

Celebrate Day 366...
every baby deserves a chance



INFANT
MORTALITY
AWARENESS
CAMPAIGN

The National Healthy Start Association

To take their first step.

To say their first word.

To start their first day of school.

To graduate from college.

To get their first job.

To have a baby.

To get married.

To be President.





The National Healthy Start Association

The National Healthy Start Association (NHSA) is committed to improving birth rates in this country. As a nationwide membership association, NHSA primarily serves the federally funded Healthy Start Projects in 38 states, District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. The mission of NHSA is to promote the development of community-based maternal and child health programs, particularly those addressing the issues of infant mortality, low birth weight and racial disparities in perinatal outcomes. As part of its mission, NHSA supports the expansion of a wide range of activities and efforts that are rooted in the community and actively involve community residents in their design and implementation. The Association's primary purpose is to expand the capacity of community-based maternal and child health (MCH) and infant mortality preventive health services, thereby ensuring that all families have access to a continuum of affordable quality health care and related services. NHSA's purpose is to be an effective advocate in policies and programs that improve the health status of women, infants and families and strengthen the capacity of Healthy Start programs and community-based MCH organizations nationwide.

There are 104 Healthy Start projects throughout the nation that work to eliminate the racial and ethnic disparities in infant mortality. This continuum of care extends beyond the welfare of newborns and includes mothers, fathers, and families – the whole community. Improving pregnancy and birth outcomes are achieved by these programs through core services of direct outreach, case management, healthy education, interconceptional care and screening for depression. Families are kept at the forefront of service delivery through a consortium composed of the



clients/consumers, neighborhood residents, mental health and social service providers, and faith and business community representatives. Collectively, the consortium, the Healthy Start Project sites, and the community work together, to address barriers that exist around quality health care for women and children within local health systems.

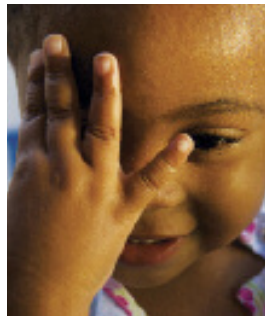
Many Healthy Start projects are situated in “high-risk” neighborhoods and residential areas in the United States, where services and resources are lacking. They are responding to the health care needs of our most vulnerable families to ensure women are healthy, babies are born healthy and families are healthy. Their commitment to providing services that address the “whole family” speaks to their uniqueness and their success in sustaining programs that utilize evidence based practices and innovative community-driven interventions.

NHSA and the Healthy Start projects work hand-in-hand to tackle the myriad of issues facing families in this country. Whether it is advocating on their behalf before legislators or conducting home visits to pregnant women, together we remain steadfast to our commitment of improving pregnancy and birth outcomes among our most vulnerable families in the United States.





Among industrialized countries, the United States is ranked 29th in the world in infant mortality. This is a dismal rate for a country that is deemed to be one of the wealthiest countries in the world. The U.S. Census Bureau indicates that several countries have a lower infant mortality rate than the United States such as the Czech Republic, South Korea, Cuba, and Slovenia. Moreover, in the United States, African Americans have 2.3 times the infant mortality rate as non-Hispanic whites. Due to these figures, a commitment to saving our nation's babies is of critical importance to the National Healthy Start Association and the Healthy Start projects. September is National Infant Mortality Awareness Month in the United States and the time we campaign around the issue. During this month, people are encouraged to become more aware and educated about how they can help ensure babies reach their first birthday in this country. Specifically, infant mortality refers to the number of infant deaths per 1,000 live births during the first year of life. The infant mortality rate is widely considered the barometer by which the health of its entire population is gauged.



Please join the National Healthy Start Association in increasing awareness around infant mortality and increasing the number of babies who will live beyond their first birthday. This is an issue that affects us all. From Colorado to Mississippi, babies are dying at alarming rates and our nation is suffering as a result. Be a part of the solution and help us spread the word about infant mortality. Using the materials within this toolkit is a great place to start.

Local communities can use the Infant Mortality Awareness Toolkit to promote awareness of the high infant mortality rate that exists in the United States and the need to reduce it. While designed primarily for the federally funded Healthy Start projects throughout the nation, this toolkit can easily be adapted by communities, local public health departments and other organizations dedicated to reducing the alarming statistics. The toolkit contains ideas for fundraising activities, advocacy, useful statistics, as well as tips for working with the media, public relations, and marketing. We hope that you will continue to use the toolkit beyond the month of September to increase awareness around infant mortality throughout the year.

