PROTECTING HEALTHY START

We all win when kids have a healthy start. And that begins with ensuring that pregnant women get the care they need to deliver strong, healthy babies and that those newborns can depend on quality, reliable care to keep them healthy.

Healthy Start, a program passed by a Democratic Congress and enacted by a Republican President in 1991, provides federal funds to reduce infant mortality and improve early childhood through grants to the communities that are most at risk.

Healthy Start projects have been successful at reducing infant mortality, reducing low birth weight, improving prenatal care, and reducing barriers to health care for pregnant women and newborns.

And because every Healthy Start site is supported by a consortium of community-based partners – residents, parents, medical providers, social service agencies, faith representatives and business leaders – entire communities are engaged to help children survive and succeed.

AN UNHEALTHY START

But real challenges remain. The U.S. infant mortality rate increased in 2002 for the first time since 1958, ranking it second to last among industrialized nations.

The death rates within the U.S. show troubling racial and ethnic disparities with Black children twice as likely to die by their first birthday than other children. In 2002, Caucasian children on average had 5.9 deaths per 1,000 live births, compared with 13.9 deaths per 1,000 live births for Black children, and 9.1 deaths per 1,000 live births for Native American children.

And the rates continue to creep upwards, especially in the Southern U.S. In 2004, the infant mortality rate in Mississippi jumped from 9.7 in 2004 to 11.4 deaths per live birth the following year. This unfortunate trend is also being seen in Alabama, North Carolina, Tennessee, Louisiana, and South Carolina.

A PROGRAM THAT WORKS

What started as a program targeting 15 communities with high infant mortality rates now provides critical support for 92 programs in 35 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia.*

These programs are successful because they are built upon the research which is conclusive that early entrance into prenatal care is the single most critical factor for improving birth outcomes.

CLOSING THE FUNDING GAP

A healthy start is critical if we are to give children the foundation they need to become healthy and productive adults. Sadly, funding for Healthy Start is insufficient to meet the needs.

First Focus is grateful that legislation to reauthorize the Healthy Start program was signed into law in fall 2008 (P.L. 110-339). Congress must ensure that Healthy Start has the resources necessary to maintain current services and reach more pregnant woman and newborns nationwide. First Focus is pleased that the President proposed $110 million in funding for FY 2011, up from $105 million the previous year, to support current grantees, allow for new grants, and to ensure that no existing programs are forced to close due to lack of funds.

* See map on the reverse side of this page.
Healthy Start Grantees

ALABAMA
Birmingham
Mobile

ARIZONA
Nogales
Tempe

ARKANSAS
Blytheville

CALIFORNIA
Compton
Fresno
Los Angeles
National City
San Leandro

COLORADO
Aurora

CONNECTICUT
Hartford
New Haven

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Washington (2)

FLORIDA
Jacksonville
St. Petersburg
Tampa
Boynton Beach
Quincy

HAWAII
Honolulu

GEORGIA
Atlanta
Augusta (2)
Dublin

ILLINOIS
Chicago (3)
Olympia Fields
Dolton
Sauget

INDIANA
Hammond
Indianapolis

IOWA
Des Moines

KANSAS
Wichita

KENTUCKY
Louisville
Williamstown

LOUISIANA
Baton Rouge
Lafayette
Bossier City
New Orleans

MARYLAND
Baltimore

MASSACHUSETTS
Boston
Worcester

MICHIGAN
Detroit
Flint
Grand Rapids
Nazareth
Saginaw
Sault Ste. Marie

MINNESOTA
Minneapolis

MISSISSIPPI
Marks

MISSOURI
Kansas City
Portageville
St. Louis

NEBRASKA
Omaha

NEW JERSEY
Camden
Trenton (2)

NEW MEXICO
Deming
Las Cruces

NEW YORK
New York (3)
Rochester
Syracuse

NORTH CAROLINA
Pembroke
Raleigh

OHIO
Cleveland
Columbus
Cincinnati

OKLAHOMA
Oklahoma City
Tulsa

OREGON
Medford
Portland

PENNSYLVANIA
Chester
Philadelphia
Pittsburgh
West Chester
Harrisburg

PUERTO RICO
San Juan

SOUTH CAROLINA
Columbia
Denmark
Florence

SOUTH DAKOTA
Rapid City

TENNESSEE
Memphis

TEXAS
Dallas
Fort Worth
Harlingen
Houston
San Antonio (2)

VIRGINIA
Richmond (3)

WEST VIRGINIA
Morgantown

WISCONSIN
Lac Du Flambeau
Milwaukee