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CALIF. INFANT MORTALITY RATE REACHES RECORD LOW, REPORT FINDS

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California's infant mortality rate reached a record low of 4.5 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 2012, [according to a report](#) from the state Department of Public Health, *HealthyCal* reports.

Details of the Report

According to *HealthyCal*, infant mortality is defined as deaths among infants younger than one year (Kritz, *HealthyCal*, 1/14).

The report found there were 503,788 live births in California in 2012 and 2,247 infants died. The rate is a decrease from 4.8 infant deaths per 1,000 live births the previous year (Larson, *Lake County News*, 1/14).

According to the report, the leading causes of infant death in 2012 include:

- Congenital malformations;
- Short gestation periods, defined as a pregnancy lasting less than 40 weeks; and
- Low birthweight (*HealthyCal*, 1/14).

The report found racial and ethnic disparities in infant mortality rates, but the rates declined among all groups.

For example the infant mortality rate among:

- Blacks decreased from 10.5 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 2011 to 9.8 in 2012;
- Whites decreased from 4.1 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 2011 to 3.8 in 2012; and
- Hispanics decreased from 4.9 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 2011 to 4.7 in 2012 (*Lake County News*, 1/14).

Reaction

In response to the report, Ron Chapman, state health officer and director of DPH, said, "Optimal infant health outcomes are influenced by a woman's health even before she becomes pregnant, including avoidance of tobacco, alcohol and drugs, maintaining a healthy weight and taking folic acid supplements."

Chapman said infant health outcomes could be improved by:

- Earlier prenatal care;
- Genetic testing to identify health risks at birth;
- Breastfeeding;
- Childhood immunizations; and
- Continuing proper nutrition through an infant's developing years (*HealthyCal*, 1/14).