

Nation Gets a 'D;' North Carolina Receives 'F' on March of Dimes Premature Birth Report Card

RALEIGH, N.C. — For the second consecutive year, North Carolina earned an "F" on the second annual March of Dimes Premature Birth Report Card but it showed improvement on criteria that can help give all babies a healthy start in life.

The March of Dimes released its second annual report card today, the 7th Annual Prematurity Awareness Day ®, when the March of Dimes focuses the nation's attention on the growing problem of premature birth (birth before 37 weeks gestation). Also for the second consecutive year, the United States earned only a "D" on the Report Card, demonstrating that more than a half million of our nation's newborns didn't get the healthy start they deserved. As in 2008, no state earned an "A" and only Vermont received a "B";

"Here in North Carolina we are proud of our hard work in smoking cessation and the decline in late preterm birth, and we hope that this will be the start of a decline in our preterm birth rate," said Tara Owens Shuler, March of Dimes Prematurity Campaign Chair. "We have a long way to go before all babies in America get a healthy start in life and we are committed to working with state health officials, hospitals and health care providers to continue to fight for preemies."

Criteria that affect preterm birth improved in NC. NC earned a star for: Reducing the percentage of women of child-bearing age who smoke; Lowering the late preterm birth rate. In North Carolina, the rate of late preterm births is 9.2 percent; the rate of women smoking is 20.6 percent, and the rate of uninsured women is 22.1 percent.

In the US, more than 540,000 babies are born too soon each year. Preterm birth is a serious health problem that costs the United States more than \$26 billion annually, according to the Institute of Medicine. It is the leading cause of newborn death and babies who survive an early birth often face the risk of lifetime health challenges, such as breathing problems, mental retardation and others. A March of Dimes report released in October found that 13 million babies worldwide were born preterm and more than one million die each year. Quality improvement programs are key to lowering preterm birth rates, according to the March of Dimes.

In North Carolina the March of Dimes is collaborating with the Perinatal Quality Collaborative of NC (PQCNC) and UNC Healthcare to reduce the rate of late preterm birth through its 39 Weeks Project. The initiative will reduce late preterm birth by reducing elective deliveries prior to 39 weeks gestation. Forty hospitals across the state have joined the initiative, been trained, and have pledged to review every elective induction and cesarean section. These deliveries should not be scheduled before 39 weeks without medical indications, according to guidelines from the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Reducing late preterm birth will help mothers, their infants, and hospitals. Details can be found at marchofdimes.com/NorthCarolina

The March of Dimes is the leading organization for pregnancy and baby health. With chapters nationwide, the March of Dimes works to improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality. For the latest resources and information, visit marchofdimes.com or nacersano.org.

About the Author

The March of Dimes is the leading organization for pregnancy and baby health. With chapters nationwide, the March of Dimes works to improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality. For the latest resources and information, visit marchofdimes.com or nacersano.org.

Source: <http://www.prsurvival.com>