. **Since 1997, the African American infant mortality rate has decreased by over 30%.** This decrease is due in part to education and interventions that make it easier for families to provide a safe sleep environment for baby.



This group includes professionals and community members concerned about infant mortality in Berrien County, and has worked on public education and other programs to reduce infant mortality, including the Safe Sleep campaign.

A common cause of infant death is accidental suffocation, which can take place if a baby is sleeping in an unsafe environment. The following are recommended to assure that a baby can sleep safely:

1. Baby sleeps by herself in a crib, portable crib or bassinet.
2. Always put baby to sleep on his back even when he can roll over.
3. Nothing should be in the sleeping area. No pillows, blankets, comforters, stuffed animals or soft things.
4. Keep baby's face uncovered during sleep for easy breathing. Use a sleeper instead of a blanket.
5. Don't allow anyone to smoke anything around the baby.
6. Don't overheat the baby. Dress babies in as much of as little clothing as you wear.
7. Use a firm mattress with a tightly fitted sheet.

Raising Up Healthy Babies

In 2004, the State of Michigan helped fund the creation of a group called Raising Up Healthy Babies (formerly the Infant Mortality Reduction Task Force).



There are many programs that help to reduce infant mortality in Berrien County.

For example, the health department provides the Nurse Family Partnership program, which pairs first-time pregnant women with registered nurses who make home visits throughout pregnancy and for the first two years of the child's life.

InterCare Community Health Network provides prenatal care and the Maternal and Infant Health program.

Save a Baby; Buy a Bed; Baby's Own Bed!

Accidental suffocation contributes to infant deaths and is totally preventable. The *Baby's Own Bed (BOB)* Program is an award winning, nationally recognized program of Berrien County. The program, initiated in 2004, provides portable beds for families who cannot afford a safe place for baby to sleep and safe sleep education. Hundreds of babies have

had a safe place to sleep and have been saved as the result of this program which has had the generous financial support from the Heart of Cook Foundation, the Whirlpool Foundation, the March of Dimes-Michigan Chapter, the Goodfellows Fund, and other sources.

However, the current available bed inventory can not meet the ever growing need of poor families for portable beds. A tax deductible, charitable

donation of \$50, payable to the Berrien County Health Department (with "BOB" memo on check) will assure a safe bed for a baby right here in Berrien County.



For more information, contact the health department at (269) 926-7121 or visit our website at www.bchdmi.org