CDC 2015. Infant Mortality Statistics from the 2015 Period Linked Birth/Infant Death Data Set. National Vital Statistics Reports

Infant Mortality Statistics

- The infant mortality rate in 2013 was 5.96 infant deaths per 1,000 live births.
- The top 5 causes of U.S. infant deaths account for 57% of all infant deaths: congenital malformations (20%); short gestation & low birth weight (18%); maternal complications (7%); SIDS (7%); unintentional injury (5%).
- African Americans (AA) have the highest death rates (11.11) among all ethnic and population groups. AA are nearly twice as likely to die as infants compared to non-Hispanic white infants. American Indian/Alaskan Native infants have a rate of 7.6.
- The smallest and most premature babies have an enormous impact on infant mortality. Less than 2% of births — those of babies born before 32 weeks of pregnancy — account for more than half of the deaths.
- Poverty, limited access to health care, stress, racism, poor prenatal care, lack of exercise, and diet and nutrition are factors that can contribute to negative pregnancy and birth outcomes, which can lead to high infant mortality rates.
- Researchers say lifelong conditions of high stress and low support may contribute to poor nutrition and physical responses that put fetuses at risk.
- Chronic emotional stress results from many factors, including physically demanding jobs and a lack of control in the workplace, single parenthood, and financial worries — all problems experienced disproportionately by women of color.
- Discrimination is also a source of harmful stress. One study found that women who gave birth to very low birth weight babies were more likely to have experienced racial discrimination than women who had normal weight babies.
- Obesity prevention programs may help reduce infant death rates, as researchers have found a link between mothers' obesity and death risk of infants born to them².
- Educational discrepancies are also apparent across color lines when confronted with infant mortality. College- and graduate-school educated black mothers have a higher infant mortality rate than white mothers who did not complete high school.
- There are 100 Healthy Start programs throughout the nation that work to eliminate the racial and ethnic disparities in infant mortality. This continuum of care extends beyond the welfare of newborns and includes mothers, fathers, and families — the whole community.

¹http://www.arc.org/racewire/030210z_kashef.html

²http://www.themedguru.com/articles/mothers_obesity_linked_to_high_infant_mortality-86120387.html

Many may ask “why dedicate an entire month to infant mortality?” The answer is why not dedicate an entire year when this issue has a profound impact on the overall health and well being of children, families, communities and the nation? Throughout the United States, there are several pockets of areas where the infant mortality rate is as high as some third world countries. While the United States has made some improvements in infant mortality, disparities continue to exist among African American and non-Hispanic white infants. For example, African American infants are four times as likely to die as infants due to complications related to low birthweight as compared to non-Hispanic white infants¹. Also, babies being born too soon impact our nation's infant mortality rate and the health of communities. More than one million babies die each year because they are born prematurely. About 13 million babies a year are born too soon, after less than 37 weeks of the normal 40-week pregnancy according to the March of Dimes. These trends are likely to create additional pressures on our nation's overburdened health care system. For example, caring for premies' medical needs costs the world \$26 billion a year. Such costs can be reduced through preventive efforts such as providing ALL families with preconception care and health education, adequate prenatal care, access to quality health services and resources, improved living conditions, and options for healthy food. All of which can also help to reduce the country's infant mortality rate and close the gap among African American and white infants.



Advocacy is an on-going process to educate your elected officials and other policy and decision makers about the issues of infant mortality, prematurity, health and health care disparities, and other issues. Advocacy can occur at the local, state, and national levels. All the suggestions in this section can be adapted or modified to use with your local or state elected officials. Just be sure to make all the necessary changes to reflect the correct terminology.

TIPS FOR ADVOCACY

• **Schedule and Inform**

Make an appointment in advance. Let the office know your issues when you call and the number of members and constituents in your organization.

• **Be Flexible**

Elected officials' schedules get juggled at a moment's notice. Don't be disappointed if you have to meet with a staff person; they are usually extremely well-informed on the issues.

• **Be Prepared**

Get your point across in the fewest possible words. Do not use jargon or acronyms. Leave supporting documents behind. Bringing a local expert such as a community or business leader concerned with your issues reinforces your position. Group visits are particularly effective, especially when different organizations or constituencies (such as religion, labor, and business) are represented. Politicians in general are less likely to skip meetings with groups than individuals.

• **Be on Time**

And be willing to wait. Delayed appointments can be very beneficial if they give you time to get to know the support staff.

• **Pick a Spokesperson**

When visiting as a group, one person should start the meeting and be the spokesperson. Before the meeting, decide on the key points that should be covered and who will raise which points.

• **Be Positive, Friendly, and Brief**

Stick to the issues and facts and don't overstay your welcome. Elected officials' offices are friendly places, but they are also places of intense activity.

• **Get Reaction**

Ask for favorable consideration of your position, thus seeking the elected official's opinion. Give them a chance to express his/her point of view. Be a good listener. Do not argue, name call, or make threats. Leave that to the opposition.

• **Send a Thank You**

When you get home, write a thank you letter to the elected official and any other staff that you met with. Ask them to keep in touch with you on your issues.



