

Palatka Daily News  
FAX: 386-312-5209  
Attention: Larry Sullivan

My name is Carolyn Fountain and I am one of the four Healthy Start Care Coordinators with the Healthy Start Program at the Putnam County Health Department. Healthy Start is a statewide program that is designed to support, aid, educate, and promote healthy pregnancy and infant health outcomes in the state of Florida through services that support and assist families in obtaining these goals. The Healthy Start Program's goals are to improve pregnancy outcomes, reduce low birth weight and to reduce infant mortality and morbidity in Putnam County.

Putnam County's Healthy Start Program takes these goals seriously. The well being of our pregnant women, mothers and children are extremely important to us. I am addressing this letter to you because despite our efforts, Putnam County's poor birth outcomes on average continue to be higher than the state's. These poor outcomes include low birth weight, very low birth weight, neonatal and post neonatal deaths (<28days and 28 days to 11 months after birth), and infant mortality. For the calendar year of 2006, Putnam County's total population number was 74,549; whites made up 60,899 of this number, blacks 12,727, and other 923.

The total births for 2006 was 1,072, whites made up 796 of this number, blacks 261 and other 14. The actual infant death for 2006 was 11, **with one being too many**. Of the reported 11 deaths 5 were white infants, 5 were black infants, and other 1. All deaths were and are equally devastating to our community, but what is also alarming is that black babies in our county are 2.7 times more likely to die based on the submitted data for Putnam County than the general population and 2 times more likely to die than other black babies in Florida.

The Putnam County Black Infant Health Initiative, a group of concerned community members and professionals, have come together to begin to understand and address this complex issue. The goal is to educate the community about the high infant mortality rates in the county and to learn about the issues that are impacting our black mothers and families. If you are interested in becoming part of this initiative please contact Putnam County Healthy Start at 326-3323.

It is our hopes to reduce the general numbers of infant deaths while targeting and learning what factors may be contributing to the high numbers of black infant deaths. Why, with the small percentage of black births to the overall birth population in Putnam County, black infant death numbers are equal to the larger population. With your support, we may be able to obtain answers to these issues so that we as a community can better serve our most vulnerable population, our children. You can also help by offering support to the pregnant women and mothers you know and encourage those who are having a hard time to contact Healthy Start at 326-3312. We as a community can solve this problem by simply working together.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Fountain  
Healthy Start Care Coordinator  
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