

FIRST FOCUS: CHILDREN'S HEALTH

PROTECTING HEALTHY START

First Focus is a bipartisan advocacy organization that is committed to making children and their families a priority in federal policy and budget decisions. Children's health, education, family economics, child welfare, and child safety are the five core issue areas around which First Focus is working to promote bipartisan policy solutions.



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, seeks to reduce infant mortality and improve early childhood through grants to communities 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 32nd among industrialized nations.

And 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 also is 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 100 programs in 36 states and 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.

Sadly, funding for Healthy Start is insufficient to meet the needs. Under the current funding structure, four Healthy Start sites may have to close their doors this year.

FIRST FOCUS'S POSITION

A healthy start is critical if we are to give children the foundation they need to become healthy and productive adults. First Focus urges Congress to:

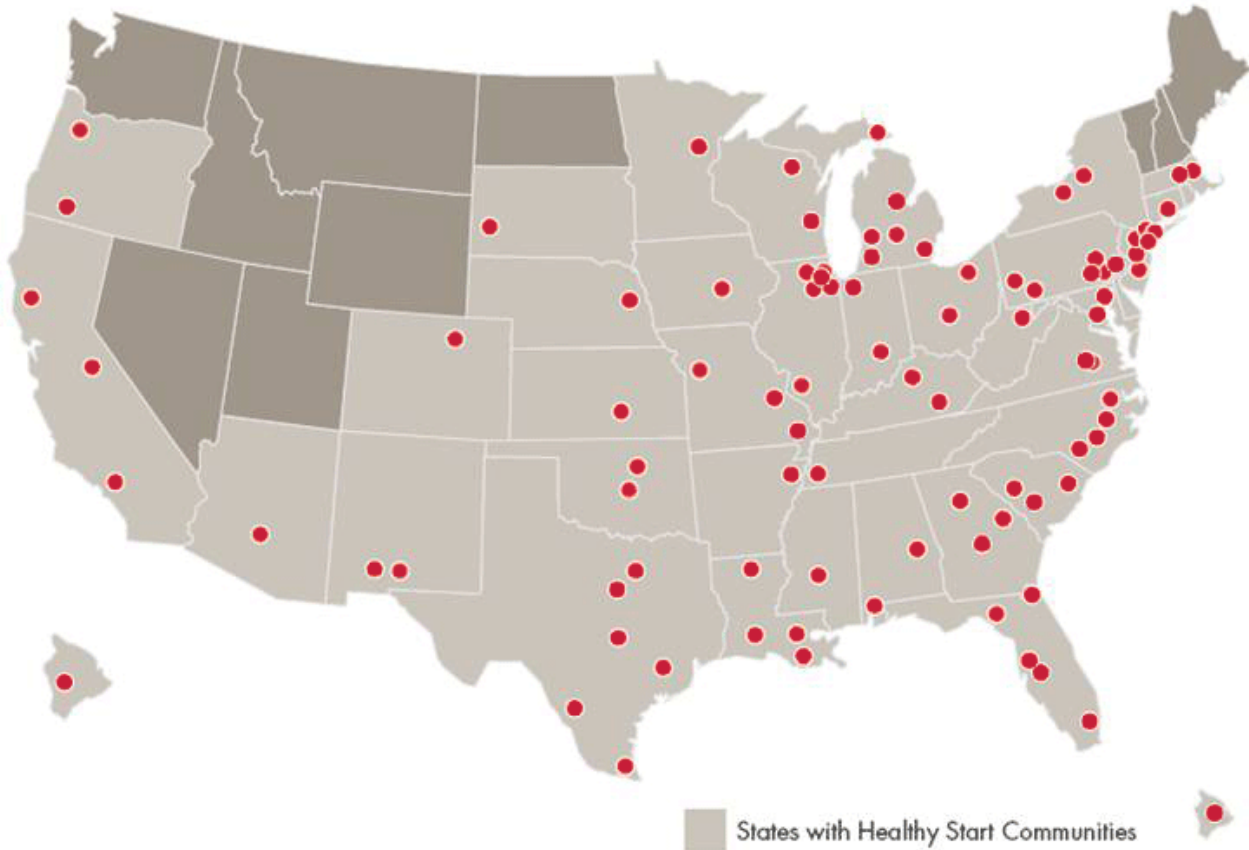
- ◆ **Reauthorize Healthy Start.** The Healthy Start program is overdue for reauthorization. Congress should enact bipartisan legislation – S. 1760 and H.R. 3267 – introduced by Senators Brown (D-OH) and Burr (R-NC) and Representatives Towns (D-NY) and Upton (R-MI) to reauthorize the program.
- ◆ **Close the Funding Gap.** Healthy Start should have the resources necessary to maintain current services and reach more pregnant women and newborns nationwide. First Focus urges a modest increase in funding for FY 2008 to \$120 million 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.*



FIRST FOCUS

MAKING CHILDREN & FAMILIES THE PRIORITY



ALABAMA

Birmingham
Mobile

ARIZONA

Phoenix

CALIFORNIA

Compton
Fresno
San Leandro

COLORADO

Aurora

CONNECTICUT

New Haven

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Washington (3)

FLORIDA

Jacksonville
St. Petersburg
Tallahassee
Tampa
West Palm Beach

GEORGIA

Atlanta
Augusta (2)
Dublin

HAWAII

Honolulu

ILLINOIS

Chicago (5)
East St. Louis

INDIANA

Hammond
Indianapolis

IOWA

Des Moines

KANSAS

Wichita

KENTUCKY

Louisville
Williamsburg

LOUISIANA

Baton Rouge
Lafayette
Monroe
New Orleans

MARYLAND

Baltimore

MASSACHUSETTS

Boston
Worcester

MICHIGAN

Detroit
Flint
Grand Rapids
Kalamazoo
Saginaw
Sault Ste. Marie

MINNESOTA

Minneapolis

MISSISSIPPI

Marks

MISSOURI

Kansas City
Sikeston
St. Louis

NEBRASKA

Omaha

NEW JERSEY

Camden
East Orange
Trenton

NEW MEXICO

Deming
Las Cruces

NEW YORK

Brooklyn

Manhattan
New York
Rochester
Syracuse

NORTH CAROLINA

Pembroke
Raleigh (3)

OHIO

Cleveland
Columbus

OKLAHOMA

Oklahoma City
Tulsa

OREGON

Medford (2)

PENNSYLVANIA

Chester
Philadelphia (2)
Pittsburgh
Uniontown
West Chester

PUERTO RICO

San Jaun

SOUTH CAROLINA

Columbia

Denmark
Florence

SOUTH DAKOTA

Rapid City

TENNESSEE

Memphis

TEXAS

Dallas
Fort Worth
Harlingen
Houston
Laredo
San Antonio

VIRGINIA

Richmond (2)

WEST VIRGINIA

Morgantown

WISCONSIN

Lac du Flambeau
Milwaukee



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