THREE STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGN

Here are three steps you can take this summer to ensure that the U.S. Congress provides full funding for your infant mortality program:

1. **Invite your House of Representative Member(s) and Senators to visit your program.** During August, Members of Congress are on recess and will be back home in your area looking for events to attend and opportunities to meet members of your community. Now is the time to contact them and ask them to visit your program, especially if you have an upcoming special event for them to attend, such as an annual fundraising dinner or volunteer recognition event. Even if the Member of Congress cannot personally visit your program, perhaps their District Director will be able to do so.
2. **Write a "Letter to the Editor" to a local newspaper highlighting the work of your program and applauding the support you have received from your Member of Congress.** (See Sample Letters.) Even if your Member of Congress hasn't actively supported your efforts, this is a good chance to start the relationship and also raise awareness about infant mortality. Members of Congress will be interested in any federal program that is making a positive impact in their home state or community.
3. **If you see any of your Members of Congress at a parade or a town meeting and only have a brief moment with them, be sure you can quickly and effectively discuss the importance of your program and ask them to support your infant mortality awareness project.**

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TESTIMONIALS

Dramatic stories about people battling overwhelming odds are memorable and persuasive. These kinds of stories create a common ground for the general public to understand unfamiliar or complicated issues such as ours. One of the best tools to help advocacy efforts are the personal stories or testimonials from the people you have helped. Sharing photos of your consumers or statements of support from members of your consortium and collaborative partners can also make a huge impact.

Testimonials and photos can be used in speeches, letter writing campaigns, brochures, newsletters, annual reports, and on display boards. Testimonials are critical to the success of the advocacy work being done by your program. To help assure confidentiality, only use first names unless the consumer feels differently. A Photo Release should be signed by the consumer agreeing to the use of their photo for marketing/advocacy purposes. (See Sample Letters)

Not sure who your elected officials are?

Visit your county and city's website. To access the U.S. Government's official web portal, providing direct access to federal, state, local, and tribal governments, visit www.USA.gov.com.

Other Key Websites:

House of Representatives: www.house.gov

Senate: www.senate.gov

Senate Calendar of Business: www.gpoaccess.gov/calendars/senate

Currently on the House floor: www.clerk.house.gov/floor



Big or small, any special event can raise awareness around the devastating effects that infant mortality can have on communities nationwide. Here are a few suggestions to make sure your event is a success:

EVENT INVITATIONS

Fliers, personal invitations to policymakers, funders, and other public figures should be sent at least three weeks out. A personal follow-up phone call, one week prior to the event, will better the odds that you have the people you want in attendance. If you give advance notice, most elected officials will try to arrange their schedules or send an aide in their place. Within two weeks after the activity takes place, be sure you have sent out a card or letter to the attendees thanking them for their support and a personal invitation to learn more about the work that your local organization or program is doing to combat infant mortality.

INFORMATION TABLE

There should be an information table located at the main entrance of any activity or event you hold and this table should be staffed at all times. This is a good way to engage volunteers. Have readily available your press kits and other local marketing materials. Drawings for a prize of some kind work well at drawing crowds. In addition, be sure to have some sort of mechanism to collect attendees contact information. For a smoother process, have plenty of pens and pre-printed information cards available for easy completion. Include email if your office has the capability to send mailings electronically. You can also have boxes to check if there is interest in volunteering, going on tours, or receiving a phone call to learn more about your project.

EVENT IDEAS

Here are a few suggestions that can be done on a large or small scale. Engage your collaborative partners. They will offer wonderful additional resources to make your activities successful.

Baby Parade

During prime time at your local park, schedule a unique parade of families pushing their babies in strollers and carriages. Before the parade begins, have a pep rally and ask the participants to help distribute promotional fliers through the park and their own neighborhoods. Try to obtain a local celebrity as a Grand Marshal. Recruit members from area Junior Leagues, churches, mommy playgroups, and mothers and fathers from your community. Come up with a catchy slogan for your parade such as “Buggying for Babies” or “Infant Mortality is NOT a Stroll in the Park.”

Neighborhood Health Fair

Successful health fairs require a tremendous amount of planning beginning at least six months before the target date; however, beginning a year before is even better. The first task is to identify a chair or co-chairs. Forming the



planning/coordinating committee a year in advance may not be necessary if this is not the first health fair or if the health fair is going to be a small affair.

A health fair is an event to:

- Increase health awareness by providing health screenings, activities, materials, demonstrations, and information;
- Increase awareness of local, state, and national health services and resources;
- Motivate participants to make positive health behavior changes;
- Provide healthy pregnancy outcomes information to parents and women of child bearing years; and
- Provide informational booths which could include prenatal care, basic baby care, free consultations with pediatricians, car seat giveaways including installation and safety checks of existing car seats (fire departments are a good source), and Safety Child ID kits.

Open House

Plan a continental breakfast, box lunch, or a simple reception immediately after work hours. Your guests will appreciate the convenient time and any food and beverage provisions you can afford. Besides recognizing the policymakers and other VIPs present, part of your program should offer testimonials from both moms and dads, given either in person or read by staff. If office space is not conducive for an open house, this activity can easily be done in the home of a board member or volunteer. For security reasons, if receptions are held in someone’s home, the event turns into an “invitation only” activity and is not publicized as an open house would be.

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Fundraising Activities and Events (cont.)

