



NEWS RELEASE

Public Health

CONTACT:

Lana Cao
Public Health Information Officer
(909) 387-9147
Lana.Cao@dph.sbcounty.gov

November 27, 2017

County working to bring awareness to preterm birth



November is National Prematurity Awareness Month, a time to refocus efforts and raise awareness of this public health priority. The San Bernardino County Department of Public Health is working to bring awareness to the community regarding the high rates of preterm birth within the County.

Babies born too early, particularly before 32 weeks, have higher rates of death and disability. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), African-Americans in San Bernardino County had the greatest percentage of babies born premature in 2015 with 12.99 percent, compared to the County's overall average of 9.58 percent.

"I encourage medical providers and County residents to take advantage of Public Health programs aimed at increasing the health of targeted populations," says San Bernardino County Public Health Officer, Dr. Maxwell Ohikhuare. "The Black Infant Health (BIH) Program is designed to address the factors that contribute to increased rates of preterm birth among our African-American residents. The program aims to reduce some of the factors associated with preterm birth that frequently affect African-American women."

There are several factors that contribute to premature birth outcomes. Some of the factors are stress, tobacco and/or alcohol use, ethnicity, prior preterm births, pregnancy with multiples such as twins and triplets and possibly low maternal income or socioeconomic status.

The BIH program is a group-based education and support intervention that women can be a part of to help reduce their risk of preterm birth. It is entirely free to participants. If you are an African-American woman, 18 years or older and currently 30 weeks or less pregnant, call toll free (844) 352-3985 to enroll in BIH services.

Reducing prematurity is a community concern that involves a community effort from all. In San Bernardino County community agencies that are also promoting the awareness of preterm births include the March of Dimes' Healthy Babies are Worth the Wait, Comprehensive Perinatal Services Program and the Child Health and Disability Prevention program. Medical providers and community organizations who are interested in partnering with the BIH program to support the effort to reduce preterm birth should contact the BIH program for details.

For more information about the BIH Program, please visit <http://wp.sbcounty.gov/dph/programs/fhs/bih/> or call (844) 352-3985.