

Organization hopes to help decrease the infant mortality rate

The Canadian County Coalition for Children and Families is raising awareness

Infant mortality is the death of a baby that is less than one year old.

Of the births in Oklahoma, each year approximately 400 babies die before their first birthday.

African American and American Indian babies die at higher rates than white babies.

In an effort to increase awareness and offer steps each of us can take to reduce infant mortality, community leaders are urged to recognize September as Infant Mortality Awareness Month. Policymakers, health care providers, community leaders, parents, grandparents, neighbors, clergy, and others can help provide all babies born in Oklahoma with the best possible start in life.

Steps that can be taken include:

- Encouraging and supporting a woman's healthy choices
- Planning for pregnancy and being healthy before and between pregnancies
- Taking 400 mcg of folic acid daily to help reduce chances of having a baby with birth defects

- Quitting smoking and providing a smoke free environment for baby
- Getting tested and treated, if needed, for sexually transmitted diseases
- Having a full-term pregnancy (about 40 weeks)
- Knowing the signs and getting help for postpartum depression
- Placing baby on his or her back to sleep
- Breastfeeding baby and supporting a woman's choice to breastfeed
- Keeping your cool when baby will not stop crying and never shaking a baby
- Watching baby at all times and never leaving a baby unattended

The Canadian County Coalition for Children and Families and many partnering agencies are hosting a Community Baby Shower on Thursday, September 26, 2013, from 4:30—7:30 p.m. at Roblyer Middle School, 427 SW 27th Street, El Reno, OK.

Free door prizes and valuable health information will be available. The event is free and open to the public.

Individuals and families who have or are expecting babies as well as those with small children are encouraged to participate. For more information please call Nicole Michael at 405-350-6211.

To learn more about what steps YOU can take to help ensure the health and safety of Oklahoma's babies, and to download relevant information, visit the Preparing for a Lifetime, It's Everyone's Responsibility web pages at <http://iio.health.ok.gov>.