Poster Contest

This event can be geared for teens, so approach high school clubs, religious youth groups, and other community-based youth leadership programs. Your contest theme should relate to “fighting infant mortality.” Be specific on the requirements and size of the posters. The contest should last no longer than 4–6 weeks. The judges can include consumers, volunteers, and local VIPs who support your cause. Contest entries should be displayed and winners announced at a designated activity.

The Un-Birthday Party

On a children’s playground, host a candlelight vigil. A birthday cake decorated in pink and blue with a memorial black ribbon should be prominently displayed on a piece of playground equipment. Each candle should be numbered according to your local statistics (e.g. if there were 250 deaths last year, your candles should be numbered 1-250). In your opening comments, draw attention to the cake, the playground that the deceased never got a chance to play on, and to the numbers on the candles representing those infants. The program might also include testimonials from caseworkers and consumers.

Clothesline Project

This event could be held in a park or neighborhood center, using cloth diapers or pink and blue baby onesies. Individuals can decorate their baby items honoring their parents or babies. Themes could center on best parenting practices, prenatal care, old wives tales about baby care, male involvement, etc. Pre-decorate clothing to represent deceased infants known in your community. Use black clothespins to hang the clothing (black spray paint works well to decorate the clothing).



Baby Shoe Memorial

Shoes can be obtained through requests made to children’s shoe stores, children’s used clothing stores, or the general public and consumers. The more shoes you have, the more dramatic the visual impact. If you find that obtaining the shoes is too difficult or expensive, you can use paper cut outs of baby feet. Use pink and blue paper and number according to your local statistics. The memorial includes signage stating that the shoes represent the number of babies in your community who died in the last year. Have the memorial displayed in highly visible locations such as City Hall, the state capital, or in the lobby of a collaborative partner. The memorial can be moved around your community all month and used as an excellent backdrop for VIP statements supporting your organization (e.g. your mayor reading a proclamation that September is National Infant Mortality Awareness Month).

Rattle and Roll

Organize a community blitz targeting pediatric offices, businesses, and restaurants. Purchase inexpensive baby rattles from party supply or dollar-type stores and decorate them with a black bow, and attach your business card. Armed with rattles, posters, and fliers, have your volunteers make personal visits asking for the materials to be displayed in a visible location.

Great Baby Chefs

Solicit local chefs from upscale restaurants to participate in a gourmet baby food demonstration. This can take place at a cooking school or at a Cooperative Extension Center that has a home economics department. Either charge an entrance fee or collect baby items for entry. This event can be advertised in the chefs’ restaurants and will attract a more affluent audience. Your policymakers and VIPs can also participate in this event by preparing their mothers’ recipes.

Memorial Garden

Approach your city’s parks and recreation department about designating an existing garden as a memorial to the babies who died in your community. Have a sign designed that promotes your program (with contact information) and acknowledges the city’s support. A local garden club might also want to get involved as well.

Bake and Candy Sale

This is a great activity for youth groups. Long stem “tootsie footsies lollipops” and other pregnancy-related fun items can be found at www.4showers.com and several baby-themed cookie cutters at www.coppergifts.com. The lollipops can be decorated with a black ribbon and the cookies with pink or blue icing. These can be sold outside grocery stores, church functions, or community events (include marketing materials). You can also give these items as gifts to your local elected officials and other decision makers with whom you want to make an impression.



MEDIA CONTACT INFORMATION

Media contact lists can be easily created with research and time. Contact information is listed on websites, in the actual publications, or can be obtained through phone calls. Research the outlet and make sure you have the correct contact person at that outlet. For print, the contact will be a specific reporter. At radio or television stations, the contact may be a news director or reporter. It is wise to spend the time to annually update media lists due to the high turnover in the industry.

A list of your local news media can be obtained from the Internet or media relations departments at the media outlet. For print media, it is important to note what area a publisher or journalist covers. For instance, some journalists only cover general news, so your press release would be written with the general public in mind. Other journalists cover a niche audience, such as health and health care, so your press releases would be more specifically targeted, containing language and terminology to suit the readers.

Make yourself familiar with the publications to which you are submitting. Notice how their stories are written and try to write press releases that fit their theme. Consider the following media sources:

- Local and regional newspapers
- Magazines that specialize in an area of interest such as *Baby and Me* or *Parenting*
- Local television, cable, and radio stations
- Collaborative partners' websites or newsletters

PRESS RELEASES

A press release is a story or announcement written for distribution to news publishers such as newspapers, television, radio, websites, etc. A press release can be thought of as a news story with an agenda. While the story itself should be genuinely newsworthy, it should be carefully crafted to promote a particular event or point of view.

Journalists like press releases, because it makes their job easier. If you can provide stories that are basically ready to publish, you are doing the journalists a huge favor. Any aspect of your press release that is last minute or requires the journalist to do extra work, such as fixing mistakes or doing additional research, lessens the story's appeal.



