

Infant Mortality Autopsy Support

FACTSHEET

Status:

- In 2006, 359 Arkansas infants died before their first birthday; resulting in an infant mortality rate of 8.8 per 1000 live births.
- Arkansas' infant mortality rate is higher than 39 other states and the rate for African-American infants in Arkansas is more than twice as high as it is for whites.
- A comprehensive analysis of the causes of infant deaths will be valuable for the development of effective maternal and child health measures and policies that will serve to reduce the risk of infant deaths in Arkansas.

Program:

A consecutive series of deaths of infants born in Arkansas who died before the first year of life will be evaluated by a team of health and health care experts to define as carefully as possible the cause(s) of each death. This evaluation will include a review of autopsy data compiled on those infants where an autopsy was done with particular emphasis on those who die as a result of "Sudden Infant Death Syndrome." In addition, clinical records of hospitalizations, immunization data and the health status of the mother before, during and after delivery will be included as part of this review.

Impact:

- The cause of death of the infants included in this analysis will be reviewed by a panel of experts convened by the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) with a particular goal of searching for preventable deaths. Once these possible preventive actions are known, a program to implement them will be put forward by the Department of Health in collaboration with health care providers statewide.
- Reduction in the infant mortality rate in Arkansas.

How it Works:

- The initial effort at death analysis will begin with a review of not less than 75 deaths. The medical records, autopsy reports when available, immunization records, death certificates and other relevant data will be compiled for each infant and analyzed for cause of death with a careful search for any preventable measures that could have been taken to reduce the risk of death for each infant.
- These data will be summarized and reviewed and a proposed plan of action developed that could reduce infant mortality in the future. This process of death reviews will continue each year in much the same manner.

Administration/oversight: This work will be led by the Family Health Branch in the Center for Health Advancement with close collaboration with the Arkansas Foundation for Medical Care. The Arkansas Department of Health will manage this effort in collaboration with the State Medical Examiner's Office and the Arkansas Foundation for Medical Care.

