



**Texas Department of State Health Services
Healthy Texas Babies Initiative
Expert Panel Meeting Summary
January 6 – 7, 2011**

On January 6-7, 2011, a multidisciplinary panel of over 40 maternal and child health experts convened in Austin to provide advice, recommendations, and support to the Healthy Texas Babies initiative sponsored by the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), in partnership with the March of Dimes. In addition, over 20 subject matter experts from DSHS and other Texas Health and Human Services agencies, leadership from the state and national offices of the March of Dimes, and three state and national experts attended the two-day meeting to support the effort. The purpose of this inaugural Healthy Texas Babies (HTB) Expert Panel (EP) meeting was to begin development of a coordinated plan to reduce infant mortality in Texas. The meeting was designed to accomplish the following objectives:

1. Outline the public / private partnerships for this initiative
2. Review U.S. and Texas data on infant mortality and low birth weight
3. Review the March of Dimes *Healthy Babies are Worth the Wait*[®] program
4. Review current Texas' interventions / practices to reduce infant mortality
5. Begin development of a coordinated effort to reduce infant mortality
6. Strengthen initiatives to continue the reduction of infant mortality
7. Identify additional activities and next steps to occur by June 1, 2011

Convened by Ms. Evelyn Delgado, the DSHS Assistant Commissioner for Family and Community Health Services, most of day one of the meeting was spent providing baseline information so that all expert panel members could begin deliberations based on a common set of data and information. The baseline information shared at the meeting supplemented pre-meeting reading, including a review of a current infant mortality data, current evidenced-based research and journal articles relating to the reduction of infant mortality.

Information provided on January 6, 2011, addressed the first four meeting objectives above and included a DSHS review of the project scope including proposed project phases and timelines, current partnerships, proposed roles and responsibilities for various groups, presentation of Texas and national infant mortality data, and an overview of an exceptional item submitted to the Texas Legislature for consideration during the upcoming legislative session. A Texas Health and Human Services (HHSC) representative provided an overview of Texas Medicaid including an overview of current eligibility data and program expenditures for maternal and infant care. The HHSC representative also outlined recent work with a Medicaid quality-based payment workgroup and the potential for collaboration and partnership with the Healthy Texas Babies initiative including possible opportunities that could have an impact on the reduction of infant mortality in Texas.



Dr. David L. Lakey, the Texas Commissioner of Health, highlighted the reduction of infant mortality as a priority for DSHS, HHSC and the state of Texas. He also outlined current efforts by health officials in 13 states to address the reduction of infant mortality on a regional U.S. basis as well as their work with federal officials to address the reduction of infant mortality on a national level.

There were also nationally recognized speakers who provided information to the meeting participants on current initiatives to reduce infant mortality from the March of Dimes, the Seton Family of Hospitals, the Northern Manhattan Perinatal Partnership, Inc., and the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals. Meeting participants concluded the day with a discussion of local initiatives/interventions and the importance of standardized data collection and measurement. This discussion prepared them for day two of the meeting, which would focus on obtaining input from the expert panel on a number of strategic level components of the coordinated effort.

Following a summary of reflections on the previous day by Ms. Delgado, the expert panel prepared to participate in a series of facilitated discussions. The following topics were discussed: (1) guiding principles and shared assumptions; (2) intervention strategies including the importance of data collection and program evaluation/research design; (3) implementation strategies; (4) enhancing current and identifying new partnerships; (5) brainstorming communication strategies; and (6) identifying next steps for the initiative. A summary of the key consensus points is provided below:

- Reducing infant mortality should be a priority for Texas.
- All actions/efforts should be patient-centered with a focus on long-term goals like 100 percent planned pregnancies; increasing access to health care including pre-conception, prenatal, inter-conception and post partum care; increasing the use and availability medical homes; and continuing the work to build healthy communities in Texas.
- Any coordinated plan to reduce infant mortality should be data driven and evidenced based.
- Consideration should be given to creating a multi-disciplined, multi-agency/organization coalition to oversee the development and implementation of a Texas plan to reduce infant mortality.
- There is a need to have a central repository or one website to serve as an information clearing house about this initiative in Texas.
- Strong consideration should be given to addressing systemic issues in addition to supporting new interventions/initiatives. There was support for the idea of developing a regional perinatal system of care.
- There is a need to enhance current and create new partnerships at the local, regional, state and federal levels to support this effort moving forward. Additional mental health, substance abuse, education, business and faith-based partners were identified as critical to support the effort in the future.
- There was support for this effort to be focused broadly across the life course but with identification of short-, intermediate-, and long-term goals and objectives.



- Effective communications about the coordinated effort to reduce infant mortality in Texas is critical for parents, providers, clinicians, stakeholders, policy makers and the public.

Meeting participants also identified the following immediate next steps:

- DSHS should produce an immediate high-level meeting summary and share with meeting participants.
- DSHS should produce a detailed meeting summary by the end of January 2011 for review by meeting participants.
- DSHS should consider developing a small steering committee to guide this work moving forward.
- After review/evaluation of the documented meeting proceedings, DSHS should identify and recommend the formation of several small work groups to continue to develop the coordinated plan for specific topical components. This may include data, evaluation and research methodologies; interventions and implementation strategies; systems identification and development; and communications planning and implementation. This work would occur from January through May of 2011.
- Each work group should have a specific charge with deliverables including the development of short, intermediate and long term goals and recommendations.
- The HTB Expert Panel should meet again in June 2011 to review and approve the initial coordinated plan to reduce infant mortality in Texas.