If your press release involves an event, create it as an “advisory” that lists the name of the event and the fact that your organization is hosting it, what it is, when and where it will be and contact information. Also include a brief description of the event, including notable guests and the great photo opportunities that will be available. If the opportunities are enticing, there will be times when a photojournalist will cover your event. Most newspapers have community calendars that will include your special events. Send your press release announcing your events at least two weeks in advance of the time you would like it published.

How to Write a Press Release

Before you begin writing your press release, ask yourself a few questions:

- Is this the first, last, least or most of anything?
- Is it part of a trend?
- Is there a local angle to a national story or event?
- Is it timely?
- Is there a human-interest angle?
- Is there a strong visual element? (A good photo opportunity can be your back door to the front page.)

Writing a press release isn't particularly difficult, it just takes practice. A good news story follows specific guidelines that answer the following questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

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Media Relations (cont.)

Begin your story with the news headlines and main facts. Most journalists use an inverted pyramid writing style. This places the most important facts at the beginning and works down from there. Ideally, the first paragraph should contain enough information to give the reader a good overview of the entire story. The rest of the article explains and expands on the beginning.

A good approach is to assume that the story might be cut off at any point due to space limitations. Your story should work if the editor decides to use only the first two paragraphs. A standard technique is to present your story with a particular angle or slant. It can help make the purpose of the story clear and give it focus. News stories are all about how people are affected. Keep a human touch at all times, using quotes at least once in your story.

Press Release Format

There is a fairly standard format for creating press releases. It will help your credibility and chances of being published if you present your materials this way. Every press release should include the following: (See Sample Press Release)

1. **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** [Date] These words should appear at the top left of the page, in upper case. If you don't want the story to be made public yet, write "**HOLD FOR RELEASE UNTIL...**" instead.
2. Contact Information – Include the contact person, email address, and phone number.
3. Headline – Just like a headline in a newspaper, make sure it describes the contents of the story.
4. City, State, Body - This is where the actual story goes. There should be more than one paragraph and each paragraph no more than a few sentences. If there is more than one page, write “-more-” on the bottom of the page.
5. Type a solid line under the body indicating that background on your organization will follow.
6. In a smaller font, include any background information about your Project.
7. End with ##### – This indicates the end of the press release.

Find out how the media outlet prefers to receive press releases. Use that method to send the release. After you send your press release, follow up with a phone call, which in PR terms is called a pitch. Prepare the pitch before you call. Try to anticipate questions the reporter may ask you. Take no more than a minute or two to share your story and why it is unique. If you

are asked to do an interview, find out when the deadline is and then promptly set up an interview with your spokesperson. When your story is published or aired, send a thank you letter to the reporter with a “CC” to his or her editor or news director. The key to good media coverage is establishing relationships with assignment editors, reporters, and journalists.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A letter to the editor is a briefly stated opinion generally written in response to a current issue or a previously published article. Focus your letter on one point or subject. If you are commenting on a specific story, mention the headline and date. Cite the specific reference and sum it up in one sentence to refresh readers' memories. Then point out facts that were left out, or refute or support facts that were stated. Be clear and concise. If appropriate, mention your motivation or expertise in writing. For example, “As a Project Manager at Healthy Start, I believe...” or, “it has been my experience...”

Always include your name, address and daytime number (See Sample Letter to the Editor). If you use email, include exactly one address in the “To” field. Don't send letters to the editor via “CC” or “BCC.” Send your letter in the body of the email message, not as an attachment. If your letter gets printed, get a print version with the front-page banner of the paper's name. Send it to your legislators and keep copies for future advocacy and education efforts.

OPINION ARTICLES OR “OP-EDS”

Op-ed articles are opinion articles published opposite a newspaper's editorial page. They are longer and more influential letters to the editor, and therefore they are more difficult to publish. Timing is key. An op-ed should be submitted when an issue is hot. In general, an op-ed is written in 500 – 800 words, double-spaced. Usually, they are written in a five-paragraph/three-talking points format.

The first paragraph should include a news hook, perhaps referring to a recent event in the news. Make sure your point is well stated and concise. The next three body paragraphs should pinpoint the three most important parts of your argument. The conclusion should be captivating and brief to make the last paragraph powerful.

It is a good idea to have the main points of your op-ed already drafted, before news breaks on your issue. This way, when your issue comes up in the news, all your article needs is the

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news hook in the first paragraph and it is ready to send to the editor. Make sure you have experience on the subject and include a brief bio-line at the end of the article. Send your article to just one of the major newspapers in your community. Include a cover letter when submitting an op-ed to an editor, and assure him or her that the article has not been sent to a competing newspaper. It will help get your op-ed article published.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS (PSAs)

Public Service Announcements, or PSAs, are short messages that can be written or presented in audio or visual form. To produce an audio or visual PSA, you will need some technical and financial resources, as well as production time. For your immediate needs, we recommend submitting your PSA in a written format.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) requires radio and television stations to donate a certain amount of airtime to serve the public and community. Most public radio and TV stations have a community calendar on which they will announce events to the public. Some stations will have a maximum length allowed, so it's a good idea to find out in advance what the guidelines are. It's generally a lot easier to get a PSA aired on radio than on television.

The length of a PSA can be written to last 10, 15, 20, 30, or 60 seconds. Most stations prefer 30 seconds. If you're writing for a television PSA, you'll want to cut your announcers copy by three (3) seconds. Television stations run on a much tighter and rigid schedule than radio stations. Many times a 30-second PSA will be cut off before the end.

Target your audience. What type of people are you hoping to reach through your PSA? Survey your radio stations, and determine who their listening audience is. For instance, if you're writing a PSA targeting teens, you'll want to send it to stations that cater to their age group. Because you only have a few seconds to reach your audience, the language should be very simple and your message clear. Take the time to make every word count. You should have sayings or phrases that grab attention. Your PSA should request a specific action, such as calling your organization for more information. The purpose of a PSA is to motivate listeners to do something as a result of having heard it.

PSA Format

Your copy should be double or triple spaced. You can put more than one spot per page for the shorter ones, but 30 or 60 second PSAs should go on separate pages. Writing a PSA is similar to writing a Press Release. Instead of putting "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE" on the top left hand side of the page, put "PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT" at the top middle

of the page, followed by a few spaces and how long you want your announcement to air. Next, you include:

- Length of the PSA
- Name of your Project and contact information
- Catchy title of the PSA
- Your announcement

The bottom of the sheet should be marked with #####, the standard ending used in releases to the media indicating that there are no further pages. (See Sample PSA)

Length of PSAs:

- 10 seconds: 20 – 25 words
- 15 seconds: 30 – 35 words
- 20 seconds: 40 – 45 words
- 30 seconds: 60 – 75 words
- 60 seconds: 120 – 150 words

LOCAL TELEVISION NEWS

There are two speeds in local television newsrooms – too slow and too fast. In a daily morning meeting, managers, producers, and assignment editors make story decisions. Some ideas originate with wire stories from the Associated Press or are generated by news department staff and others come from press releases. A typical newsroom will receive literally hundreds of press releases each day. Some are placed in daily planning folders and others are simply tossed out. The most important way to be sure that your press release isn't tossed is to have a relationship with an assignment editor.

Assignment editors are always looking for a local angle on a story that is mainly taking place elsewhere. Put together a press kit that contains information about your organization nationally and locally with a list of experts from your various program areas. Call the assignment editor and ask for an appointment to introduce yourself and your organization. Leave the press kit with the editor. If you can't get an appointment, drop off the kit with a note stating that you would be happy to assist with a local angle on infant mortality, health care disparities, or the importance of prenatal care.

Once you establish yourself as a credible local source, assignment editors will be sure to read your press releases rather than toss them. Keep abreast of what's in the news, always looking for your organization angles. When you find one, first line up your expert, and then call the assignment editor. Call the station and introduce yourself and your Project, and then state "I have a local angle on the xyz event." Newsrooms are usually chaotic and the editor might not immediately jump on your story. But, if you leave your contact info with reference to "a local angle on xyz," you will probably get a call back.



MARKETING TIPS

Marketing Kits/Press Kits

A marketing kit is a folder containing information tailored to entice the reader to support your project. It can be used for the media press kit, and you can also leave behind these materials after meetings with elected officials, potential funders, or other public figures.

The folders should have a double pocket, and be die-cut for business cards. You should create a label with your organization's name and the nature of the event (e.g. "Prepared Specifically for _____" or "National Infant Mortality Awareness Month"). In general, the folder contains an introductory or personal letter explaining the purpose of the kit. A fact sheet, organization/program brochure, and a statistical sheet substantiating your work are standard.

Each kit should be individualized for your target audience. If the kit is being prepared for the media attending a special event, it should include a press release, bios, and copies of any speeches or testimonials that will be given. A press kit should include information that will help editors construct a story about your event or organization. If you are using the kit as a "leave behind" after a meeting with an elected official, a potential funder, or policymaker, it can contain newsletters, annual reports, testimonials, substantiating statistics, copies of news articles, and photographs of your Project's moms, dads, and beautiful, healthy babies. (Be sure to have release forms for all consumers and children photos.) This type of kit should contain materials and information that motivate the individual to support your organization.

SPEAKERS BUREAU

Utilize your "experts" – your Project's moms and dads, volunteers and staff – to form a Speakers Bureau. It's a good idea to create a standard list of talking points, so a consistent message is given throughout the community. Talking points should include brief statistics, how your services address those statistics in a cost-effective way, a personal story, and a call to action.

Chambers of Commerce are great target audiences, as well as the numerous service clubs that need luncheon speakers. Libraries are a good source for a complete listing of service clubs. Write a letter to the club's program coordinator informing them that you have an exciting and informative presentation. Be sure to bring your marketing materials to distribute.

A good way to collect contact information from your audience is to have a "business card drawing." The inexpensive prize can be a pocket sized book on inspirational quotes for philanthropy. (Be sure your project's phone number is written on the inside cover). Follow up with a thank you letter, not only to the program coordinator who invited you to speak, but to those new contacts you collected. Invite them all for a tour or to your next special event.

NEWSLETTERS

Writing a newsletter is another way to keep your organization's name at the front of people's minds. This can be online or offline. Both can contain valuable information about your successes, consumer testimonials from both moms and dads, plenty of great photography, upcoming events, or a letter from your Executive Director and/or Board president requesting financial support. Your newsletter can be as large or small as you like, but it should be sent out on a regular basis, usually quarterly. E-letters are actually emails to your permission-based database.

OUTDOOR ADVERTISING

Outdoor advertising can include billboards, transit shelter displays, subway displays, and mall displays. Each outdoor advertising company has different guidelines depending on your local codes. It can be a rather expensive way to market unless the company has a philanthropic philosophy.

PROCLAMATIONS (See Sample Proclamations)

Proclamations are a great way to make a public announcement. Mayors, council members or local government administrators

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write proclamations to commend people or announce upcoming events. Contact your Mayor's office as early as possible to request a proclamation announcing September as National Infant Mortality Awareness Month in your city/town/state. Send a follow up letter including the points you would like covered in the proclamation. Often, you are asked to write the actual proclamation.

The proclamation can be read at a City Council meeting with representatives from your Project present. Be prepared to make a few comments to the Council, including thanking them for their support. The proclamation can also be read by the Mayor at any of your planned activities, including a Board meeting. Be sure to have a camera handy, as the photo will be excellent to use in advertising.

FLIERS

Fliers can be created to announce each of your activities or you can create one flier with a calendar of events for the entire month. Keep the flier simple. Use one or two graphics and include your "who, what, when, where, why, and how" information. Be sure to include your website and a contact name with phone number for more information. (List all collaborative partners or major donors.)

WEBSITES

Websites are a wonderful way to direct prospective supporters and donors to your Project. An inexpensive way to have a website designed is to contact a local high school or technical school. Often, students are required to complete a class project, such as designing a website or doing community service.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social Media is becoming a more popular way to promote campaigns to target audiences. Creating Twitter, Facebook, and Ning accounts are great social media tools to use disseminate campaign messages. More organizations are setting up Facebook fan pages and Twitter accounts that spotlight their programs.





A Photo Release could read as follows:

I give [ORGANIZATION NAME] my permission to take and use my picture. As parent/guardian of _____, I give my permission to have his/her picture taken by and for the use of [ORGANIZATION NAME]. I understand that my child(ren)'s picture may appear on different marketing tools used by (organization name) that include, but are not limited to, newsletters, posters, brochures, fliers, and the website. My signature below gives [ORGANIZATION NAME] the authorization to use my and/or my child(ren)'s picture(s).

Signature of Parent/Guardian Date

Sample Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:

I am the [POSITION TITLE] of [ORGANIZATION/CHURCH/COMMUNITY GROUP NAME], a community-based project/coalition making steady progress in reducing infant deaths in our area. I am writing to ensure that the entire community is aware of the issue of infant mortality and to thank our Congressperson, [REPRESENTATIVE/SENATOR NAME], for **his/her** support of the local infant mortality awareness **project/coalition**.

We are a **nonprofit/for profit organization** making a dramatic impact on the high rates of infant mortality that are prevalent in many communities with large minority populations, high rates of unemployment and poverty and limited access to safe housing and medical providers. Our program has had great success with (**List two or three key achievements**).

We are grateful that [REPRESENTATIVE/SENATOR NAME] recognizes that investing in our program will reduce overall federal costs associated with the often expensive and frequent medical treatments that low birth weight infants require. Supporting community-based infant mortality programs now will prevent future spending on Medicaid, special education, and a myriad of other social services that are needed for infants and children who are born with a low birth weight.

[ORGANIZATION/CHURCH/COMMUNITY GROUP NAME] is proud to partner with [NAME OF CONGRESSPERSON] in helping our community's most disadvantaged children survive infancy and live longer, more productive lives. I can be reached at [PHONE NUMBER].

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME]
[POSITION/TITLE]
[YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION]

Sample Letter to House Member

DATE

ADDRESS

Dear Representative [NAME OF CONGRESSMEMBER]:

I am writing to invite you to visit our [PROGRAM NAME] in [CITY NAME]. [PROGRAM NAME] is making a dramatic impact on the high rates of infant mortality that are prevalent in many communities with large minority populations, high rates of unemployment and poverty, and limited access to safe housing and medical providers.

Studies have shown that the cost of care for low birth weight babies has an estimated annual economic impact of \$13 billion. While intensive neonatal care is an effective means to decrease infant mortality, a more cost-effective approach is to increase a pregnant woman's participation in early prenatal care. Since 1998, Healthy Start projects across the country have successfully increased that rate of participation during the first trimester of prenatal care from 41.8% to over 70%. This success directly saves the lives of many vulnerable infants.

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I would like you to visit our program so you can see first-hand the impact we are having in [CITY NAME]. You can meet some of our staff, supporters, and board members, and, most importantly, some of the beautiful, healthy babies that are a living testament to the success of our efforts. We would also like to use the visit to personally thank you and your colleagues in the House for your support for the [CITY NAME] in the House version of the Labor/HHS/Education funding bill. This funding is appreciated and provides enormous hope for the continued success and scope of our program here in [CITY NAME].

I can be reached directly at [PHONE NUMBER]. I will follow-up with your district staff next week in order to find a time that works best for your schedule. Thank you for your service and for considering this request. I look forward to your visit.

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME]
[POSITION/TITLE]
[YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION]

Sample Press Release

Print on Project's letterhead (or press release stationery)

PRESS RELEASE

Contact: [PROJECT SPOKESPERSON NAME]
[SPOKESPERSON EMAIL ADDRESS]

For Immediate Release: [DATE]

[PROGRAM NAME] PROMOTES INFANT MORTALITY AWARENESS MONTH

[CITY, STATE]—Last year, [XX number] of babies in our community never celebrated their first birthday. The majority of those babies were African American, Hispanic, and American Indian. September is National Infant Mortality Awareness Month, a campaign sponsored by National Healthy Start Association (NHSA). On September first, [PROGRAM NAME] is kicking off a month-long campaign to increase the awareness of the high rate of infant mortality in our community.

“Forty countries have a lower infant mortality rate than the United States,” said [LOCAL ELECTED OFFICIAL]. “I am personally challenging the residents of our town to become involved in the local [PROGRAM NAME]. [SENATOR NAME] will be joining me and other concerned citizens [DATE] at [TIME] on the steps of [LOCATION]. Personal testimonials will be given by families that the local project has helped.”

The [ORGANIZATION/CHURCH/COMMUNITY GROUP NAME] promotes community-based maternal and child health programs that focus on the reduction of infant mortality, racial disparities and low birth weight. Our [ORGANIZATION/CHURCH/COMMUNITY GROUP NAME] is hosting numerous activities throughout September including open houses, a stroller-thon, poster contests, a neighborhood health fair, and advocacy trips to the State capital. For more information and times, please call [INSERT NAME], Project Director, at [PHONE NUMBER].

(Sample Boiler Plate for your ORGANIZATION/CHURCH/COMMUNITY GROUP)

The federal Healthy Start Initiative receives \$105,000,000 in funding from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service's Health Resources and Services Administration. Established in 1991, Healthy Start is comprised of 104 community-based programs that respond to the medical, social, cultural, and social service needs of women and their infants. Your town's Healthy Start Project is a member of the National Healthy Start Association (NHSA). For more information, go to <http://www.healthystartassoc.org/>. The NHSA supports the expansion of efforts that are rooted in the community and actively involve community members in their design and implementation. For information, visit www.healthystartassoc.org, or contact the NHSA at 202-296-2195.

(continued)



Sample 30-second PSA

Project's Letterhead (or Press Release Stationery)

Public Service Announcement

Please air [DATES TO AIR]

30 Seconds

[ORGANIZATION/CHURCH/COMMUNITY GROUP NAME]

Contact: [PROJECT DIRECTOR NAME AND TELEPHONE NUMBER]

Tiny Shoes Tell a Big Story

A mountainous pile of baby shoes has been growing on the steps of City Hall this week. Each shoe represents the untimely death of a baby in our community. [ORGANIZATION/CHURCH/COMMUNITY GROUP NAME] of [CITY/TOWN] is working hard to keep our babies alive. Mayor [NAME] and Senator [NAME] will be hosting a community forum to raise awareness about the local increase in infant mortality. The forum will be held [LOCATION] on [DATE AND TIME]. Call for more information at [PHONE NUMBER].

Sample Proclamation

Whereas,

The National Infant Mortality Awareness Month campaign has been designed to increase people's awareness of the high rates of infant deaths, and is led by the [NAME OF ORGANIZATION]; and,

Whereas,

September 1– 30, 2010, marks the annual National Infant Mortality Awareness Month campaign; and,

Whereas,

The Healthy Start project in [YOUR TOWN/CITY] is one of nationally recognized infant mortality projects nationwide; and,

Whereas,

Since 1991, **The National Healthy Start Association (NHSA)** has been dedicated to reducing the incidence of infant mortality that is prevalent in many communities with large minority populations, high rates of unemployment and poverty and limited access to safe housing and medical providers; and,

Whereas,

Our [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] in [YOUR TOWN/CITY] has made a dramatic impact on the high rates of infant mortality that are prevalent in our community, providing critical services to [NUMBER] of women and their infants; and,

Whereas,

The National Infant Mortality Awareness Month campaign provides opportunities for our community to get involved and support [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] in [YOUR TOWN/CITY];

NOW THEREFORE, be it resolved that I/We the Mayor of [YOUR TOWN/CITY], do hereby proclaim September 2010 as National Infant Mortality Awareness Month in [YOUR TOWN/CITY].

Signed this ____ day of the month of September in the year ____.

Signature